Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes 2012-13

Subject Area Committee Name: Philosophy

Contact person: Matt Stockton

For LDC/DE: Core outcome(s) assessed: Critical Thinking & Self-Reflection

For CTE: Degree or certificate* assessed: _____

*please attach a table showing the alignment of the degree or certificate outcomes with the College Core Outcomes

Please address the questions below and
send to *learningassessment@pcc.edu* by **June 21, 2013** with Annual Report in the subject line

Note: Information provided in this report may be inserted into or summarized in Section 2C Program Review Outline.

1. *Describe <u>changes that have been implemented</u> towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that <u>resulted from recent outcome assessments</u>.   These may include but are not limited to changes to content, materials, instruction, pedagogy etc. Please be sure to describe the connection between the assessment results and the changes made.*

Minimal changes have been implemented toward improving student's attainment of outcomes as a result of our recent outcome assessments. This is largely due to the fact that we are still in the process of trying to construct a meaningful way to assess students in a fashion that will satisfy the specific demands of the LAC while simultaneously managing to enrich our own pedagogies. In philosophy, almost every exercise we utilize in our courses involves an assessment of student growth in critical thinking and self-reflection. The expectation that they will have achieved a degree of mastery from these exercises which can be then measured in a single assessment tool is problematic in a variety of ways. One fundamental challenge is that our students arrive at our classes already possessing a capacity for each of these proclaimed outcomes. Some students possess a very mature capacity for critical thought and self-reflection while others might possess very underdeveloped ones. The idea that students can leave our classes with a comparable level of expertise that can then be measured in a single assessment is as unrealistic as expecting all students in a weight lifting class to be able to bench press 200 pounds upon its conclusion. In short, the language of "outcomes" is built upon faulty assumptions and arbitrary semantics. We could always define these "outcomes" at such a minimal level of "mastery" that we show a statistical level of student growth, but that would seem to be creating an illusion of success that doesn't fully encapsulate the real student growth that does occur in our classes. The substantial growth and learning that occurs in our courses is relative to each student and is best articulated by their own qualitative self-reflective feedback. The diminishment of this evidence for self-reported growth in preference of quantifiable data seems to be in deference to the expectations of accreditors more than it is to the educators.

While we cannot cite any direct changes as a result of our assessment efforts, we can cite a collective passion for teaching and student success that is brought into focus through the discussions these exercises provoke. These discussions are the most beneficial for us as they allow each of us to assert and re-evaluate our own methodologies and pedagogical philosophies.

For __each outcome assessed this year__:

2. *Describe the assessment design (tool and processes) used. Include relevant information about:*

   - *The nature of the assessment (e.g., written work, project, portfolio, exam, survey, performance etc.) and if it is direct (assesses evidence mastery of outcomes) or indirect (student's perception of mastery). Please give rationale for indirect assessments (direct assessments are preferable).*

   - *The student sample assessed (including sample size relative to the targeted student population for the assessment activity) process and rationale for selection of the student sample. Why was this group of students and/or courses chosen?*

   - *Any rubrics, checklists, surveys or other tools that were used to evaluate the student work. (Please include with your report – OK to include in appendix). Where appropriate, identify benchmarks.*

   - *How you analyzed results, including steps taken to ensure that results are reliable (consistent from one evaluator to another.*

METHODOLOGY: Surveys were constructed separately for each outcome. In each, students were provided with ten statements that each pertained to the outcome in question. Students were then asked to mark the strength of their agreement or disagreement with each statement. The five options were:

<div align="center">Strongly Disagree ← → Disagree ← → Undecided ← → Agree ← → Strongly Agree</div>

Students were administered these surveys twice: once on the first day of class and again on the last day of class. The underlying premise being utilized was that a shift in student responses between the beginning of the term and the end of the term would signify their growth in the comprehension and application of the outcomes in question.

To tabulate the results, only responses from students who completed both the pre and post class surveys were accounted for. A numerical value was attributed to each response with "Strongly Disagree" being represented as a "1" and "Strongly Agree" being represented as a "5". The values of these numbers are regarded as neutral (ex. 5 is not greater or worse than 1) and are only used for purposes of quantification. Totals for each question were averaged out and juxtaposed for pedagogical consideration by the SAC .

RESULTS:

PHILOSOPHY 2012-2013 ASSESSMENT DATA

OUTCOME: Self-Reflection

COURSE: PHL 201 Being & Knowing

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SURVEYED: 67

1) *I am good at identifying and clearly explaining problems in people's arguments, including my own.*

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	3.85	Agree -
Post-Course:	4.15	Agree +

2) *When I disagree with someone, I mostly focus on what's wrong with their view rather than reflecting on my own view.*

	Average	Approx. Response

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	2.70	Undecided -
Post-Course:	2.33	Disagree +

3) *I think about my thinking frequently.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	4.07	Agree +
Post-Course:	4.22	Agree +

4) *I am confident in my ability to find common ground to serve as the basis for fruitful discussion with others.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	4.04	Agree +
Post-Course:	4.09	Agree +

5) *Disagreements and doubt are weaknesses that impair our ability to learn.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.40	Disagree +
Post-Course:	2.24	Disagree +

6) *The purpose of argumentation is to point out why someone else is wrong.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	1.76	Disagree -
Post-Course:	1.58	Disagree -

7) *The primary function of education is to train you to get a job.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.21	Disagree +
Post-Course:	1.96	Disagree -

8) *All ideas are subjectively true, and therefore we can't analyze another person's beliefs.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.58	Undecided -
Post-Course:	2.55	Undecided -

9) *I don't like to explore my reasons for believing something is true.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	1.84	Disagree -
Post-Course:	1.77	Disagree -

10) *Dictionaries determine what words mean.*

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.73	Undecided -
Post-Course:	2.33	Disagree +

OUTCOME: Critical Thinking

COURSE: PHL 191 Analysis & Evaluation of Argument

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SURVEYED: 80

1) I realize that some of my beliefs may not fully correspond to what is true and factual about the world.

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	4.24	Agree +
Post-Course:	4.43	Agree +

2) Oscar says *"people who change their minds about an issue or idea are generally confused intellectual wimps*
      —it's a sign of weakness to change your opinion after you have held it for a long time." Do you agree with Oscar?

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	1.34	Strongly Disagree
Post-Course:	1.34	Strongly Disagree

3) The following is an example of critical thinking: *"Andrew position on Medicare reform is flat out wrong.*
      He doesn't know what he's talking about. Plus, he's always saying ridiculous things that are self-serving"

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	1.54	Disagree -
Post-Course:	1.30	Strongly Disagree

4) Sincerity and authenticity are the hallmarks of sound beliefs.

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	3.48	Undecided +
Post-Course:	3.28	Undecided +

5) The following reasoning is sound: *"Absolutely, ghosts exist. I've personally seen one and experiences like mine are very common.*
      Why else would so many people believe in them?"

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	2.09	Disagree +
Post-Course:	2.09	Disagree +

6) In its television advertising, the Burger Czar fast-food chain claims that *"The bigger the burger, the better the burger."*
      The ad ends with a shot of an attractive, smiling young woman who assures: *"The burgers are bigger at Burger Czar."*
      If you agreed with these claims, you might reasonably conclude that the burgers are better at Burger Czar.

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	3.21	Undecided +
Post-Course:	4.01	Agree

7) Fairness alone is enough justification for giving everyone's opinions equal weight.

	Average	Approx. Response
Pre-Course:	2.83	Undecided -
Post-Course:	3.26	Undecided +

8) Seeing is believing.

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.99	Undecided
Post-Course:	2.61	Undecided -

9) Whenever well-established science and one's own beliefs conflict it is most important to remain true to one's own beliefs.

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	2.39	Disagree +
Post-Course:	2.26	Disagree +

10) Ophelia tells her friend Oprah: *"The Culinary Arts department at PCC is taking over the food service in the student cafeteria —I guess we can't afford to eat there anymore"* Oprah responds: *"I suppose you are assuming that the Culinary Arts department will charge more for food services than the current food service does."*
In this exchange, Oprah is providing an acceptable supposition.

	Average	**Approx. Response**
Pre-Course:	4.20	Agree +
Post-Course:	4.25	Agree +

3. **Provide information about the results (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?**
   - *If scored (e.g., if a rubric or other scaled tool is used), please report the data, and relate to any appropriate benchmarks.*
   - *Results should be broken down in a way that is meaningful and useful for making improvements to teaching/learning. Please show those specific results.*

EVALUATION: We as a Philosophy SAC discussed the specific assessment results as well as the process. We thought that the results of the surveys yielded some statistical data consistent with what we had expected. Students were answering the questions of the surveys in ways that trended towards more self-reflection and critical thinking. Some answers to specific questions showed marked improvement (see "Self-reflection" #'s 2 and 10; "Critical Thinking" #'s 6 and 7), while others showed slight improvements or consistent answers. These results enable us to conclude that we were at least not harming our students' ability to think critically and engage in the process of self-reflection. We were unable to strongly conclude that specific assignments or teaching styles contributed to these areas of improvement. This led us to reflect on the process and methodology of our assessment work. What follows is our interpretation of the process we engaged in this year.

4. **Identify any changes that should, as a result of this assessment, be implemented to help improve students' attainment of outcomes. (These may include, but are not limited to, changes in curriculum, content, materials, instruction, pedagogy etc).**

RECOMMENDATIONS: The quantitative survey approach enabled the Philosophy SAC to have a discussion about the results, what they showed and what they didn't show.   We felt that the results showed some small shifts in predictable ways, they showed that students were more self-reflective regarding their own worldviews and tolerant of other people's positions. Also, the results revealed that students were able to see the value in being critically aware of the process of thinking on an everyday basis. However, it was also concluded that the results could not be expected to show, based on the quantitative "snap shot" that the surveys produced, which specific approaches to teaching philosophy yields the results that are valued in the process of teaching and learning. This insight into the process revealed to us that the main value added in this assessment cycle was the opportunity to come together as a philosophical community of educators and discuss our core values. Unfortunately, the survey design and implementation/interpretation/evaluation process did not maximize our efforts in having assessment dialogues which were seen as having the most value by our faculty.

The quantitative process of assessment is detrimentally affected by a limited number of FT staff, no release time, and a lack of statistical training. Further, our general assessment is that its current format does not provide a productive reflective avenue for assessment improvement. The Philosophy SAC would prefer to find a process next year that would afford us the time and space to conduct such dialogues where we could share teaching and learning "best practices" when attempting to assess each of our strengths/areas of improvements regarding next year's core outcomes. Given that much of what we find practically beneficial is not in conformity with the expectations of the LAC, the Philosophy SAC will continue to reassess the assessment process again in the next academic cycle.

5. *Reflect on the effectiveness of this assessment tool and assessment process. Please describe any changes to assessment methodology that would lead to more meaningful results if this assessment were to be repeated (or adapted to another outcome). Is there a different kind of assessment tool or process that the SAC would like to use for this outcome in the future?   If the assessment tool and processes does not need to be revised, please indicate this.*

REFLECTION: During the assessment planning and implementation process this year, the Philosophy SAC had some productive conversations regarding the methodology of assessment and the value we can ascribe to taking the quantitative approach that was recommended by the Assessment Council. At the beginning of the year, we discussed last year's assessment process and any improvements we could make. It was decided that we should move towards assigning numerical value to answers, instead of the qualitative approach we used last year. We had a spirited conversation concerning the core value of doing assessment (what is the value of the valuation system we were using?) and decided that the best approach we could think of (dialogical teaching/learning assessment) would not meet the demands of the assessors of our assessment process. Subsequently, we concluded that we would try to find a system that could be quantifiable, since that seemed to be the direction we were told is the best practice.

We then spent time constructing the survey forms to best select the questions for students to answer. We solicited questions from members of the SAC and then narrowed them down to the top ten for each outcome.

The questions we chose for "self-reflection" and "critical thinking" were deemed to be the best to elicit some common themes found in the curriculum of each instructor teaching these subjects. This approach, while providing consistency, was also recognized as too general since us, as a SAC, value diversity in teaching pedagogy and content, which then meant we had to find general questions that might overlap best between the varieties of teaching approaches. At the end of the assessment cycle, we realized that this approach would not yield relevant information to help individual instructors assess the core values that should be at the forefront of this process: how can each of us improve the teaching and learning environment when educating others on difficult topics in critical thinking and self-reflection?