



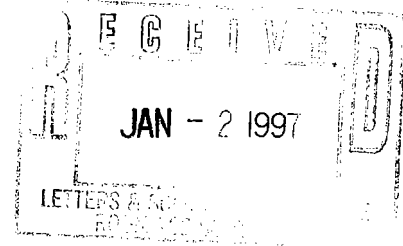
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 30, 1996

Phillip Certain
Dean, L&S
South Hall



Dear Phil,

Enclosed are the assessment plans that the Philosophy Department has devised for the undergraduate major and the graduate program. In both cases, the Department met to discuss the issues, then delegated the structuring of a procedure to the relevant committee, which then circulated their proposal as a mail ballot, which was approved.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elliott Sober".

Elliott Sober
Vilas Professor and Chair

Assessment Plan for the Philosophy Department Graduate Program

Approved December, 1996

The Graduate Studies Committee will undertake an evaluation of the Graduate Program in three steps: (i) sending of the attached questionnaire to all of our Ph.D. graduates (with a brief cover letter); (ii) sending of a request for information analogous to that elicited by our questionnaire to Philosophy Departments in the Big Ten, ranked at our level, and/or included in the Governor's Commission listing of comparable universities; (iii) constructing a report based on the data collected in (i) and (ii).

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT GRADUATE PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

The University has been mandated by the Legislature to produce and implement a plan of evaluating each Graduate Program. The responsibility for production and implementation lies with each Graduate Program, which will present its results to the University. This Questionnaire is an essential component in the evaluation plan of the Department of Philosophy. We ask you to fill out this Questionnaire and return it to us.

SECTION ONE

1. What is your college and university educational background (please give dates as well as degrees)?
2. What is your post-PhD. employment record (please give dates as well as employers)?
3. What were your major areas of academic work at Wisconsin, and what was the topic of your dissertation?
4. What have been your post-PhD. areas of teaching and advising responsibility?
 - A. Graduate courses:
 - B. Undergraduate courses:
 - C. Student advising:
5. Please describe the ways in, and the degree to, which your graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison prepared you for taking on and executing these responsibilities.
6. Were there particular parts of your graduate education at Wisconsin that were especially important to you in your post-PhD. work?
7. Please list your publications:
 - A. Books
 - B. Articles/Book Chapters
 - C. Book Reviews
8. Please list your professional presentations:
 - A. At Philosophy Conferences:
 - B. At Academic Conferences not restricted to Philosophy:
 - C. To non-academic groups:
9. Please indicate your administrative responsibilities:

A. Within your own Department:

B. Within your University:

C. In other academic organizations:

10. Please rate the education that you received in your graduate work at Wisconsin:

A. Excellent

B. Good

C. Fair

D. Poor

SECTION TWO

Please add what comments you wish relative to your graduate work in Madison, on whatever relevant topics and terms you choose.

Proceedures for Evaluating the Undergraduate Philosophy Major:

Goals:

A major in philosophy can provide a core or principle around which a student can organize an education in the liberal arts. Accordingly the goal of the major in philosophy is (a) to provide a basic and balanced understanding of philosophical questions and the methods philosophers use in attempting to answer them, (b) and some appreciation of the history and the classic discipline, (c) to foster the development of skills essential for doing philosophy and for engaging conceptual issues generally; particularly, logical skills and ability to identify, reconstruct and critically assess arguments, (d) to prepare students for graduate study in philosophy, should they choose to continue to work in the field. Because many of our majors also major in other disciplines, we aim in addition (e) to provide opportunities through course work and independent study to investigate philosophical issues in the natural and social sciences, as well as in the arts and other humanities.

To these ends, we require majors to complete course work in:

- i. the history of philosophy, focusing particularly on the ancient Greek and Modern periods;
- ii. logic;
- iii. and in a variety of advanced subjects which are designated as satisfying our breadth requirement. Thus we require that majors who are especially interested, say, in the theory of knowledge also do course work in ethics or aesthetics, and that students interested mainly in political philosophy also study metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

Assessment of the Goals:

In order to assess our goals we propose the following:

(1) In the required courses, 211 (Logic), 430 (Ancient Philosophy) and 432 (Modern Philosophy— 17th and 18th Century Philosophy), a professor will assess the majors' grasp of key concepts or skills by embedding questions designed for this purpose in a regular examination or other assignment. This question might aim to test whether the student has grasped some important concept (e.g., What is a valid argument form? the concept of "objectivity"? or Plato's Forms) or it might aim to test some key skill (e.g., the ability to recognize or produce a valid argument, to give a plausible rendition of some important argument, or to produce a criticism of an argument). The professor will then evaluate the performance of the majors and write a report for the Undergraduate Planning Committee. This is meant to assess whether we are meeting the goals stated in (a) and (b), and (c) above.

(2) The undergraduate planning committee will review the transcripts of the graduating majors to evaluate whether the advanced courses they are taking in

fact meet our goal of "breadth and depth" in the major. That is, are majors taking enough courses from a sufficient variety of areas as well as courses that are sufficiently central to the subject. This is meant to assess goals (a), (d), and (e).

(3) Questionnaires will be given to graduating majors to see how well they think we meet our goals. (This is meant to assess whether we meet all our goals) In order to assess goal (d), questionnaires will also be sent to students who went on to graduate school in philosophy (after their first year of graduate school) for the purpose of evaluating how well they think they were prepared by our program for graduate school.

Implementation of the Assessment of Goals:

We propose to do all of (1) through (3) next year (97-98) and, by the end of the Spring of 98, have the Undergraduate Planning Committee prepare a report for the department.

We think any changes we would make in the program would take at least 2 years to show up in any assessment. Consequently, after our initial assessment, we propose to do (1) through (3) every other year.