

July 1, 2023

Dear Academic Standards Committee,

Please see below the one-year follow up report for the recommendations and implementation plan outlined in the Philosophy BA Honours program PPR, 2028-2022.

Andrew Hunter  
Department Chair

RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
<b>Recommendation #1</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b> Launch a co-op study program option for Philosophy students starting in the academic year 2023-2024 as part of the overall Faculty of Arts co-op development in partnership with the Ryerson Career and Co-op Centre. The program will include an alternative curriculum stream with 3 work terms.
<b>Rationale:</b> There is a strong need to help Philosophy students transition from the Philosophy program to the workforce. This has been identified in student surveys. Most Philosophy students enjoy the program but feel anxious and unprepared for the labour market.
<b>Objective:</b> Students will acquire work experience, build professional networks and better integrate and understand how to apply their philosophy degree in the workforce. A co-op study option will provide students with the best of both worlds: an opportunity to study the subject they are passionate about while getting the work experience that will help them transition to the workforce after graduation. It will also help students to realize the importance of skills they've acquired as philosophy students for future employment.
<b>Actions:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve at a Department Council meeting a modified curriculum stream that includes 3 co-op work terms as part of a proposal to go to the Academic Standards Committee.</li> <li>2. Work closely with Laura MacKinnon in the Career Centre to identify employers and organizations, including NGOs, think-tanks and advocacy groups, for possible internships.</li> <li>3. Work with the Ryerson Career Centre to finalize and submit a proposal to the Academic Standards Committee.</li> </ol>

**Timeline:**

1. Submit proposal to Academic Standards Committee by end of 2022
2. Confirm organizations for work terms by end of 2023
3. Launch co-op study program option for academic year 2023-2024

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator in partnership with the Ryerson Career and Co-op Centre

**Responsibility** for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Department of Philosophy

Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:

The Co-op Study program has been approved and will begin 2024-25.

RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Recommendation #2**

**Recommendation:** Investigate options for dedicated tutorials, sections, or courses for Philosophy students in years 1 and 2.

**Rationale:** Students have voiced a need to foster a stronger community among the student body. Philosophy students do not have a dedicated course until third year and many believe a dedicated course earlier in the program would go a long way towards community building.

**Objective:** The aim of a dedicated philosophy course in second year, and dedicated tutorials or sections in first year, is to foster community for philosophy majors, and to more freely focus on the methods and approaches of the discipline (for e.g. philosophy essay-writing). This should help improve retention rates.

**Actions:**

1. Strike an expanded curriculum committee in 2021-22 to review second year required courses and propose a dedicated course for Philosophy students in year two. (Options to be explored include: a new dedicated Ancient course; a philosophy specialist version of PHL 503 or PHL 708). The committee presents their recommendation for approval at a Department Council meeting.
2. Chair and Program Administrator to investigate the possibility of dedicated tutorials for SSH105 as well as PHL201 for Philosophy students for Fall 2021.
3. Chair and Program Administrator to investigate the possibility of a dedicated SSH105 section for Philosophy students for Fall 2022 following discussions with the Dean's Office.

**Timeline:**

1. Summer 2021: Investigate the possibility of manually enrolling philosophy students in dedicated PHL 201 or SSH 105 tutorial sections in the Fall 2021 or Winter 2022 terms.
2. Winter 2022: When preparing loadings for Fall 2022-Winter 2023, schedule a separate section of SSH105 for Philosophy students if approved by the Dean's Office.
3. Winter 2022: Curriculum committee presents recommendation to a Department Council meeting on a second year dedicated Philosophy course.
4. October 2022: If approved by council, submit calendar changes for implementation starting Fall 2023.

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director, Administrator, and expanded Curriculum Committee

**Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation:** Curriculum committee, Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

In 2022-23 the Department offered a dedicated section of PHL 201 to majors.

**We plan to offer dedicated sections of PHL 102 starting in Winter 2024.**

In 2022 the Department approved two new required courses dedicated to philosophy majors at the second year level:

PHL 402 Ancient Greek Philosophy

PHL 403 Early Modern Philosophy

These will be offered annually starting in Fall 2024.

**RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**Recommendation #3**

**Recommendation:** Investigate the possibility of implementing a type of fundamentals course for incoming philosophy students. This would be a mandatory pass/fail course that meets throughout one semester (number of hours to be determined) for writing workshops, an introduction to discipline-specific research and methods, and to discuss career options with guest speakers from various professions.

**Rationale:** Philosophy students have complained that they are not acquiring enough career-ready skills and have expressed concern with entering the job market after graduation. Students in all the surveys have asked for more guidance in career skills training. The leading question for the Department is the following: what does career readiness mean for philosophy students who are not moving on to graduate school and have decided to enter the labour force with a BA in philosophy? Philosophy students have also complained that they are not getting enough writing support (specific to philosophy) in their first semester. They are especially concerned about the transition from high school to a BA program in which essays are the main assessment method. This course would be modeled on similar pass/fail program orientation courses such as [SCI180 in Biomedical Sciences](#) taken by all students in the Biomedical Sciences program at Ryerson. A fundamentals course would address a number of weaknesses in the SWOT chart (see Appendix I-E): 2, 3, 4, 6, 7.

**Objective:** This recommendation has four objectives:

1. To provide a smoother transition for incoming students into the BA.
2. To counteract societal and cultural perceptions that philosophy is not relevant for a career beyond the academy.
3. To help students learn in the first semester how to write a philosophy essay, read philosophical texts, and take accurate notes during lectures.
4. To start building community for program students when they enter.

**Actions:**

1. Inquire into the feasibility of adding a pass/fail course given the requirements of the Arts common platform, effects on tuition, minimum course requirements, and work loads.
2. Contact undergraduate programs with a similar pass/fail fundamentals type of course.
3. Plan a fundamentals course with one hour weekly or two-hour biweekly learning modules.
4. Winter 2022: present recommendation to a Department council meeting. If approved, make necessary calendar changes by Fall 2022 for curriculum implementation in Fall 2023 onwards.

**Timeline:**

1. Make inquiries in 2021-22, in consultation with the expanded curriculum committee
2. If feasible, submit calendar change by October, 2022, for 2023 implementation.
3. Plan the course in time for 2023-24.

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator

**Responsibility** for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

After extensive consultations and discussions, the curriculum committee and the Department decided it was not feasible to offer a pass/fail course dedicated to philosophy majors. Given all first year students are on the common platform, any introductory philosophy course would have to be open to all students. The Department approved instead a new introductory course that will be offered for the first time in the winter term, 2024, and that will fulfill the objectives of this recommendation.

PHL 102: What is Philosophy? is designed to introduce first year students to discipline-specific methods and approaches and incorporate a focus on career-readiness skills. It is hoped that a dedicated section for program majors will be offered every year.

RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Recommendation #4**

**Recommendation:** Increase the diversity of the curriculum and the program

**Rationale:** The discipline of philosophy is still predominantly focused on male, European, canonical thinkers, and needs to include more under-represented minorities including women, people of colour, and scholars working in non-Western philosophical traditions.

**Objective:** To diversify the program, expose students to non-Western traditions and bodies of knowledge, attract and retain under-represented minorities in philosophy.

**Actions:**

1. Establish a Committee for Diversity and Inclusion to propose and implement measures intended to diversify the program
2. Revise the calendar descriptions to include female authors.
3. Propose a \$1000 bursary for Indigenous students entering the program with the possibility of renewal after the first year, funded by the Department.
4. Propose a \$1000 bursary for students entering the program with financial need, possibly renewable, funded by the Department.

5. Revise current course offerings with a view to incorporating more authors from under-represented minorities in philosophy.
6. Offer a course exclusively focused on a major female philosopher.
7. Organize a speaker series on Indigenous philosophy.
8. Organize a speaker series on women philosophers.
9. Ensure the Department speaker series is inclusive.
10. Hire a part-time staff member whose duties include assisting with these objectives.

**Timeline:**

1. Some curriculum changes will be submitted in fall 2021.
2. More substantial changes will be submitted in fall, 2022 for 2023 implementation.
3. Both speaker series will begin 2021-22.
4. Diversification of curriculum is ongoing.
5. Committee for Diversity and Inclusion established May 2021

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator, Curriculum Committee, Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, Speaker Series Committees.

**Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation:**  
Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

A Committee for Diversity and Inclusion was formed in 2022 and is ongoing.

Where relevant, course content and calendar descriptions were revised to include female authors in 2022.

An emergency financial assistance program was set up in 2022 and 2023 for students with demonstrated financial need.

New courses were approved in 2022 for the 2023 calendar that focus on a more diverse range of authors and issues, and a core elective in non-Greek philosophical traditions is now required in year three:

PHL 535 Introduction to Indigenous Philosophy

PHL 547 Jewish Philosophy

PHL 570 Black Political Thought (part of the Black Studies minor and will be offered in 2024-25)

If successful in procuring another hire in 2023-24, the Department has decided on a disjunctive area of specialization: Chinese or Africana philosophy

An upper level Indigenous philosophy course is being proposed for the 2023 calendar cycle.

A new course on a female philosopher was added in 2022: PHL 675: Hannah Arendt

A reconciliation committee was formed in 2022, that served as a reading group as well as the organizer of an Indigenous speaker series.

The Department also cohosts and sponsors one or two events per semester with the Society for Women of Ideas. These events promote women thinkers across the disciplines.

A Department speaker series committee has been formed as of 2023 with an equity member responsible for ensuring a diversity of speakers.

## RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Recommendation #5

**Recommendation:** Review program requirements and address curriculum gaps

**Rationale:** The Comparator Report reveals that Ryerson's Philosophy program has fewer history requirements than all the other comparison programs but one. This means students lack foundational knowledge important for more advanced philosophy courses. Other program requirements need revision, and curriculum gaps need to be filled. In a series of focus group discussions with faculty, those teaching the "Classic Readings" seminars have complained that students do not have the relevant background for these seminars, including logic (important for PHL 600). Faculty discussions have furthermore revealed an interest in exploring the possibility of a social and political requirement, as well as offering more choices in experiential learning (e.g. a course on public philosophy, philosophy through media, or practical research)

**Objective:** Review core requirements and address curriculum gaps with a view to strengthening the foundational knowledge of philosophy majors.

#### Actions:

1. Consult with faculty on whether to propose new requirements in history, logic, and social and political philosophy
2. Review all the program requirements in consultation with faculty members
3. Add dedicated required philosophy course in second year to strengthen foundational knowledge
4. Expand offerings in logic by adding an advanced course for students interested in further study
5. Explore more options in experiential learning

#### Timeline:

1. Consult with faculty members in 2021-2022.

2. Make calendar changes in fall 2022 for 2023 implementation.

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator, Curriculum Committee

**Responsibility** for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

The Department held a retreat in 2022 and formed an extended undergrad curriculum committee to carry out extensive curriculum review and revision. As a result, the requirements were revised to be more inclusive, provide more structure in the early levels, and more flexibility in the upper levels. The ongoing work of the curriculum committee has expanded to include review of course outlines, better coordination with the Chang school and CUPE instructors, and to continue to ensure diversity of course content.

The Department added or redesigned course offerings in logic, added a requirement in political philosophy or ethics and added three new core electives in level three, one in non-Western philosophy (which will be expanded with courses in Chinese and/or Africana philosophy) and the other two in continental and analytic philosophy, the two major traditions taught in the Department. These latter two core electives replace two former requirements (PHL 600 and 601), in order to offer more choices to students.

Experiential learning is no longer a requirement, but the Co-op option will meet this objective, and PHL 102 as well as PHL 700 will continue to emphasize career-readiness in course content.

The Department is continuing with curriculum revision in 2023, with plans to enhance several advanced seminars with lower enrolments in order to foster oral presentation skills and close reading of texts.

RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Recommendation #6**

**Recommendation:** Establish an alumni network

**Rationale:** It has been difficult to stay in touch with alumni of the program as alumni relations are managed centrally by a different administrative area of the University. However, alumni can and should form an important part of the broader program community and assist with enriching the experience of current students, for example by providing career mentorship. A better system for connecting with alumni could also help the department to get employer feedback.

**Objective:** Investigate how to improve connections with program alumni and build a robust alumni network. Use the alumni network to gather employer feedback before the next program review.

**Actions:**

1. Consult with the Alumni Relations department to discuss objectives of this recommendation.
2. Investigate possible platforms or services that can assist with maintaining an alumni network (for example, Discord, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
3. Consult current alumni.
4. Hire a part-time staff person who can oversee the chosen alumni platform to invite and engage with alumni.

**Timeline:** As soon as the PPR is approved with this recommendation, actions can be started. Estimated start date is late Fall 2021.

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator

**Responsibility** for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

In progress.

RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Recommendation #7**

**Recommendation:** Investigate and monitor retention data from 2021 until next PPR and strengthen recruitment efforts.

**Rationale:** The self-study would seem to suggest that the BA Philosophy program has low retention rates for any given cohort after two years of study, and especially after three years of study. However, this data does not harmonize with program headcount data that seems to show numbers

increase in the fourth year after reductions in years two and three. This may be due to program transfer students or students falling out of phase (those who take reduced course loads, fail courses or take short term leaves from their studies).

**Objective:** Investigate whether retention data is truly pointing to a trend of students prematurely leaving the program. If so, investigate reasons why and whether these are particular to the Philosophy program or attributable to general University attrition. Assess whether recommendations implemented after the PPR have an effect on retention. Students may be leaving the program for reasons of a lack of community or anxiety about the relevance of philosophy for future employment, and many of the recommendations seek to remedy these weaknesses, but these reasons need to be confirmed by the data. Consider furthering recruitment measures.

**Actions:**

1. Consider tracking graduate rates not only for four years, but five years given the percentage of part-time students in the program.
2. Attempt to collect data on why students are leaving the program.
3. Investigate why retention data does not harmonize with program headcounts numbers.
4. Monitor retention data to see if recommendations carried out as a result of this program review have a positive effect.

**Timeline:** ongoing

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair, Director and Administrator

**Responsibility** for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

In progress.

**RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**Recommendation #8**

**Recommendation:** Hire a part-time staff person

**Rationale:**

1. Given the growth in enrollment since the start of the program, the Philosophy Department has an urgent need to hire part-time administrative support. The recommendations resulting from the program review will lead to a number of initiatives including the co-op program option, launching an alumni network and a first-year fundamentals course. Without permanent staff support paid by the University it will be difficult to effectively deliver on all expectations while maintaining the same level of service.
2. The Department's need for further staff support have been evident in recent years, as part time staff have been hired on Department funds.
3. Programs in the Faculty of Arts typically get a full-time program administrator when they have reached steady state. While Philosophy was originally the smallest program in the Faculty of Arts, in recent years the program has begun admitting enough students to be comparable to other small programs in the Faculty.

**Objective:** To convert the part-time position that the Department has been hiring into a permanent part-time position built-in to the University's budget. This person would continue to support the Department as well as new initiatives created to improve the experience of students in the BA program.

**Actions:**

1. Consult with the Dean's Office on making a request to the University.
2. Write up the job responsibilities and work with HR to formalize and grade the position.
3. Post and hire the position.

**Timeline:**

1. Consult with the Dean's office over the summer of 2021.
2. Ideally, post the position for Fall of 2021 and hire by the end of 2021.

**Responsibility for leading initiative:** Philosophy Program Chair and Administrator

**Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation:**  
Department of Philosophy

**Status for one-year Follow-Up Report:**

In progress.

