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## Philosophy Department Guidelines for Five-Year Reviews

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### Overview

In anticipation of the renewed implementation of five-year reviews for faculty members whose contributions to the university have not been reviewed by a Divisional Personnel Committee for the previous five years, the Philosophy Department elected to submit the following guidelines explaining our understanding of our roles as professors and the current state of the art in the philosophical profession.

### Service and Teaching

We are teachers first and foremost, and we are all citizens of the university. Thus every professor is expected to maintain a record of high quality teaching and to contribute to the success of UH Hilo as an institution. Philosophers ought to bring their own perspectives on the goals of the institution to their service to the university, but our contributions can generally be judged by the same standards the DPC applies to professors from other departments.

We also expect to be held to the same teaching standards as the rest of the university, though we would like to add that philosophers face unique challenges in the classroom. Philosophy classes force students to ask uncomfortable questions about their heritage and personal identity that most students generally receive well but a vocal minority will always reject. Since our classes generally require a great deal of interaction between students, students sometimes express hostility to other students whose opinions they reject even though they find the instruction and course content engaging. Philosophy is also very difficult. Upper level students are mostly self-selecting and thus expect a high level of difficulty, but lower-level students sometimes feel the difficulty has been unfairly sprung upon them. Moreover, we generally do not take it as our mission to impart a body of knowledge to our students, and thus students who measure their education by the quantity of data they have added to their memories may fail to appreciate the growth in critical thinking skills that is the true goal of philosophical pedagogy. Thus while student evaluations are valuable data points, they may not always be the best measure of instructional success.

### Research and Scholarship

Philosophers create new concepts and reflect critically on both prevailing and marginalized concepts. As such, the significance of our professional work will always be difficult to understand for those who lack the time or resources to work through it. Nevertheless, no philosopher's intellectual journey is wholly private, and there are several generally accepted ways of demonstrating one's value to the philosophical community at large.

- **Books:** A full-length (i.e., greater than 75000 word) monograph in philosophy is a grand achievement and by itself constitutes more than sufficient contributions to scholarship for a five-year period. Though there remain more and less prestigious presses, the discipline has grown flatter and more fragmented in the past forty years, and thus which press

publishes a book is an unreliable indicator of its quality. But a good rule of thumb is that university presses and academic publishers like Routledge, Bloomsbury, Ashgate, Lexington, and similar presses that require peer review by scholars in the field are all likely to be worthy venues. For lesser-known presses, the author should be prepared to provide evidence that the book underwent meaningful peer review. For books, blind review is often impossible or undesirable, but the book ought to be reviewed by other professors in the field and not just the press's editors. Self-published books can also be valuable contributions to scholarship, and their cheapness can make them more accessible. In short, the mere fact that a professor published a book with an academic press is sufficient proof that she has made sufficient contributions to the discipline, whereas self-publishing calls for more evidence of the work's significance. For academic publishers, perhaps the best indicator of a book's expected impact is its cost. Those books that are listed at less than \$100 are expected to sell more copies and thus to have a greater impact on the profession. Nevertheless, more expensive books are also likely quite valuable, since they generally cover underrepresented areas in philosophy, and a publisher expects them to find a committed audience despite their high prices.

- **Journal articles:** Publication in a philosophical journal is never simply a publicizing of new discoveries that cites previous work in the field. For an article to make it into a journal, it has to reflect on the whole of human experience within a specific context while carrying on a dialogue with both contemporary and historical philosophers and in the process to say something that has never been said before in 2700 years of our greatest scholars trying to address the same problems. These articles are then reviewed by an editor who is herself an eminent philosopher and blind reviewed by 2-3 experts in the specific field whose job description entails that they like nothing more than to rip apart any argument they find. As such, even with no contributions in any of the other categories listed here, the publication of three journal articles in a five-year period would be evidence of sufficient contributions to philosophy. There is no longer a hierarchy of the "top journals" in philosophy. Some would argue that there never was, and the cachet of rags like *Mind*, *Nous*, and *The Philosophical Review* always traded on the artificial exclusion of marginalized voices, but in any event those days are gone. On the other hand, the proliferation of journals with lax editorial standards, like *The Transylvanian Journal for Really, Really Important Philosophical Research*, means not every journal publication can be accepted at face value. Thus when there is any question about the value or integrity of a journal, professors should be prepared to provide copies of the peer review reports. Negative comments within these reviews should be taken in context. We only hurt the ones we love, and philosophers only savage the arguments in which they are most interested. From an external perspective, the most relevant part of the review is whether publication was recommended.
- **Book chapters:** Articles in collected volumes undergo two rounds of review: first when the editors decide which articles to include in the volume and then when peer reviewers recommend whether to bring the entire book to print. Because review is not always blind, such chapters are not always reviewed as rigorously as journal articles. On the other hand, when a philosopher is asked to contribute to a volume or her unsolicited contribution is accepted with enthusiasm, this is generally proof that her work is already widely valued. Since a book chapter involves just as much work as a journal article and

on average is likely to be read by more people, we regard journal articles and book chapters as carrying equal weight in assessing a CV.

- **Conference presentations and invited presentations at universities:** Philosophers don't do posters. Every conference presentation is essentially a journal article shortened for public consumption. While philosophers sometimes speak extemporaneously and use graphic aids like Powerpoint and Prezi, we are still expected to have fully written versions of our presentations, many of which are distributed to all conference attendees. Philosophers are also often invited to share their research at other universities. Such presentations are generally longer than conference presentations (90 minutes of combined speaking and question time is the norm), and require more time for preparation, but they are rarely reviewed in advance and instead arise from the invited philosopher's reputation. Since conference attendees are also expected to engage other conference participants over a three-day period, we regard conference and invited presentations as approximately equally valuable. The department recommends that its members seek to publish their work for the benefit of posterity, but for the purposes of a five-year assessment of scholarly contributions, six conference or invited presentations in five years is evidence of sufficient activity.
- **Blog posts, popular works, and community presentations:** Everyone ought to have access to the world's philosophical traditions, and philosophers have a valuable role to play in making them more accessible. With the rise of the internet, we now have more power than ever to reach wide audiences, and engaging the public at large can be the best possible use of a philosopher's time. However, no philosopher is a pure disseminator of information, so philosophers who consider their primary role to be engaging the public should provide evidence that they are not simply throwing their *mana`o* off into the void, but are engaging in a meaningful conversation. Showing the size of the readership for one's blog, references to it in other sources, and so on can provide evidence to this effect, but the philosopher should also be prepared to show that she is doing original, critical work in a new forum. Articles in newspapers, magazines, and other mass media, along with chapters in books from popular presses like Open Court's Philosophy and Pop Culture series (*Philosophy and The Simpsons*, *Philosophy and Breaking Bad*, etc.), also provide evidence that the philosopher is seeking to make philosophy accessible to the public at large and thus should be considered in the five-year review, but are not quite as valuable as journal articles or chapters in academic press books.
- **Deep thought:** Some of the greatest philosophical achievements in history followed long periods of apparent inactivity. After being granted tenure in 1770, Immanuel Kant published nothing at all for eleven years until he came out with arguably the greatest work of modern philosophy in his 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ludwig Wittgenstein, whom some consider the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, published only one short book and one article in his lifetime and spent the last thirty years of his life working on his *Philosophical Investigations*, which appeared two years after his death. So absence of publication is not necessarily evidence of philosophical inactivity. Nevertheless, all UHH philosophers should welcome the five-year review as a chance to share and explain the work that they have been doing. A teaching post at a university like UHH is a tremendous privilege, and none of us should take it lightly.