

2008 Assessment Yearly Report: Psychology BA program

I. Learning Outcomes/Goals:

The department adopted the 10 goals for undergraduate education in Psychology that are promoted by the American Psychological Association. These are listed in the chart.

II. Assessment Activities:

- A. The activities used to assess outcomes are also noted in the chart. The primary focus is on course grades, as these are consistently based on outcome related academic projects such as papers, exams, etc. In addition, during Assessment Day, the department conducted focus groups with undergraduate majors and administered a psychology content knowledge exam to students at all levels of our program. The focus groups were useful in assessing students' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the program from the vantage point of lower division, junior and senior students. The content exam was intended as a "validity check" to measure the degree to which our students improve in basic psychology content knowledge throughout their time as majors in the department. In addition, we developed a new assessment technique we are evaluating. The technique involves having students rate pairs of psychological terms for their relatedness. The faculty (in this case our experts) also rate the same terms. These ratings are then transformed into a network of associations which is one way of representing the cognitive structures of each group. It is hoped that over the course of a student's education in psychology that their cognitive structures will become more like the experts. (For example, a person who understands statistics should rate a t-test and analysis of variance as highly related, while a novice should have no idea how they are connected.) It is likely that it will take several attempts to refine this procedure as the selection of appropriate terms is crucial.
- B. Benchmarks for our main goals and assessment techniques are listed in the attached chart. Benchmarks for assessment day activities have not been established yet.
- C. Focus group resulted in valuable feedback concerning both what students liked and what they'd like to see improved. In general they see our faculty as a strength and appreciate our availability; they like as much variability in course offerings as possible, and particularly value applied experiences such as our field practicum courses.

The instrument used on Assessment Day demonstrated (thankfully) that our upper division majors were more knowledgeable about basic psychology content than were lower division students, with the results being as hoped (sophomores higher than freshman, juniors over sophs, seniors over juniors). However, the sample of test takers we get on assessment day is small and perhaps biased towards our better students. We hope to be able to obtain larger samples in the future.

- D. A recurring theme in student feedback is that they perceive career oriented advising as a relative weakness of the program. To address this concern we are planning to require a mandatory advising session for juniors and/or seniors. This session may be a prerequisite in order to register for a capstone course. In addition, we are trying to develop a procedure to offer a 1 credit course in our

inventory called “Careers in PSY” that has not been offered in several years because of the difficulty of working it into faculty schedules. One possibility is for a doctoral student TA to be trained to offer several sections of that class per term. In addition, based on an analysis of our current major requirements, faculty teaching strengths, and the need for flexibility in scheduling, we have realigned our courses into new categories for meeting our major requirements. We will likely administer the same instruments again, and perhaps have focus groups with majors during assessment day. Our faculty remains concerned about students’ writing skills and limited opportunities to be involved in learning research methodologies. We are discussing ways to focus upon these areas within required courses in our major sequence via such possible changes as adding a lab to our experimental psychology and statistics classes and integrating the two courses. In addition, we have agreed to a revised set of basic requirements for all capstone options (e.g. data based, integration of material from prior courses, written and oral presentation).

- III. Assistance needed- One of our most urgent current needs is additional space for research. With our growing emphasis on research and goal to give more students research opportunities we have run into continual scheduling conflicts for the limited space we have.
- IV. In a large program such as ours, it difficult to do as thorough a job as we’d like to do regarding program level assessment. There is no nationwide undergraduate exam that is appropriately flexible (given the wide variety of curricula at the undergrad level) or widely accepted, the costs of developing such an exam are prohibitive, the behaviors involved in some of our outcomes are extremely difficult to measure, and the competing demands on faculty and staff time are intense. Given this, we are reasonably pleased with the progress we are making in our program assessment process. Our combination of course level outcome assessments, focus groups, and various instruments used on assessment day over the last several years have given us good data on student learning and perceptions. Further, our faculty is continually reflecting on the program curriculum and, with recent changes in our department makeup we plan to consider a number of programmatic changes and course additions.

Marshall University
Assessment of Student Outcomes: Component/Course/Program Level

Component Area/Program/Discipline:

Component / Course / Program Level					
Student Outcome	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
<p>1. Knowledge Base of Psychology</p> <p>Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in Psychology</p>	<p>Capstone Options</p> <p>(a) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 460 (History and Systems)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 470-71 (Practicum; I/O/Clinical Psych)</p> <p>(d) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 460 Historical Review Paper</p> <p>Psy 470-71 (Practicum Experience)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Assessment Day content exam</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (Psy 456-57; Psy 499), the Historical Review Paper (Psy 460), and/or the Practicum (Psy 470-71) demonstrates student competence with respect to familiarity with major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in Psychology</p>	<p>NOTE: for all COURSES noted in these analyses, final grades are based on academic competence only, and not on attendance, etc)</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>8 students completed Psy 460 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>3 students completed Psy 470-71 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>Assessment Day content exam: results as expected; seniors scored higher than juniors, who were higher than sophomores and freshman.</p>	<p>As noted in the text accompanying the chart, we have instituted a modification to our major requirements increasing by one the number of required courses within the 33 major hours, and reorganizing categories from which students select courses to meet requirements to make them more clear to students and more coherent in terms of exposing students to the core areas of the discipline.</p>

<p>2. Research Methods in Psychology</p> <p>Understand and apply basic research methods in Psychology, including research design, data analysis, & interpretation</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (paper, poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in basic research methods and statistical analysis and interpretation</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>10 Psychology students were chosen to present their research at the 2008 Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol event</p> <p>Over 10 (exact number not available) students presented research at local/regional conferences)</p> <p>Upper division students demonstrated better understanding of statistics than lower division students</p>	<p>Ongoing discussions about how to add a lab experience to PSY 323.</p> <p>Department faculty instituted a revised set of core requirements for all capstone options clarifying the nature of requirements (e.g. data based, integration of material from prior courses, written and oral presentation)</p>
<p>3. Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology</p> <p>Respect and use of critical thinking, skeptical inquiry and when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student Performance on the Research Project (paper poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in ability to critically evaluate scientific evidence and to employ a variety of problem- solving approaches to test research questions about behavior and mental processes</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>Upper division students demonstrated better critical thinking skills than lower division students as evidenced by research design and data interpretation in capstone courses.</p>	<p>Ongoing discussions about how to add a lab experience to PSY 323</p> <p>Department faculty instituted a revised set of core requirements for all capstone options clarifying the nature of requirements (e.g. data based, integration of material from prior courses, written and oral presentation)</p>

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<p>4. Application of Psychology</p> <p>Understand and apply Psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 470-71 (Practicum; I/O/Clinical Psych)</p> <p>(d) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 470-71 (Practicum Experience)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (paper poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in ability to apply Psychology to test research questions/hypotheses in both lab and real world settings</p> <p>Evaluation of student performance by on-site practicum supervisors demonstrates students ability to apply Psych to employment-related assignments</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>3 students completed Psy 470/471 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p>	<p>Our undergraduate field practicum courses remain popular; we are in the early stages of discussing how to expand these offerings to include more students and in more types of sites than is currently possible.</p> <p>Faculty have encouraged students to be involved in applied research and consulting projects in the local community</p>
<p>5. Values in Psychology</p> <p>Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the under-pinnings of Psychology as a science</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 470-71 (Practicum; I/O/Clinical Psych)</p> <p>(d) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 470-71 (Practicum Experience)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (paper poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in doing research according to the ethical guidelines established by the APA</p> <p>Evaluation of student performance by on-site practicum supervisors demonstrates students ability to complete employment-related assignments in an ethical and competent manner</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>3 students completed Psy 470/471 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p>	<p>All students serving as student researchers, co-investigators, or research staff for faculty research projects must complete mandatory IRB training modules in the ethical treatment of research participants and the role that ethics play in the relationship between science and society</p>

<p>6. Information and Technological Literacy</p> <p>Demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers & other technology for many purposes</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (paper poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in use of computers/technology (e.g., word processing; Internet; PowerPoint; search engines; SPSS/ EXCEL for statistical analysis and creation of figures, graphs, tables)</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p>	<p>Students in Psy 323, 456-57, and 499 are required to present their Research Projects. The majority of the projects require technology to create the presentations</p>
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<p>7. Communication Skills</p> <p>Communicate effectively in a variety of formats</p>	<p>(a) Instructors for Psy 323 (Experimental Psychology)</p> <p>(b) Instructors for Psy 456-57 (Research in Psychology)</p> <p>(c) Instructors for Psy 499 (Capstone Seminar)</p>	<p>Psy 323 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 456-57 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p> <p>Psy 499 Research Project (APA paper, poster, presentation)</p>	<p>Evaluation of student performance on the Research Project (paper, poster, presentation) demonstrates student competence in written and oral communication skills and demonstrates an ability to effectively communicate with the target audience (class, journal, conference)</p>	<p>128 students completed Psy 323 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>32 students completed Psy 456-57 during the 2008 academic year</p> <p>68 students completed Psy 499 during the 2008 academic year</p>	<p>Department encourages students to present their research work (papers, posters presentations) at local, regional, and national conferences</p> <p>Department discussed making student writing key learning objective throughout the undergraduate curriculum</p>
<p>8. Sociocultural and International Awareness</p> <p>Recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity</p>	<p>All Full-time and Part-time faculty in the Department of Psychology ;</p> <p>Instructor for PSY 426 (Cross Cultural Psychology)</p> <p>Instructor for PSY 480: SP TOP Race and Culture in Developmental Processes</p> <p>Instructor for PSY 481 SP TOP Psy of Women</p> <p>Instructor for PSY 480 SP TOP: Psy of Gender</p>	<p>Papers and projects in PSY 426</p>	<p>Performance on papers and projects in PSY 426 demonstrates knowledge of cultural variability in human behavior and social/cultural influences on development</p>	<p>29 students completed PSY 426 in 2008</p> <p>63 students completed PSY 480/481 (Race and Culture) in 2008</p> <p>22 students completed PSY 481 (Psy of Women) in 2008</p> <p>23 students completed PSY 481 (Psy of Gender) in 2008.</p>	<p>To strengthen curriculum in this area department developed and offered courses in Psychology of Womem (fall 2007) and Psychology of Gender (spring 2008) Race and Culture in Development (Fall 2007). These will be offered again and will be considered for permanent addition to the PSY course offerings.</p>

<p>9. Personal Development</p> <p>Develop insights into one's own and others' behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement</p>	<p>All Full-time and Part-time faculty in the Department of Psychology</p>	<p>2006 administration of Senior Psychology Major Questionnaire (Dimension 9; items 81-90)</p>		<p>Senior Psychology Questionnaire: 28 graduating senior majors completed it in 2006; mean score on this dimension was 7.96 out of 10</p> <p>(NOTE- this is most recent data on this dimension; we did not administer the questionnaire this past year)</p>	<p>This (like all outcomes noted here) comes from a list developed by APA. We, as of yet, have not adequately developed valid and ethically appropriate methods to evaluate this dimension for our majors other than through the senior questionnaire that we periodically administer-that is of limited value in isolation and we did not administer it this past year. Personal development, by its nature, is not subject to typical academic assessment and we are still trying to identify useful and ethically appropriate approaches to assessment on this dimension.</p>
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<p>10. Career Planning and Development</p> <p>Pursue realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings</p>	<p>All Full-time faculty in the Department of Psychology with student advising responsibilities</p> <p>Faculty with practicum supervision responsibilities</p>	<p>2006 administration of Senior Psychology Major questionnaire</p> <p>Student Evaluation of Undergraduate Practicum Experience Instrument</p>	<p>Advising sessions with Psychology faculty provide students with information about the educational/employment opportunities available within Psychology and help students develop realistic educational/employment goals</p> <p>PSY 470-471 Practicum experience provides students with a realistic preview of their chosen field of interest and provides students an opportunity to gain practical experience, acquire new knowledge, and develop new skills</p>	<p>Psychology faculty provided academic/career advising to over 430 Psychology majors</p> <p>3 students completed the undergraduate practicum during the Spring 2008 semester; student evaluations were very positive in terms of placements and experience gained</p>	<p>Assessment day focus groups indicated that seniors saw advising as addressing academic issues (courses, requirements) almost exclusively; department is attempting to require an advising session to enroll in a capstone.</p> <p>Psi Chi & Psychology Club sponsor Psych Awareness week which contains presentations to undergraduate majors by informed faculty and doctoral students on various fields of advanced study within Psychology, graduate school options and career opportunities.</p>