

Program Assessment Plan
 American University
 Academic Program: CAS: Psychology - BA

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Contact Person for Anthony L. Riley

Assessment:

Unit Website Address: www.american.edu/cas/psychology

Unit's Primary Department: Psychology

COLA Reader -1: Rachel Borchardt

COLA Reader -2: Brian Yates

Learning Outcome: Basic Foundations

Competency in the basic foundations of the field, e.g., concepts, principles, theories and research findings.

Outcome Year: 2011-2012

Outcome Status: Archived Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Student scores on a 57 item Psychology test based on questions from the GRE Psychology test preparation guide. Measure Type Multiple Choice Test Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	Students should be able to correctly answer 65% of the questions demonstrating their knowledge of general psychology.	This test is more balanced over twelve areas of Psychology than was the 50 item test used in the last few years. We had looked into commercially available Psychology tests but found they were prohibitively expensive (\$20 -25 per test).	Yes
As in prior years, we will continue to assess general competency in the field of Psychology. Instead of using our past test, i.e., subset of questions from the GRE Psychology exam, we have obtained a commercially available 140 item comprehensive test "The Major Test for Psychology" for undergraduate learning in Psychology. This test will be administered to senior Psychology majors. As in past assessments, we will obtain an overall grade as well as perform an item analysis which should provide information as to general and specific competencies of our majors. There are several important changes in this proposed assessment: 1) This is an objective test that is used generally in a number of institutions. It is constructed in a way that more objectively samples the field and should provide a more comprehensive sample of our students' specific and general competencies. In fact, the tests are sent to Educational Testing Services, and summaries are returned to the department with overall percentages and specific scores on individual sub-tests. 2) We will be informing our entering majors that this assessment will be given at the end of their senior year. One difficulty that we have had is getting students to take the exam. Their first introduction to it is when we hand it to them. Notifying them earlier that this is part of their major and is expected to be taken should provide us with a larger sample of students from which to make conclusions regarding competencies. 3) We will be holding a general session at which the test will be given. In the past, we have given professors the exam to distribute to seniors in their classes. A common test day will be organized (around a general Psychology function). Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	Our aim is to have our students perform 80% or better on the overall exam. The goal, however, is less an overall passing grade than to gain information on the topical areas students have deficits.	Annual, a common test day will be organized for seniors around a general Psychology function.	No

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>This is less an assessment of specific goals as opposed to the general perception of our program meeting expectations and its success in appropriate placement.</p> <p>We will attempt this year to gain information on the student's perception of our program, both in terms of general satisfaction and whether they feel that the program has prepared them for their post-graduate plans. Specifically, a questionnaire will be developed for psychology majors asking them to anonymously evaluate the Department (as noted above) and offer suggestions how their education could be improved. Questions such as the following will be asked: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Department? What should be emphasized more? Less? Is the Department preparing you well for a career in Psychology, etc?</p> <p>The purpose of this measure is to determine whether we are doing what we want to do from the student's perspective and whether students are obtaining Psychology-related work (from eventual placement in the field).</p> <p>This is an attempt to determine how the students perceive the program in terms of meeting their academic and professional goals. If we can determine what aspects of the program are perceived as weak or deficient, we can work to remedy the concern.</p> <p>Tracking post-graduate placement will allow us to determine what percent of our students are able to continue in their area of study.</p> <p>Measure Type: Survey</p>	No target identified.	<p>We will collect data at specific meetings at the end of the school year through a special gathering of all of our graduating seniors. We will maintain this data and track the success of the program and its placements for an eventual report to the department council.</p> <p>Depending upon the specific outcome of our assessments, we will meet as a council to discuss strategies for changes in our curriculum, advising and means of communication of our program and its options to the students. Part of this academic year will be spent working on the language and details of our specific surveys.</p>	Yes

Related Action Steps

* Supporting Assessment: Exit Exam

Description: Exit Exam Data will be compared with prior years

* Supporting Assessment: Revised Satisfaction Survey

Description: With several new liker scales based on 4/12 feedback.

Learning Outcome: General Knowledge of Psychology

Competency in the basic foundations of the field, e.g., concepts, principles, theories and research findings.

Outcome Year: 2011-2012

2012-2013

Outcome Status: Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>Student scores on a 57 item Psychology test based on questions from the GRE Psychology test preparation guide.</p> <p>This test is more balanced over twelve areas of Psychology than was the 50 item test used in the last few years. We had looked into commercially available Psychology tests but found they were prohibitively expensive (\$20-25 per test).</p> <p>Measure Type</p> <p>Multiple Choice Test</p> <p>Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam</p>	<p>Our target is that all majors should be able to pass this competency exam (i.e., score a minimum of 65%).</p>	annually	Yes

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
In 2012, 40 students took a 57 question exam and achieved a mean score of 61.8% with a range of 14 to 52 out of 57 questions right. Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	A score of 65% across questions that measured competence in the different areas of psychology.	annually.	Yes

Learning Outcome: Ethical Issues

Competency in the ethical issues in the field (both research and applied).

Outcome Year: 2010-2011
2011-2012
2012-2013

Outcome Status: Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
The National Institutes of Health web based test on ethics. The test can be taken until passed. Assessment measure: Pass rate on the NIH test. In order to pass any one of our three research courses, students must present their professor with a certificate indicating that they have passed the test. Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	All students should be able to pass a standard research ethics test.	ongoing	Yes
All students while enrolled in PSYC-301 will complete the National Institute of Health web-based seminar on ethics and take the standardized test related to its content. The test can be taken until it is passed and completion of the course is contingent on passing the ethics exam. As in the past, our administrative assistant, Lefteris Hazapis, will ensure that each major has the appropriate training. We will also be examining other ways to assess this competency, e.g., 1-credit of seminar in research and applied ethics. Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	All students must pass the web-based training program and submit a certificate to the department.	No schedule identified.	No
The National Institute of Health (NIH) and/or the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) web based ethics test. If a student fails the test it can be retaken until it is passed. Passing this test is required in all three of our research courses. No better tests were found to replace the NIH/CITI tests. Measure Type: Quiz/ Exam	All students should be able to pass this ethics test (s).	ongoing.	Yes

Learning Outcome: Research Methodology

Competency of basic research methodology, i.e., conducting and interpreting research.

Outcome Year: 2009-2010
2010-2011
2011-2012
2012-2013

Outcome Status: Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan

Assessment Plan

Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>Student scores on an assignment to analyze and critique an experiment as reported in a journal article (see Appendix 2).</p> <p>Measure type Written review</p> <p>Students in PSYC-301, the basic research course required for all majors, were asked to read a research article "The Effect of a Cognitive Behavioral Exercise Intervention on Clinical Depression in a Multiethnic Sample of Women with Breast Cancer: A Randomized Controlled Trial." They were then asked the following questions and issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is the research question? What is the rationale for this research? 2) What were the Hypothesis? Were any theories used to suggest the hypothesis? 3) What were they? 4) What was the research methodology used? 5) Was the methodology appropriate to address the issues under investigation? 6) Was the study a written analysis or between subjects? 7) Identify the independent variable. Identify the dependent variable. 8) Describe one of the measures used and its psychometric qualities. 9) Describe the analysis of the data. 10) What was the significance level used? 11) What did the study find? 12) Describe threats to internal validity. <p>Measure Type: Written Assignment</p>	<p>Students ability to critique a research paper. Students should get 75% correct in the questions pertaining to the research article.</p>	<p>annually.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Students in PSYC-301, the basic research course required for all majors, will again be given a research paper to evaluate. They will be asked the following questions from the article:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Describe the research issue under investigation. 2) Describe the specific research methodology utilized in the research and how it addressed the issue under investigation. They will also be asked to identify specific strengths and weaknesses of the work. 3) Describe the analysis of the results (i.e., how the data were collected and analyzed). 4) Describe the interpretation of the results in light of the original hypothesis. <p>Generate a research question of your own that extends the original one posed in the paper and provide a research methodology to answer the question. (This latter exercise allows students to design their own research project. It's conduct is not practical given the number of students in the class; however, their understanding of basic research will be revealed through this.)</p> <p>The difference this year will be our assessment rubric. We have been able to obtain several very strong assessment tools from other universities that also require a similar type of assessment. This year, we will be going over these rubrics and developing one of our own that provides a more objective and thorough evaluation of research competencies.</p> <p>We will also be evaluating papers for reviews that more closely parallel student interests. When students declare a major in</p>	<p>Eighty percent of the students will be expected to be able to identify the hypothesis, research design, dependent and independent variables, kind of statistics used and research findings.</p>	<p>The direct measure for this exercise will be performed by the instructor in the class (PSYC-301) and will be reviewed by the undergraduate curriculum committee at the end of each term. The measure will be repeated each semester as an assignment in this class. Each semester, the results will be used to inform the future teaching of research in the Department, i.e., where are we doing well, where do we need to change.</p> <p>The differe</p>	<p>No</p>

Assessment Plan

Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>Psychology, we will be giving a brief survey that attempts to assess their intended interest in Psychology. This is to more appropriately pair the student with a faculty member in their area of interest. We will use this information to provide papers in the student's area.</p> <p>Measure Type: Written Assignment</p>			
<p>This is less an assessment of specific goals as opposed to the general perception of our program meeting expectations and its success in appropriate placement.</p> <p>We will attempt this year to gain information on the student's perception of our program, both in terms of general satisfaction and whether they feel that the program has prepared them for their post-graduate plans. Specifically, a questionnaire will be developed for psychology majors asking them to anonymously evaluate the Department (as noted above) and offer suggestions how their education could be improved. Questions such as the following will be asked: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Department? What should be emphasized more? Less? Is the Department preparing you well for a career in Psychology, etc?</p> <p>The purpose of this measure is to determine whether we are doing what we want to do from the student's perspective and whether students are obtaining Psychology-related work (from eventual placement in the field).</p> <p>This is an attempt to determine how the students perceive the program in terms of meeting their academic and professional goals. Recent work nationally has revealed that Psychology majors (at the end of their programs) rate their satisfaction with the program the lowest among all majors. If we can determine what aspects of the program are perceived as weak or deficient, we can work to remedy the concern.</p> <p>Tracking post-graduate placement will allow us to determine what percent of our students are able to continue in their area of study.</p> <p>Measure Type: Survey</p>	No target identified.	<p>We will collect data at specific meetings at the end of the school year through a special gathering of all of our graduating senior. We will maintain this data and track the success of the program and its placements for an eventual report to the department council.</p> <p>Depending upon the specific outcome of our assessments, we will meet as a council to discuss strategies for changes in our curriculum, advising and means of communication of our program and its options to the students. Part of this academic year will be spent working on the language and details of our specific surveys.</p>	No
<p>As part of a class assignment in PSYC-301 (Research Methods in Psychology), 20 undergraduates were asked to critique a journal article reporting the results of a psychology experiment. Each student chose the article that they read and critiqued. They were instructed to apply what they had learned over the course of the semester. A ten-point grading rubric was used to evaluate students' critiques. Each item was scored as ?Good., ?Acceptable, or Poor. This rubric is reproduced below and the percentage of students scoring Acceptable or Good is provided for each item.</p> <p>Measure Type: Written Assignment</p>	Students ability to critique a research paper. Students should get 75% correct in the questions pertaining to the research article.	annually.	Yes

Related Courses

- PSYC-301 - Research Methods in Psychology

Learning Outcome: Satisfaction with the Psychology major

Improved results of the Psychology Department Satisfaction Survey

Outcome Year: 2011-2012

Outcome Status: Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>A questionnaire was designed with six rating scales and two open ended questions (see Appendix 3). Twenty four graduating Psychology majors were asked to complete the questionnaire. They were asked to rate the following on a 7 point scale (courses, faculty, career preparation, basic foundation, research methodology, ethical issues). Students also answered two open ended questions: What did you like about being a psychology major and what did you not like about being a psychology major. Students were encouraged to give three answers to each question.</p> <p>Measure Type: Survey</p>	<p>We should see yearly improvement in satisfaction with the department and the major (as indexed by higher score on the survey) and directed feedback on open-ended questions about the department.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>This is less an assessment of specific goals as opposed to the general perception of our program meeting expectations and its success in appropriate placement.</p> <p>We will attempt this year to gain information on the student's perception of our program, both in terms of general satisfaction and whether they feel that the program has prepared them for their post-graduate plans. Specifically, a questionnaire will be developed for psychology majors asking them to anonymously evaluate the Department (as noted above) and offer suggestions how their education could be improved. Questions such as the following will be asked: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Department? What should be emphasized more? Less? Is the Department preparing you well for a career in Psychology, etc?</p> <p>The purpose of this measure is to determine whether we are doing what we want to do from the student's perspective and whether students are obtaining Psychology-related work (from eventual placement in the field).</p> <p>This is an attempt to determine how the students perceive the program in terms of meeting their academic and professional goals. Recent work nationally has revealed that Psychology majors (at the end of their programs) rate their satisfaction with the program the lowest among all majors. If we can determine what aspects of the program are perceived as weak or deficient, we can work to remedy the concern.</p> <p>Tracking post-graduate placement will allow us to determine what percent of our students are able to continue in their area of study.</p> <p>Measure Type: Survey</p>	<p>No target identified.</p>	<p>We will collect data at specific meetings at the end of the school year through a special gathering of all of our graduating senior. We will maintain this data and track the success of the program and its placements for an eventual report to the department council.</p> <p>Depending upon the specific outcome of our assessments, we will meet as a council to discuss strategies for changes in our curriculum, advising and means of communication of our program and its options to the students. Part of this academic year will be spent working on the language and details of our specific surveys.</p>	<p>No</p>

Related Action Steps

* Supporting Assessment: Satisfaction Survey

Description: Forty graduating Psychology majors were asked to evaluate the Psychology major in six areas (courses, faculty, preparation for career, basic foundations, research methodology and ethics) on a seven point scale (See satisfaction survey in Documents).

Learning Outcome: Application of Psychological Knowledge in Labs and Internships

Increase student participation in Labs (PSYC-490) and Internships (PSYC-491)
The number of students in these courses will be compared with those enrolled in prior semesters.

Outcome Year: 2012-2013

Outcome Status: Active Program Outcome

Assessment Plan

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Enrollments in PSYC-490 and PSYC-491 will be monitored, and students will be encouraged to enroll in research projects in labs and internships. Measure Type: Other	10% increase from the prior year	annually.	Yes

Related Action Steps

* Supporting Assessment: tracking

Description: In this past academic year, a total of 47 students enrolled in PSYC - 490 (29) and PSYC - 491 (18). This represents 31.5% of our majors (149). We will revise and extend the lists of clinical and research placements and encourage students to join labs or take internship placements via faculty advising and undergraduate panels and speaker events. Our aim is to increase overall participation in these experiences each year.

Learning Outcome: Honors Level Research with Capstone Project

Increase student participation in honors courses and programs.

The number of students in honors will be compared with those enrolled in honors in past semesters.

Outcome Year: 2012-2013

Outcome Status: Active Program Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Enrollments in Honors (HNRS-) courses will be monitored and students will be encouraged to enroll in these courses. Measure Type: Other	10% increase from the prior year	annually.	Yes

Related Courses

- PSYC-301 - Research Methods in Psychology

Related Action Steps

* Supporting Assessment: tracking.

Description: In the last academic year, we had a total of 47 Psychology majors in the Honors Program. Of that number, five were involved in Capstone projects in the department. In cooperation with the Honors Program, we will encourage students to take Honors Program courses in Psychology and complete a capstone project in the department. This will be done through an active involvement of our Honors coordinator with the student and advisers and the Honors Program.