

SUNY Potsdam
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan - Psychology

Department Name: Psychology

Date Submitted and Academic Year: 1/10/11 (2011-12)

Department Mission Statement:

"The SUNY Potsdam Psychology Department is firmly committed to providing a broad, liberal-arts education for its majors. This involves teaching and mentoring activities that foster a basic understanding of research methods and psychological theory as well as exposure to a variety of areas and perspectives in the field of psychology. All four of Boyer's forms of scholarship are valued, though two of them in particular reflect the primary mission of the psychology department: teaching and discovery. Our majors should be able to critically evaluate psychological problems and realize that scientific inquiry is a dynamic and evolving process. Our faculty members see themselves first and foremost as teachers. It is hoped that a rigorous and diverse set of core courses, a carefully-chosen selection of elective courses, an honors program, internship experiences, independent studies, seminars, interdisciplinary programming, and involvement in faculty research projects will equip our students with the intellectual, theoretical and applied skills necessary for advanced study or career opportunities in the field of psychology. Members of the faculty are also encouraged to engage the discipline beyond the classroom--through research, community service, discipline-related consulting, and as resources for the media and other community groups."

Department Assessment Coordinator: Rick Williams

Update on prior years' Application of Assessment Results:

2010-2011 Results Summary:

We were very happy with our outcome data this year. Highlights include:

- 1) We had data from 261 students.
- 2) We improved the percentage did not meet expectations for research methods (including APA style)
- 3) We showed a good percentage of students meeting expectations in all areas measured.
- 4) We added student outcomes on more syllabi.
- 5). We decided to add measures of where our students go after graduation.
- 6). We planned a way to separate outcome measures 1 and 2.

Please see the 2010-2011 Assessment Report for additional details.

Our 2011-2012 Plan

I. *Intended Student Learning Outcome #1*

Psychology students will have the capacity to read, understand, evaluate, and engage psychological theories and research.

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Connection to University/Dept Mission

We believe that our majors should be able to critically evaluate the psychological problems that are addressed by theory and research. With regard to the campus mission, we believe that psychological theories and research are a fundamental part of a liberal arts education. This is also reflected in the SA Gen Ed designator classes that are listed below.

Links with other programs/departments

- *Gen Ed Component*
Three courses within the major carry the SA Gen Ed designator: PSYC 100 Introduction to Psychology, PSYC 220 Child Development (and also the Honors section of PSYC 220) and PSYC 321 Psychology of Adolescence. These courses are taken by many students in Education, Crane, and from other departments in Arts & Sciences, as well as by psychology students.

- *Related Courses*
STAT 100 (MATH 125) Introduction to Statistics is a required cognate course for all psychology students. Students are required to have completed this course before taking PSYC 300 Research Methods. Students must have an initial familiarity with statistical concepts in order to successfully complete the methods course. The evaluation of research relies heavily on an understanding of the statistical analyses that play a fundamental role in psychology research.

Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)

Given the theoretical and empirical foundation of psychology, nearly all of the classes we teach have a substantial focus on psychological theory and research. This list includes: PSYC 100, 220, 300, 320, 321, 322, 330, 340, 350, 361, 364, 370, 375, 376, 377, 381, 383, 384, 385, 386, 390, 400, 493, and 494.

Data Source/Results & Analysis

The data sources for this learning outcome are: (A) the term paper assessment, (B) the senior exam, and (C) the research methods assessment.

A. Term Papers

The term paper assessment includes an evaluation of all four student-learning outcomes:

1. Psychology students will have the capacity to read, understand, evaluate, and engage psychological theories & research

2. Psychology students will be familiar with multiple theoretical schools of thought in the field, both past and current.

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3. Psychology students will be able to communicate their analyses of this material in an effective fashion, be it oral or written.

4. Psychology students will be able to use APA style in their writing.

Included in this analysis will be the following courses: Theories of Personality, Research Methods, Learning & Memory, Cognitive, Counseling Theories & Methods, History of Psychology, Social Seminar, Animal Behavior, & Honors Seminar.

B. The Senior Exam will be given to graduating seniors who volunteer to take the exam. The mean number of correct items (out of ten questions) by course (example, Child Development, Social, etc.) will be compared the mean score for students who have or have not taken the course.

C. Research Methods

We will give pre- and post-tests to methods students this year to assess prior knowledge (of APA style and research methods concepts) and learning (at the end of the semester).

II. Intended Student Learning Outcome #2

Psychology students will be familiar with multiple theoretical schools of thought in the field, both past and current.

Connection to University/Dept Mission

The connection between this learning outcome and the department mission statement is clear. In it, we state directly that a central part of our mission is to teach these concepts to our students, both in the classroom and beyond its confines. With regard to the campus mission, we believe that psychological theories and research are a fundamental part of a liberal arts education.

Links with other programs/departments

- *Gen Ed Component*
N/A
- *Related Courses*
N/A

Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)

The following courses cover various schools of thought in the field of psychology: PSYC 100, 220, 320, 321, 350, 364, 370, 375, and 400.

This student-learning outcome is assessed via the term paper assessment report, as well as by the senior exam.

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III. Intended Student Learning Outcome #3

Psychology students will be able to communicate their analyses of this material in an effective fashion, be it oral or written.

Connection to University/Dept Mission

Although it is not explicitly stated in the department's mission statement, students' ability to communicate their analyses of the material they have learned in their classes is crucial to their success in the field. Many of our courses involve a written or spoken component. With regard to the campus mission statement, we believe that effective communication skills are a central part of all academic programs.

Links with other programs/departments

- *Gen Ed Component*
- Three courses in the major carry Gen Ed designators that are relevant to this student-learning outcome. PSYC 300 Research Methods carries a WI designator. PSYC 320 Advanced Child Development, PSYC 493 Psychology Seminar (Stillwell's section) and PSYC 494 Honors Seminar all carry the SI designator.

- *Related Courses*
N/A

Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)

Our courses that involve either written or oral communication as part of the requirements are: PSYC 300, 320, 340, 364, 370, 380, 390, 400, 493, and 494. We measure this outcome with the term paper assessment. We will assess Oral communication by examining the two seminar courses.

IV. Intended Student Learning Outcome #4

Psychology students will be able to effectively use APA style in their writing.

Connection to University/Dept Mission

Although it is not explicitly stated in the department's mission statement, students' ability to use APA style effectively is crucial to their success as psychology majors. Many of our courses include instruction in APA style as part of their content and require students to make use of APA style in their writing. With regard to the campus mission statement, although APA style is, for the most part, discipline specific, effective communication skills are a central part of all academic programs.

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Links with other programs/departments

- *Gen Ed Component/Related Courses* N/A

Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)

The courses that include assignments involving the effective use of APA style are: PSYC 300, 364, 370, 375, 390, 400, 493, 494, and 496.

Data Source/Results & Analysis

We will examine the APA style questions from the Research Methods courses both early in the semester (Pre) and at the end of the semester (Post).

<i>Summary of Action Plans for upcoming Academic Year 2011-2012</i>
1. Add learning criteria on more psychology syllabi
2. Include a separate measure of schools of thought from Theories of Personality
3. Include a measure of where our graduates are going