

Department of Psychology  
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology  
Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes  
The University of New Mexico

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**A. College, Department and Date**

1. College: *College of Arts & Science*
2. Department: *Department of Psychology*
3. Date: *September 23, 2008*

**B. Academic Program of Study**

*B.A. Psychology*

**C. Contact Persons for the Assessment Plan**

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**D. Broad Program Goals & Measurable Student Learning Outcomes**

**1. Broad Program Learning Goals for this Degree Program**

The broad mission of the Department of Psychology is the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. From the perspective of any psychology department, the knowledge being sought concerns the individual organism, and most typically the behavior of the individual person. Our broad learning goals for the undergraduate degree reflect this mission.

- A. Students will develop an understanding of empirically known factors that underlie, shape, and sustain their individual sense of self and their relationships to others.
- B. Students will develop a conceptual understanding of important behavioral principles, theories, and applications.
- C. Students will recognize and understand principles of scientific and critical thinking and be able to appreciate how this knowledge applies to their lives.
- D. Students will become clear and effective communicators.

**2. List of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for this Degree Program**

- A.1. Students can identify how we become aware of ourselves, how we learn to interact with others, and how we influence others and how they influence us.
- B.1. Students can identify how psychologists study human behavior and how this knowledge can be used to explain, predict, and influence behavior.
- C.1. Students identify and critically evaluate psychological research methods.
- C.2. Students analyze empirical data.
- C.3. Students assess the significance and importance of research reports.
- D.1. Students communicate clearly and effectively in a written format.

## E. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan

### 1. **Priority Student Learning Outcomes**

Over the next three years (2008-2011), the Department of Psychology will assess all of the learning outcomes listed above. These program outcomes are responsive to UNM's broad student learning goals, as shown in the following table.

<b>University of New Mexico Student Learning Goals</b>				
<b>Program SLOs</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Program SLO is conceptually different from university goals.</b>
A.1. Students can identify how we become aware of ourselves, how we learn to interact with others, and how we influence others and how they influence us.	X		X	
B.1. Students can identify how psychologists study human behavior and how this knowledge can be used to explain, predict, and influence behavior.	X		X	
C.1. Students identify and critically evaluate psychological research methods.	X	X	X	
C.2. Students analyze empirical data.	X	X	X	
C.3. Students assess the significance and importance of research reports.	X	X	X	
D.1. Students communicate clearly and effectively in a written format.		X	X	

### 2. **How will learning outcomes be assessed?**

Learning outcomes will be assessed using a variety of measures that collect evidence of learning from students beginning with a Pretest in their first course in Psychology (PSY 105) and finally with a Posttest at a time near the end of their course of studies in Psychology (after 27 hours of coursework out of a total requirement of 35 hours for the degree, which will require a catalog change; for AY 2008/09, however, the exam will be given near the end of PSY 302). These measures are described fully below.

#### **MEASUREMENT PROCESSES #1 & #2**

##### **Outcomes:**

- A.1. Students can identify how we become aware of ourselves, how we learn to interact with others, and how we influence others and how they influence us.
- B.1. Students can identify how psychologists study human behavior and how this knowledge can be used to explain, predict, and influence behavior.

##### **Measurement Process:**

- i. The large number of Psychology majors combined with the relatively small number of FTEs available for teaching and evaluation leads us to favor an outcome assessment based in part on evaluation of student performance on a comprehensive multiple-choice exam given to all Psychology majors.

We have used the ETS Major Field Test in Psychology to compare a modest sample of upper division students to a few first-year students who had completed PSY 105. In general, the more courses an upper division student had taken the better he or she performed on the Test. Moreover, the more courses a student had taken in a given area, the better the student performed on the pertinent Test subscale.

Using the ACT and SAT percentiles of these students as a baseline, the mean percentile on these college boards for these advanced students was the 70th percentile on their college boards. Assuming the college boards and the Major Field test have a bivariate normal distribution, the predicted mean percentile, given

the correlation of .34 between the ACT and the Major Field test, would be a score at the 64th percentile, which is very close to what was observed on the Major Field test.

The ETS Major Field subscales overlap with the Department's major study requirements. The Department's major study requirements will serve as the substrate for our student-learning objectives (SLOs). The requirements are:

General and Quantitative Psychology  
Developmental Psychology  
Clinical/Personality Psychology  
Behavioral neuroscience/Brain-behavior relations  
Psychology of Learning and Cognition  
Social Psychology

At present, the Department cannot afford to pay the cost of the ETS Exam (\$25 per student). Short of passing the cost to the student, we instead will use our own Undergraduate Comprehensive Exam. Professor Harold Delaney developed such an exam a number of years ago which we will adapt to our present needs.

The Psychology assessment exam will be given as a Pretest Exam to all students enrolled in PSY 105 and as a Posttest Exam to all majors who have accumulated 27 hours in Psychology (of the 35 hours required for a degree).

Based on our experience with the ETS and Psychology Department's assessment exam, we believe that an acceptable level of performance on the Posttest Exam is represented by a score at or above 50%.

- ii. This is a direct measurement.
- iii. The student-learning outcome (SLO) for an acceptable level of competency will be a score at or above 50% (see Rubric A), which is based on our experience with the ETS Major Field Test and the Psychology Department's assessment exam.

### **MEASUREMENT PROCESS #3**

#### **Outcomes:**

- C.1. Students identify and critically evaluate psychological research methods.
- C.2. Students analyze empirical data.
- C.3. Students assess the significance and importance of research reports.

#### **Measurement Process:**

- i. PSY 302 Research Methods is the highest level course that all Psychology majors are required to complete. Students learn to recognize and critically evaluate psychological research methods; they analyze empirical data; and they assess the significance and importance of research reports.
- ii. This is a direct measurement.
- iii. The program performance target for these outcomes is defined as acceptable or better performance by 75% of Psychology majors. The standards for acceptability and instructions to students are outlined in Rubrics B and C, which will be given to students in advance.

### **MEASUREMENT PROCESS #4**

#### **Outcome:**

- D.1. Students communicate clearly and effectively in a written format.

#### **Measurement Process:**

- i. Assessment of this outcome will use each student's written review of journal articles as evidence of student learning.
- ii. This is a direct measurement.
- iii. The program performance target for this outcome is defined as acceptable or better performance by 75% of PSY 302 students. The standard for acceptability is defined in the attached Rubric D, which will be given to students in advance.

**3. When will learning outcomes be assessed? When and in what forum will the results of the assessment be discussed?**

Assessment of student learning in the B.A. program will be conducted annually from performance measures described above. A committee of faculty and graduate student instructors will be tasked with assessment duties, which will include:

- i. Reviewing test performance
- ii. Reading, grading, and providing feedback for student research reviews
- iii. Completing all relevant rubrics at the end of the semester

PSY 302 course instructors will communicate with this committee during the semester and will make copies of all relevant materials, such as research reports. Although students will be given multiple assignments per semester in PSY 302, only the first and last assignments will be assessed in any given semester.

All outcomes will be assessed yearly. (See timeline below.)

Completed rubrics will be placed in an assessment file (to be administered by a Psychology Department Staff member) as soon as they are completed. Each summer, the Assessment Committee will produce an annual report on the number of students assessed and the average scores recorded for each outcome.

This report will be distributed to the entire faculty and will be discussed at the first faculty meeting in the fall semester.

Modifications to the assessment instruments or methods will be discussed at the end of each year's annual faculty meeting. Changes in program curriculum/pedagogy will be discussed every third year, beginning in summer 2011.

**TIMELINE**

- **Fall 2008**
  - appointment of Assessment Committee
  - assignment of assessment duties for 2008-2009
- **Spring 2009**
  - assessment of outcomes A.1, B.1, C.1, C.2, C.3, D.1
- **Summer 2009**
  - annual report compiled/distributed
  - faculty review of assessment procedures
  - assignment of assessment duties for 2009-2010
- **Spring 2010**
  - assessment of outcomes A.1, B.1, C.1, C.2, C.3, D.1
- **Summer 2010**
  - annual report compiled/distributed
  - faculty review of assessment procedures
  - assignment of assessment duties for 2010-2011
- **Spring 2011**
  - assessment of outcomes A.1, B.1, C.1, C.2, C.3, D.1
- **Summer 2011**
  - annual report compiled/distributed
  - faculty review of assessment procedures
  - faculty review of B.A. program
  - assignment of assessment duties for 2011-2012

**4. What is the unit's process to analyze/interpret assessment data and use results to improve student learning?**

All members of the Psychology faculty will participate in the assessment process at various levels, as described below.

- a) Evidence will be gathered by the regular instructors of PSY 105 and PSY 302 through the following assignments: Multiple-choice Psychology Department assessment exam (PSY 105 Pretest; 27-hour Posttest) and performance on PSY 302 article reviews.
- b) The Assessment Committee will analyze these direct measures.
- c) The Committee will prepare and circulate Annual reports to the faculty.
- d) Annual reports will be used as a basis for discussing assessment mechanisms/procedures (on an annual basis) as well as curricular design and pedagogical approaches (every third year). Priority areas for discussion at the annual faculty meeting will include:

2009, 2010, 2011

- Quality of data collected
- Completeness of data collected
- Reliability of data collected
- Potential improvements to measurement instruments
- Potential improvements to assessment procedures
- Assignment of assessment responsibilities for the coming year

2011

- Student performance levels on each outcome
  - Potential explanations for any missed targets
  - Desired improvements to student learning
  - Curricular approaches to improving student learning
  - Pedagogical approaches to improving student learning
  - Modifications to program goals and outcomes
  - Modifications to performance targets
- e) Recommendations will be voted on by the entire faculty and will be circulated to the advisory board, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the Provost's Office of Assessment.

**Rubric A: Competencies in Understanding Self and Other Behavior & Awareness of How Psychologists Study Behavior**

Program Outcomes	Criteria for Acceptable Performance	Assessment from Test performance			
		Superior	Good	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
A.1. & B.1. Students will learn how we become aware of ourselves, how we learn to interact with others, and how we influence others and how they influence us.	1. Performance on questions from General or Quantitative Psychology	70%	60%	50%	Below 50%
	2. Performance on questions from Developmental Psychology	"	"	"	"
	3. Performance on questions from Clinical/Personality Psychology	"	"	"	"
	4. Performance on questions from Behavioral neuroscience/Brain-behavior relations	"	"	"	"
	5. Performance on questions from Psychology of Learning and Cognition	"	"	"	"
	6. Performance on questions from Social Psychology	"	"	"	"

## Rubric B: Competencies in Evaluating Scientific Processes and Methods

### Instructions to Students

Psychological Research Techniques (Psych 302)  
Review of Journal Articles

You will need to read and review 10 psychological research articles. You will select the 10 articles from a larger set of articles that are provided to you on WebCT in the folder named *Journal Articles*. Each of your written reviews must follow a very specific format. The reviews must be submitted in a text entry box in WebCT. I recommend that you use a word processing application to write and edit your paper, and copy and paste it into the text entry box when submitting it. Submit it in plain text (don't check the "use HTML" option). Then check over it in the web browser before submitting it to ensure that it has retained the proper formatting after pasting.

Sections should be separated with the appropriate labels, as follows:

"Reference: [text]  
Introduction: [text]  
Methods: [text]  
Results: [text]  
Discussion: [text]"

The ten reviews are to be submitted one at a time on the following dates: (Example dates) 2/1, 2/8, 2/15, 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, 3/22, 3/29, 4/5, 4/12. The assignments must be submitted by 5:00 pm on the day they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted. Note however that you may turn in your assignments early.

### Review Format

Reference. Cite the article in APA format.

Introduction (200 words).

- What was the general topic of this article?
- What did previous research show?
- What was the goal of this particular study?
- What specific hypotheses were to be tested?
- What was the rationale for the hypothesis?

Methods (100 words).

- What type of research design was used?
- Who were the participants in the study?
- How were the data collected?

Results (100 words).

- What statistical tests were performed?
- What were the outcomes of the tests?

Discussion (200 words).

- Were the hypotheses supported?
- What specific findings were reported?
- What was the general conclusion of the article?
- What were some strengths and weaknesses of the study?

600 words in a word processor should appear as approximately 2 double spaced pages with 1" margins.

**Rubric C:**

Points will be assigned based on how clearly your paper answers the above questions for each section.

	Introduction 3	Methods 2	Results 2	Discussion 3
exemplary	<b>3:</b> All five issues are clearly and thoroughly addressed	<b>2:</b> All three issues are clearly and thoroughly addressed (design, participants, data collection)	<b>2:</b> Tests and outcomes are clearly and thoroughly described	<b>3:</b> All four issues are clearly and thoroughly addressed
adequate	<b>2:</b> Most of the questions are clearly answered with one or two weaknesses	<b>1:</b> Weak treatment of one of the issues (e.g., sample is incompletely described)	<b>1:</b> Weak treatment of one of the two issues	<b>2:</b> Most of the questions are clearly answered, with one major weakness or two minor problems
needs improvement	<b>1:</b> One or more issues completely unaddressed, or most questions incompletely covered			<b>1:</b> One or more issues completely unaddressed, or most questions incompletely covered
failing	<b>0:</b> Poor or absent coverage of the five topics overall	<b>0:</b> Weak treatment of two or all three of the topics	<b>0:</b> Weak treatment of both issues or missing treatment of one or both issues	<b>0:</b> Poor or absent coverage of the four topics overall

**Rubric D: Competencies in Communication**

Program Outcomes	Criteria for Acceptable Performance	Assessment			
		Superior	Good	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
D.1. Students communicate clearly and effectively in a written format.	1. The report is clearly written.				
	2. The report is well organized.				
	3. Proper usage of grammar, syntax, etc.				