

Major Field Assessment Plan B. A. Psychology (2009)

The mission of Southeastern Louisiana University is to meet the educational and cultural needs, primarily of Southeast Louisiana, to disseminate knowledge and to facilitate life-long learning through quality instruction, research and service in a safe, student-centered environment.

The Department of Psychology attempts to foster, among all students, a grasp and appreciation of the scientific method in the study of behavior, and to stimulate interest in the field of Psychology.

In Fall 2008, the department submitted a new major field assessment plan. The current report reflects data collected using the new plan.

Goal 1

To provide students with a foundation in the core concepts and methods of psychology

A. Expected Outcome

Students completing the baccalaureate program in Psychology will demonstrate adequate knowledge of core areas of psychology including research methods and statistics, as well as additional topics such as abnormal, developmental, social, cognitive, personality and learning.

Assessment

Psychology majors will earn at least a C average in their major courses which include the following required and elective courses.

- 1) Required courses (16 hours):
 - a) Introduction to Psychology – PSYC 101 and 102
 - b) Principles of Research Design – PSYC 220
 - c) Psychological Statistics - PSYC 221/222
 - d) Research Design and Analysis - PSYC 335
- 2) Elective Courses (18 hours):
 - a) Developmental Psychology – PSYC 204
 - b) Social Psychology – PSYC 210
 - c) Conditioning and Learning – PSYC 343
 - d) Sensation and Perception – PSYC 346
 - e) Introduction to Clinical Psychology – PSYC 350
 - f) Evolutionary Psychology – PSYC 373
 - g) Personality – PSYC 416
 - h) History and Systems in Psychology – PSYC 421
 - i) Abnormal Psychology – PSYC 422
 - j) Cognitive Psychology – PSYC 440
 - k) Service Learning – PSYC 450
 - l) Physiological Psychology – PSYC 462
 - m) Industrial/ Organizational Psychology – PSYC 475

Results obtained:

By department policy, all majors are required to earn at least an overall C average in order to graduate. In addition, Psychology majors must make at least a C in required major courses in order to graduate. This insures demonstration of adequate knowledge in the core areas of psychology.

B. Expected Outcome

Students will have a positive opinion of the degree to which they have been exposed to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology.

Assessment

- a. All psychology majors are required to take Psychology 335. During this time they will take the "PSYC 335 Questionnaire" and will rate the Department positively (i.e. above "3.0") in terms of success in exposing them to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology and as this being more important now than when they took their first psychology course.
- b. Based upon the Southeastern Exit Survey, students will have positive scores (i.e. an average score of above "3.0) on this goal (1=Very Dissatisfied, 5=Very Satisfied).
- c. Students taking PSYC 450 (Service Learning in Psychology) will be required to submit a narrative summarizing and evaluating their experience in a human service setting. At least 80% of students will indicate in their narrative that their experience was positive and personally rewarding.
- d. Students are to become aware of the importance of taking cultural background differences into account for a full understanding of human behavior. Textbooks for Psychology content courses (e.g. excluding methods courses such as statistics) incorporate relevant cultural issues in their discussions. Psychology faculty cover such issues as: culture-specific mental disorders, cultural variations in dream content, multicultural considerations in psychotherapy and assessment, cultural differences in the definition of the self, the consequences of being bicultural, cultural differences in parenting and family planning, among others. Assessment will consist of adding relevant questions on the "PSYC 335 Questionnaire". They will rate the Department positively (i.e. above "3.0") in terms of success in exposing them to a global/multicultural perspective in Psychology, and as this being more important now than when they took their first psychology course. In addition, on the Southeastern Exit Survey, students will have positive scores (i.e. an average score of above "3.0) on an item rating the major as promoting sensitivity to individual/cultural differences.

Results obtained:

- a. Twenty-nine students completed the PSYC 335 Questionnaire in the fall of 2008 and seven students in the spring of 2009. As can be seen in Table 1, the goal that students would rate the Department positively (i.e. above "3.0") in terms of success in exposing them to a broad body of knowledge in Psychology was met. The mean rating for this item was 3.96 in the fall and 3.86 in the spring. Additionally, students

indicated that they found this slightly more important now than when they took their first psychology course.

- b. As seen in Table 2, Results were available from the Southeastern Exit Survey from 2005-2008. In 2007-2008, 92.2% of students had scores of 3 or higher on the item regarding breadth of knowledge provided by the psychology major. These ratings have been consistently above 90% for the three years of available data.
- c. For Fall 2008 and Spring 2009, 10 students enrolled in service learning. All students (100%) described it as a positive experience.
- d. Students rated the Department positively in terms of success in exposing them to a global/multicultural perspective, with means of 3.82 in the fall and 3.86 in the spring. Furthermore, students indicated that sensitivity to cultural differences is much more important now than when they took their first psychology course (See Table 1).

Additionally, 93.7% of students reported that the Psychology major promotes sensitivity to individual/cultural differences on the 2007-2008 Southeastern Exit Survey (i.e., 93.7% of students rated the Department with a 3 or higher on this item). As seen in Table 2, over 90% of students have rated the Department with a 3 or higher on this item for the past three years.

Goal 2

Majors will have a grasp and appreciation of the scientific method in psychology and demonstrate necessary skills to implement and critically evaluate research strategies.

A. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will demonstrate the application of the scientific method to an actual research question.

Assessment

In a required capstone research class (PSYC 335), psychology majors will produce a written manuscript of publishable quality from beginning to end that requires the student to be able to conceptualize the targeted phenomenon into scientific research terms, and generate one or more testable hypotheses. These skills are further developed in the elective course PSYC 449 (Individual Research in Psychology). PSYC 335 and PSYC 449 provide students with critical thinking/statistical skills applicable to a wide variety of academic and non-academic settings and professional activities.

Results obtained:

All Psychology majors were required to complete the capstone research course in which a manuscript of publishable quality is produced. As seen in Table 3 and 4, students completed the capstone paper in PSYC 335, illustrating their knowledge of the scientific method. Instructors rated student papers using a rubric and the rating scale of 1 (unacceptable; lack of ability) to 10 (excellence; exceeds expectations). Specifically, students earned average ratings of eight or higher on skills including Academic integrity

and Methodological understanding in both the fall and spring semesters. The means for the other skills were all higher than seven. The vast majority of students scored above 5 which is equivalent to adequate.

B. Expected Outcome

The senior research project resulting from PSYC 335 will demonstrate expertise in the scientific method and ability to synthesize research findings using appropriate APA style.

Assessment

In evaluation of manuscripts from 335, 80% of majors will achieve a 5.0 (adequate) or higher. Ratings will be for the following areas/criteria.

- a) APA style
- b) Academic integrity
- c) Ability to utilize library resources necessary to conduct scholarly research in psychology
- d) Synthesis of relevant research literature
- e) Demonstrate understanding of methodology
- f) Accurate statistical analysis and interpretation of results
- g) Comprehensive discussion and integration of results with scientific literature

Results obtained:

As can be seen in Table 4, over 90% of students obtained a rating of 5 or above in both the fall and spring semesters on the following components of the capstone paper: APA style; Academic integrity; Use of library resources; Synthesis of research literature; Methodological understanding. Students in during the fall semester were weaker in statistical analyses and comprehensive discussion and integration with the literature, but these areas improved in the spring.

C. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will feel confident in their abilities to conduct psychological research.

Assessment

- a. Based on the “PSYC 335 Questionnaire”, at least 80% of those students taking Psychology 335 will rate themselves as being able to demonstrate the following skills with only minimal supervision--collect data, do background research, formulate a set of hypotheses, write up an Introduction section, write up a Methods section, graph data, use statistics, write Results and Discussion sections, and construct a Reference section in proper APA form.
- b. Based upon the Southeastern Exit Survey, students will have positive scores (i.e. an average score of above “3.0) on this goal (1=Very Dissatisfied, 5=Very Satisfied).

Results obtained:

- a. As can be seen in Table 5, the results for the Department were mixed. The desired outcome was obtained in most areas, with the exception of graphing data and using simple and advanced statistics. Approximately 60% of students indicated ability to

demonstrate those skills. Nonetheless, over 95% of students felt confident to run participants, collect data, formulate hypotheses, and write a discussion during both semesters.

b. This was assessed with two questions on the Southeastern Exit Survey. First, students were asked if the psychological major fosters students' grasp and appreciation of the scientific method. In 2007-2008, 98.4% of students rated the Department positively, with a score of 3 or above. Next, students were asked if the psychology major trains practical research skills. Over 95% of students rated the Department positively on this item (See Table 2).

Goal 3

Students graduating in psychology will be prepared for entrance into graduate school and/or a variety of relevant professions.

A. Expected Outcome

The rate of admittance into graduate schools in the behavioral sciences will compare favorably with other students graduating from a national sample of psychology programs in institutions comparable to Southeastern, and who apply for graduate work in the field. Once in a graduate program, the level of academic performance will compare favorably with other students graduating from institutions comparable to Southeastern.

Assessment

a. On the Southeastern Exit Survey, students will rate the Department positively (i.e. an average score of above 3.0) on the item "How satisfied are you with the degree to which the Psychology Department prepares qualified students for further education in the Behavioral Sciences?" (1=Very Dissatisfied, 5=Very Satisfied).

b. On the Southeastern Exit Survey, at least 25% of graduating Psychology majors will indicate they are accepted in graduate school, or intend to go to graduate school

Results obtained:

a. On the 2007-08 Southeastern Exit survey, about 92% of students indicated that they were satisfied that the psychology major prepared them for advanced studies. Again, this has been consistent over the past three years (See Table 2).

b. Current data from the Alumni survey was unavailable as the most recent results are from the 2004 survey. Therefore the percentage of graduates attending graduate programs is unknown. However, on the 335 Questionnaire, a majority of the students indicated they were likely or extremely likely to apply to graduate school, primarily in Psychology. Results for Fall 2008 indicated that 25% (n = 28) were "likely" and 42.9% were "very likely" to apply to a graduate program, primarily within psychology (51.7%). For Spring 2009, 28.6% (n = 7) reported they were "likely" and 57.1% were "very likely" to apply to graduate school with 57.1% intending to apply to a psychology program.

B. Expected Outcome

Psychology majors will feel that they are prepared to attend graduate school.

Assessment

a. Students taking the “PSYC 335 Questionnaire” will have positive scores (i.e. an average score of above 3.0) on those items in which they rate their current opinion of their degree preparedness, and will rate this goal as being more important now than when they first entered the program.

Results obtained:

As seen in Table 1, students reported that the Psychology Department was successful in meeting the goal of preparing students for graduate school with means of 3.79 in the fall semester and 4.00 in the spring semester. Students also reported that this goal was much more important to them now than it was when they took their first psychology course.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for additional 335 survey items.

	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
Provide students with broad body of knowledge in Psychology		
Importance first psychology course	3.85 (0.76)	3.86 (1.06)
Present view	4.04 (0.79)	4.00 (1.15)
Success of Psychology dept. in meeting this goal	3.96 (0.84)	3.86 (1.21)
Promoting sensitivity to individual/ cultural differences		
Importance first psychology course	3.82 (1.02)	2.57 (1.81)
Present view	4.11 (0.96)	3.86 (1.21)
Success of Psychology dept. in meeting this goal	3.92 (1.05)	3.71 (1.50)
Train students in practical research skills		
Importance first psychology course	3.32 (0.98)	2.57 (1.40)
Present view	3.86 (1.11)	3.86 (1.06)
Success of Psychology dept. in meeting this goal	3.82 (1.09)	3.86 (0.69)
Preparedness for graduate school		
Importance first psychology course	3.57 (0.99)	2.86 (1.21)
Present view	4.04 (0.91)	4.00 (1.00)
Success of Psychology dept. in meeting this goal	3.79 (1.13)	4.00 (1.29)

Note. 1 = "extremely unimportant/ unsuccessful"; 5 = "extremely important/ successful."

Table 2. Results of Southeastern Exit Survey 2005-2008

	1	2	3	4	5
Psychology major provides broad knowledge					
2005-2006	1.5%	3.0%	17.9%	43.3%	34.3%
2006-2007	1.6%	3.3%	16.4%	41.0%	37.7%
2007-2008	3.1%	4.7%	18.8%	42.2%	31.3%
Psychology major promotes sensitivity to individual and cultural differences					
2005-2006	1.5%	0.0%	9.0%	44.8%	44.8%
2006-2007	0.0%	0.0%	6.6%	37.7%	55.7%
2007-2008	1.6%	4.7%	17.2%	35.9%	40.6%
Psychology major fosters student's grasp and appreciation of the scientific method					
2005-2006	3.0%	6.0%	10.4%	52.2%	28.4%
2006-2007	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%	41.0%	47.5%
2007-2008	1.6%	0.0%	18.8%	42.2%	37.5%
Psychology major trains practical research skills					
2005-2006	3.0%	9.0%	14.9%	40.3%	32.8%
2006-2007	0.0%	1.6%	26.2%	37.7%	34.4%
2007-2008	1.6%	3.1%	20.3%	45.3%	29.7%
Psychology major prepares for advanced studies					
2005-2006	0.0%	9.0%	20.9%	46.3%	23.9%
2006-2007	0.0%	4.9%	16.4%	45.9%	32.8%
2007-2008	1.6%	6.3%	20.3%	42.2%	29.7%

Note. 1 = "very dissatisfied"; 5 = "very satisfied."

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for ratings of students' capstone paper in Psyc 335.

	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
APA style	7.66 (1.33)	7.87 (1.45)
Academic integrity	8.92 (1.50)	8.67 (1.73)
Use of library resources	7.70 (2.05)	8.67 (0.86)
Synthesis of research literature	7.39 (1.52)	8.00 (1.59)
Methodological understanding	8.08 (1.38)	8.79 (1.02)
Statistical analysis/ Results	7.72 (1.95)	8.67 (1.04)
Comprehensive discussion and integration with literature	7.67 (2.03)	8.71 (1.08)

Note. Items rated on a scale from 1 (unacceptable; lack of ability) to 10 (excellence; exceeds expectations).

Table 4. Percentage of students scoring above 5 (adequate) on components of capstone paper.

	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
APA style	100%	96%
Academic integrity	100%	91.7%
Use of library resources	100%	100%
Synthesis of research literature	97.2%	100%
Methodological understanding	97.2%	100%
Statistical analysis/ Results	88.9%	100%
Comprehensive discussion and integration with literature	86.1%	100%

Note. Items rated on a scale from 1 (unacceptable; lack of ability) to 10 (excellence; exceeds expectations).

Table 5. Percentage of respondents indicating ability to demonstrate research skills on online 335 survey.

	Fall 2008 (n = 29)	Spring 2009 (n = 7)
Run participants	96.4%	100%
Collect data	96.4%	100%
Background research	88.9%	71.4%
Formulate hypothesis	96.4%	100%
Write introduction	85.7%	85.7%
Write methods	92.9%	100%
Graph data	64.3%	71.4%
Use simple statistics	67.9%	42.9%
Use advanced statistics	60.7%	42.9%
Write results	89.3%	85.7%
Write discussion	96.4%	100%