

Campus Correspondence

Southeastern Louisiana University

To: Faculty
Department of Psychology

From: Major Field Assessment in Psychology Committee
Earl W. Capron, Chair
Jay Azorlosa, member
Hunter McAllister, member

Re: Assessment/Evaluation of MFA efforts for the M.A. in Psychology
for Spring, 1993 to Spring, 1994

Degree Program: **M. A. PSYCHOLOGY**

Purpose/Mission Statement:

The purpose of offering graduate study in the Department of Psychology is to provide students with a M.A. level of knowledge and skills that will prepare them for entry either into a Ph.D. program or a subprofessional position.

1. Goal A

To train graduate students in practical research skills and critical thinking skills.

a. Method of Assessment

(1) Criterion: A student will not be allowed to graduate with a M.A. in Psychology without at least acceptable competence in those skills listed in Working Goal A.

(a) Procedure: An understanding of research and the manner by which research is conducted is accomplished both by formal course work plus actual experience in research. All students are required to take Advanced Experimental Psychology (Psych 633). This four hour course involves advanced design and analysis of psychological experiments.

(This course was expanded to two four-hour courses in the Fall, 1993). The new courses cover design and statistics, but also require work on a research project as part of the course requirement. Students are required to earn a grade of at least B in these courses. All students gain actual research experience when they are required to conduct a research project for their thesis work (Psyc 770). Some students gain additional research experience through taking independent research (Psych 549) as an elective. A student's research skills and knowledge are certified by faculty committee

evaluations of their performance on thesis and on their comprehensive exams.

(2) Criterion: Alumni respondents will have positive ratings in terms of the questions relating to training in research and critical thinking skills.

(a) Procedure: All of the Alumni of our M.A. program will be surveyed using the questionnaire developed by Institutional Research at SLU. The questionnaire is entitled "A Survey of Alumni of Graduate Degree Programs" and contains several questions rating satisfaction with the research training and critical thinking training.

b. Results Obtained

(1) As can be seen in Table A, students have performed well in the two new statistics/methods courses. For F'93 88% of the students passed their comprehensive exam in the area covered by Psyc 635 (Experimental). For S'94 75% of the students passed the comprehensive exam for the material covered in Psyc 636 (Nonexperimental).

(2) For the period S'93 to S'94, 5 students completed a research project in Psyc 549. All 5 students received grades of A for their research.

(3) As can be seen in Appendix B, nine students successfully defended their theses during the assessment period.

(4) Institutional Research did not survey graduate alumni during the assessment period; thus, there is no data on alumni attitudes towards their training.

c. Changes in Program

None at this time

d. Planned Changes

Since none of the students who completed a thesis during the assessment period went through the new statistics/methods sequence, it is too early to assess the impact. The theses completed during this period will serve as the comparison for the thesis work completed by students in the revised curriculum.

2. Goal B

To provide students with a broad body of knowledge representative of the current state of knowledge in Psychology.

a. Method of Assessment

(1) Criterion: A student will not be allowed to graduate with a M.A. in Psychology without a broad base of knowledge of Psychology.

(a) Procedure: Students do not specialize in an area in the Psychology M.A. program; rather they are required to take a broad base of core courses. Thus, whether students are going on to Ph.D. programs in applied areas such as Clinical and Industrial or going on in basic research areas such as Cognitive and Physiological, they have had a broad base on which to build. Students' general knowledge is certified by faculty committee evaluations of their performance on thesis and on comprehensive exams. Additional evidence comes from performance on the LSU exams which require a broad, general knowledge of the major areas of Psychology (Note: only the subset of our students in the consortium program take these exams).

(2) Criterion: Alumni respondents who enter Ph.D. programs will have positive ratings on questions relating to how well their M.A. training prepared them for further graduate work.

(a) Procedure: All of the Alumni of our M.A. program will be surveyed using the questionnaire developed by Institutional Research at SLU. The questionnaire is entitled "A Survey of Alumni of Graduate Degree Programs" and contains several questions rating satisfaction with the curriculum.

(3) Criterion: Fifty percent of the students who apply to Ph.D. programs will be admitted to a Ph.D. program.

(a) Procedure: Psychology faculty will follow up on all graduate students for whom they write letters of recommendation to graduate schools, and report the results to the Graduate Coordinator.

b. Results Obtained

(1)(a) As can be seen in Appendix A, students did extremely well on their SLU comprehensive exams in the various content areas (i.e., areas other than Psyc 635 and 636 discussed in Goal A). The overall pass rate for the content area was over 90%, with no area being below 83%.

(1)(b) As can be seen in Appendix C, the LSU consortium exam

results provide a much less positive view of student knowledge than the SLU exams. The overall pass rate was 29% with a range of 0 to 100%. Only the performance on the Social exam was at or above the expected level.

(2) Institutional Research did not survey graduate alumni during the assessment period; thus, there is no data on alumni attitudes towards their training.

(3) As can be seen in Appendix D, the goal of a 50% acceptance rate for those students applying to Ph.D. programs was met. However, it should be noted that the number of students applying to Ph.D. programs was lower than expected.

c. Changes in Program

The results concerning performance on the LSU consortium exams and performance on the SLU comprehensive exams was not consistent. Based on their SLU performance, the students were obviously capable of operating at a very high level; however, the LSU scores were not reflecting this same high level. In an attempt to determine the difficulty, Dr. Lipscomb and Dr. McAllister met with the Department Head and Graduate Coordinator at LSU. Various problem areas were discussed such as: (a) some LSU faculty included questions on the exams from their lectures (material that the SLU students did not have access to). (b) Some of the LSU faculty informed the LSU students which material to concentrate on while not providing that information to the SLU students. It was agreed that the departments would do a better job of communicating with each other. For example, SLU students (and faculty) would be encouraged to contact the LSU faculty to discuss issues such as what to emphasize in their studying.

One area targeted for improvement was the Biological Bases of behavior. Students in our program had a 100% success rate on the SLU exams, yet had only a 17% success rate for the LSU exams. Dr. Baker, the faculty member who teaches the graduate physiological psychology course, discussed the course with Dr. Advocate, his LSU counterpart. Based on this discussion, Dr. Baker planned changes in the course to make it more consistent with the LSU course. For example, the textbook selected for the course would be the same as the LSU text. The topics that will be chosen for discussion will have a greater overlap with those in the LSU course. Finally, Dr. Baker will begin the use of multiple choice quizzes and tests (the same style of testing used at LSU). These changes will go into effect for the Fall, 1994. Ideally, the level of performance on the SLU and LSU exams will be more comparable.

d. Planned Changes

Ongoing modification of curriculum and course content as necessary.

3. Goal C

To permit pursuit of a Ph.D. degree in Psychology in the "Louisiana Consortium of Graduate Training in Psychology."

a. Method of Assessment

(1) Criterion: Each year at least one student will enter an LSU Ph.D. program through the consortium program. (Note: LSU limits the number of consortium students that they allow each year to 1 or 2).

(a) Procedure: These figures are obtainable from LSU each year.

(2) Criterion: SLU will have at least two faculty qualifying as LSU Affiliate Graduate Faculty Members.

(a) Procedure: These figures are obtainable from the LSU graduate catalogue each year.

b. Results Obtained

(1) No students passed all four consortium exams during the assessment period. At the end of the S'94 the standing of the current consortium students is as follows:

No. of Students	Exams Passed
1	3
1	2
3	1
4	0

(2) For the 1993-1994 school year, one faculty member applied for (and obtained) reappointment to the LSU graduate faculty; this kept the total number of approved faculty at 2.

c. Changes in the Program

As discussed under Goal B, an attempt has been made to improve the coordination between the SLU and LSU Psychology programs.

d. Planned Changes

Ongoing modification of curriculum and course content as necessary.

4. Goal D

To provide students who do not immediately wish to pursue a Ph.D. with a variety of courses that will help prepare them for subprofessional positions.

a. Method of Assessment

(1) Criterion: Seventy five percent of the M.A. alumni who attempt to get jobs in Psychology will be successful.

(a) Procedure: Major professors will follow up on all of their graduate students receiving the M.A. and report the results to the Graduate Coordinator.

(2) Criterion: Alumni respondents who obtain jobs will have positive ratings on questions relating to how well their M.A. training prepared them for those jobs.

(a) Procedure: All of the Alumni of our M.A. program will be surveyed using the questionnaire developed by Institutional Research at SLU. The questionnaire is entitled "A Survey of Alumni of Graduate Degree Programs" and contains several questions rating satisfaction with how well the M.A. program trained them for jobs.

(3) Criterion: Students who plan to obtain subprofessional positions will include applied courses in their program.

(a) Procedure: Students are allowed to take up to seven hours of practicum work. Students are placed in a setting such as the Comprehensive Counseling Center on campus or the private practice of Baton Rouge Psychological Associates and allowed to engage in assessment and counseling under the guidance of a licensed Psychologist. This is a chance for students to operate in a manner more relevant to their future professional life than would be the case in the typical classroom setting.

b. Results Obtained

(1) As can be seen in Appendix E, 88% of the graduates who attempted to find subprofessional positions were successful. Thus, the goal of a 75% success rate was achieved.

(2) Institutional Research did not survey graduate alumni during the assessment period; thus, there is no data on alumni attitudes towards their training.

(3) During assessment period, 5 students completed practicum courses and 3 completed the prepracticum course.

c. Changes in the Program

Given the success of our students in obtaining employment in subprofessional positions, no changes were deemed necessary at this time

d. Planned Changes

The Major Field Assessment Committee concluded that there has been a drop off in the number of students taking practicum. This may require further study to determine the cause; changes in the program may be necessary to remedy the situation.