

## Assessment of Majors/General Education Competency Template for 2005

Program/Department: Psychology Major

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**Key Learning Outcomes: What should students be able to do AFTER completing this program? State learning outcomes simply and in measurable terms. Please limit the number of outcomes to five or fewer.**

**If your department reports on General Education competency areas (writing, foreign language, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning), please use this form to report on those areas in a separately generated document.**

1. Understand the basic psychological principles shared by all core areas.
2. Understand contemporary issues in psychology, the evolution of psychological theory, and the impact of psychology on diverse social, political and cultural environments.
3. Apply statistical methods to psychological data and use the computer to analyze such data, write research papers using APA format, and communicate scientific information orally.
4. Use various research methods to design, implement, and evaluate research using the scientific method.

The following explains where these outcomes will be assessed:

**Exit exam:** outcomes one and two, part of three (apply statistical methods to psychological data), and part of four (research methods)

**Senior thesis paper:** outcomes one, part of three (apply statistical methods to psychological data and use the computer to analyze such data, write research papers using APA format), four.

**Oral presentation:** outcome one, three, and four.

**Please link learning outcomes to the College's Desired Accomplishments/Goals.**

- 1.1. PSYC 110, 203, 303, 499 (in general way all of our core classes)
- 1.3 PSYC 110, 306, 474
- 1.4 PSYC 110, 306, 474, 476
- 1.6 PSYC 110, 306
- 1.7 PSYC 499 (in general way all of our core classes)
- 1.8 PSYC 306, 407, 499

**Through what courses/assignments will you ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn this? List key courses, capstones, internships, experiences, etc.**

Required core course:

PSYC 110: Introduction to Psychology  
PSYC 203: Applied Statistics  
PSYC 303: Research Methods  
PSYC 306: Cultural Diversity  
PSYC 330: Biopsychology  
PSYC 472: Child Development OR  
PSYC 474: Adolescent Development OR  
PSYC 476: Adult Development and Aging OR  
PSYC 478: Lifespan Development  
PSYC 308: Psychology of Learning OR  
PSYC 407: Cognitive  
PSYC 401: Abnormal Psychology OR  
PSYC 402: Personality  
PSYC 499: Senior Seminar

**Please list all tools used for assessing student achievement (CRTs, MFTs, capstones, exit interviews, external reviews, etc.). Choose a minimum of three tools.**

A comprehensive Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) is given during the first semester of the senior year to each Psychology major. The CRT covers any and all core courses a student may have taken from our program. However, recognizing the fact that not all students have taken the same course, when an option was available, students are only tested over course from the core that they have completed.

All Psychology majors are required, under the current Catalogue, to complete the Psychology 499, the Senior Seminar. This capstone course integrates and synthesizes the information students have received as a part of the core requirement classes. In this course students are required to complete a formal thesis paper synthesizing a major theoretical perspective or comparing two theoretical perspectives that pertain to one core area of the discipline. This paper is designed to evaluate students' ability to understand and critically evaluate Psychology-based research articles and other scholarly works in Psychology. Further, students will apply their knowledge of statistics, research methodology, and the appropriate use of the APA writing style. Papers are separately and independently evaluated by two Psychology faculty members.

In addition, all Psychology majors in the capstone (Psychology 499) are required to create and give a formal presentation before the Psychology faculty. This presentation is based on the area of research students have chosen for their senior thesis paper. The presentation and the thesis paper are evaluated using an oral and written communication rubric developed by the College and adopted by the Psychology major.

**How will you assess how well your students are learning? List standards/performance indicators, etc., taking care to provide quantifiable means (for example, all students should earn a minimum 50% on exit exam; 65 % should earn a minimum 70%; with a rubric, indicate the scale used, the levels of competence, what is identified as "competent," and what constitutes competence for each outcome measure, what percentage of students you would expect to see at each level, etc.). Be sure to spell out criteria.**

Students are assessed in the Psychology capstone course, PSYC 499, in three primary ways. First, students are given a comprehensive exit exam that covers content from all core courses that they have taken. Second, students complete a senior thesis paper that is designed to evaluate their written competency, computer research skills, use of statistics and research methods to synthesize Psychology research, and the application of APA writing style. Finally, students' oral communication skills are assessed in a presentation given before the Psychology faculty and other Psychology students. The oral presentation is also designed to assess a student's ability to integrate research and synthesize major findings from their written report in a clear and compelling manner.

All senior thesis papers are evaluated independently by two Psychology faculty members using the same criteria from which an average grade is determined. Students then have the opportunity to revise and correct their papers and resubmit them for additional points. A student may earn up to half of the points between their original average grade and 100 percent by making the revisions. The Psychology faculty believes that allowing students to revise their papers is consistent with mastery learning and an additional learning opportunity.

Oral presentations are independently assessed by two or more Psychology faculty members using the same oral rubric criteria. An average grade is determined and the evaluation is shared with the student.

#### **A. The exit exam**

The senior exit exam covers the following topic areas: Applied Statistics, Research Methods, Cultural Diversity, Biopsychology, Developmental Psychology, Learning Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Personality, and Abnormal Psychology. Students will only be tested over areas for which they have completed the core course. Due to the fact that students have choices among some of these classes, not all students will complete the same test questions.

The expectations for the standard of performance on the senior exit exam are as follows:

- All students are expected to receive a score of 70 percent correct or above.
- Fifty percent of the students are expected to receive a score of 80 percent or above.
- Fifteen percent of the students on average are expected to obtain a score of 90 percent or above.

#### **B. Senior thesis paper**

##### **Evaluation of Writing Competency Rubric**

Definition: Competent writing conveys ideas/information in a clear, ordered, and well-supported fashion; uses a style and sources appropriate to the purpose; and employs well-structured paragraphs, correct grammar, and appropriate language

Scale: 5=Excellent 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Below Average 1=Far Below Average

**A Thesis: essay has a strong unifying thesis**

- 5 Aim is clear; introduction states thesis to be defended; conclusion revisits thesis thoughtfully
- 4 Aim is clear; introduction states thesis; conclusion is strong
- 3 Aim is fairly clear; introduction attempts to explain thesis; conclusion may be somewhat vague
- 2 Aim is vague; introduction states no clear thesis; there may be no conclusion
- 1 Essay is without apparent aim or purpose; neither introduction nor conclusion are evident

**B Organization: writing is effectively structured**

- 5 Development is logical, competent, thoughtfully addresses the complexities involved
- 4 Development is logical and competent; essay addresses more than one of the complexities inherent
- 3 Development is logical and competent; may be a few organizational problems/argumentative weaknesses
- 2 Development is weak, with problems of logic and flow, though topic is still addressed
- 1 Development is seriously flawed or illogical

**C. Paragraphing: paragraphs are well-developed, have clear topics, and support thesis**

- 5 Paragraphs well-constructed; flow logically; transitions felicitous
- 4 Paragraphs well-constructed; flow is logical; transitions are solid
- 3 Paragraphs are adequate; some transitions weak
- 2 Paragraphs tend to be weak and vague; transitions unclear
- 1 Paragraphs poor; transitions vague or nonexistent; flow is illogical

**D. Language: Writing is grammatical and use of language is effective and appropriate to purpose**

- 5 Grammar consistently correct; diction excellent; stylistically mature and free from error
- 4 Grammar largely correct; diction appropriate; largely free from usage error
- 3 Grammar/diction adequate, though occasionally weak and unimaginative; some errors of usage evident
- 2 Grammar and diction errors frequent; many errors of application
- 1 Grammar and diction inappropriate to task and consistently unacceptable

**E. Sources and Documentation: sources are appropriate & documented according to discipline style**

- 5 Evidence/detail judiciously-chosen and enhance thesis; documentation is impeccable
- 4 Evidence/detail support thesis; documentation is solid
- 3 Some supporting evidence/detail provided; documentation largely adequate
- 2 Evidence/detail trivial or inappropriate; errors of documentation evident
- 1 Evidence/detail inappropriate or nonexistent; documentation is not provided or is provided incorrectly

The evaluation of written communication skills rubric by which students are evaluated contains five skill levels. These levels are as follows: 5-excellent, 4-good, 3-average, 2-below average, and 1-far below average. These skills levels are the same for five areas of performance pertaining to a student's presentation.

- All students are expected to perform on average at level three or above.
- Forty percent of the students are expected on average to perform at level two or above.
- Fifteen percent of the students on average are expected to perform at level one.

### C. Senior Oral presentation

#### Evaluation of Oral Communication Skills

Oral communication is defined as the ability to convey ideas/information in a fashion that is clear, ordered, and well-supported; that reflects the ability of the speaker to respond to the audience as well as to make a prepared statement; and to employ for the purpose a style that is appropriate to the occasion.

## II. Public communication skills

5=Excellent    4=Good    3=Average    2=Below Average    1=Far Below

Average

### A. Ability to present a main thesis in a clear manner.

5 Overall intent is unmistakable; audience has compelling reason to listen; speaker's credibility is explicitly stated or clear

4 Overall intent clear; audience reason to listen clear; speaker credibility good

3 A topic is introduced; audience reason to listen may be vague or unclear; credibility is identified

2 Topic/intent vague; speaker's credibility unclear; speaker credibility unclear

1 Intent of presentation is not identifiable; audience has no reason to listen; speaker has no credibility

### B. Ability to present main points/ideas in a clear manner.

5 Points are clearly related to and support thesis; points/ideas emerge w/thorough logic; cues and transitions direct

4 Points relate to thesis; points/ideas emerge fairly clearly; cues and transitions fairly direct

3 Points/ideas may not all be directly related to thesis; may cues/transitions direct; many ideas communicated

2 Points/ideas only tangentially applicable; logical progression vague; cues vague; rambles somewhat

1 No points are identifiable; lacks any logical progress; no clear cues or transitions at all

### C. Ability to present sufficient research/arguments to support thesis.

5 Has excellent knowledge of & effectively uses relevant literature/theory

4 Has good knowledge of & often effectively uses relevant literature/theory

3 Has acceptable understanding of literature/theory; may use ineffectively in areas

2 Has less than satisfactory understanding of literature/theory; does not effectively apply to thesis

1 Appears to have no understanding of or ability to use literature/theory whatsoever

**D. Use of language (grammatically and field-specifically) appropriate.**

- 5 Language/syntax correct, even elegant; topic-applicable; free from error; direct and tactful
- 4 Language/syntax consistently correct; largely topic-applicable; mostly free from error; mostly direct
- 3 Language/syntax generally correct, with few errors of usage or application; tactful
- 2 Language/syntax sometimes correct; many errors of usage and application
- 1 Language/syntax completely inappropriate or incorrectly applied; lacking tact or direction

**E. Visual aids appropriate for the context and field.**

- 5 Visual aids are appropriate, professional, interesting, and thoroughly enhance presentation.
- 4 Visual aids appropriate but may be unexciting; enhance presentation
- 3 Visual aids are appropriate but not as professional (handmade charts versus Power Point); enhance presentation somewhat
- 2 Visual aids poorly executed; have little relevance to presentation; little reference made to them
- 1 Visual aids nonexistent or irrelevant; little to no reference made to them

**F. Ability to respond to questions in a clear fashion.**

- 5 Speaker responds promptly, thoroughly, respectfully to questions
- 4 Speaker responds fairly promptly, fairly thoroughly, & respectfully to questions
- 3 Speaker accepts questions; is respectful; response adequate but may require further elaboration
- 2 Speaker accepts questions; may be impatient or uneasy with questions; responses imprecise or inadequate
- 1 Speaker's response is unclear; unable to answer question; consistently misconstrues questions

**G. Delivery includes effective verbal and nonverbal techniques**

- 5 Speaker is conversational/natural; makes consistent eye contact; audible and well-paced; gestures enhance presentation; consults notes smoothly & as appropriate or does not refer to them at all (discipline-specific issue); good posture
- 4 Speaker largely natural; often makes eye contact; audible; few hesitations; gestures mostly enhance; relies on notes bit more than should be necessary but without interrupting flow; posture seldom needs correction
- 3 Speaks with some hesitations; makes eye contact sometimes; audible; gestures are not distracting; use of notes may interrupt presentation; posture sometimes sloppy or inappropriate
- 2 Speaker somewhat stilted; seldom makes eye contact; sometimes inaudible; use of notes too often interrupts flow; posture inappropriate; gestures may not fit presentation
- 1 speaker is stilted; makes no eye contact; is not audible; no gestures or are distracting; reads only from notes giving impression that speaker is unprepared

The evaluation of oral communication skills rubric by which students are evaluated contains five skill levels. These levels are as follows: 5-excellent, 4-good, 3-average, 2-below average, and 1-far below average. These skills levels are the same for seven areas of performance pertaining to a student's presentation.

- All students are expected to perform on average at level three or above.
- Forty percent of the students are expected on average to perform at level two or above.

Fifteen percent of the students on average are expected to perform at level one.

**How often, when, and under what circumstances will you gather the relevant data?**

The relevant data will be collected during the fall semester of the senior year of each Psychology major. This assessment will be administered as a part of the Senior Seminar, PSYC 499, which is a requirement in the College Catalogue for Psychology Majors.

**Summarize what has been learned about how well students are achieving desired outcomes.**

**Action Plan: What plans have you for the future based on the data gathered that will aim to improve student learning/achievement? Should students perform at less than the standard expected, what steps will the department take to improve their learning/performance? What steps does the department anticipate to improve the program otherwise?**

During the spring semester of each college academic year, the Psychology faculty will be given a detailed copy of student outcomes and scores from the proceeding fall semester. These results will be analyzed by each faculty member. After such time as would be appropriate to give adequate time for analysis and objective criticism, the Psychology faculty will meet to discuss any needed steps to raise student performance or make program changes for improving the major.

If students perform at a level less than expected one of the following steps is an example of what might be appropriate:

1. Senior comprehensive exam
  - Address the areas of students' weakness in a core course by adding to the content area.
  - Increase the outside reading requirements in a core course.
  - Add or modify courses in a core subject area to strengthen what is taught.
2. Writing competency
  - Require term papers in a larger number of the core courses that utilize the same written communication rubric as used in the Senior Seminar.
  - Address in detail specific areas of weakness, such as APA writing style earlier in our core classes.
  - Add a course dealing with Psychology thesis writing that specifically addresses common weaknesses found in our students and gives students further opportunities to develop these skills.
3. Oral competency

- Require oral presentations in a larger number of the core courses that utilize the same oral communication rubric as used in the Senior Seminar.
- Address in detail specific areas of weakness, such as how to incorporate research into a presentation or appropriately cite research in a presentation. These specific areas could be addressed earlier in our core courses.
- Require students use the oral communication lab in order to gain experience and knowledge pertaining to oral communication.

## **Comments**