

Department of Psychology

Undergraduate Program

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan

Overview

We revised our Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP) in Spring 2009 because the original plan—one of the first at CSUF—no longer met the evolving standards for SOAPs. The main issue was that our original goals and learning outcomes were much more numerous and detailed than is currently recommended, making it nearly impossible to assess them all on a regular basis. In addition, some new elements had become standard (a curriculum map), while some old elements had become obsolete (an assignment x objectives matrix). The revised plan continues to be a work in progress, but it comes much closer to meeting current university standards and we expect it to help streamline the assessment process considerably.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Psychology is to provide quality instruction in behavioral science to the students of California State University, Fresno. The program is designed to promote and develop skills in critical thinking and expression, quantitative reasoning, scientific literacy, and an appreciation of different perspectives in psychology. These abilities may be applied to diverse occupations, graduate training, and community service.

Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology

Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

Learning Outcomes

1. Characterize the nature of psychology as a discipline, including explaining why it is a science, identifying its primary objectives (describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling behavior), explaining its major theoretical perspectives, and comparing and contrasting its assumptions with those of other disciplines.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology (learning and cognition, individual differences, biological bases of behavior, development across the lifespan, sociocultural issues), the history of psychology, and its overarching themes (e.g., heredity-environment, variability-continuity, free will-determinism).
3. Demonstrate an awareness of human diversity at both the individual and cultural levels, and explain how social and cultural factors can affect psychological processes and the interpretability of research findings in psychology.

Goal 2: Research Methods and Critical Thinking in Psychology

Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

Learning Outcomes

1. Review the psychological literature on a topic, including accessing and using relevant databases, identifying, reading, and understanding relevant research, integrating information from different sources to support a thesis or develop a hypothesis, and writing an APA style literature review.
2. Design, conduct, and analyze the results of basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods, including application of the APA ethical principles, and write an APA style empirical research report.
3. Use critical thinking effectively, including evaluating the quality of information (e.g., differentiating empirical evidence from other kinds), recognizing and defending against common fallacies in thinking, avoiding being swayed by appeals to emotion or authority, evaluating popular reports of psychological research, and constructing effective arguments.
4. Display critical thinking values consistent with psychology as an empirical science, including intellectual curiosity, tolerance of complexity and ambiguity, and skepticism.

Goal 3: Application of Psychology

Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.

Learning Outcomes

1. Describe theories, best practices, and professional training for major applied areas of psychology (e.g., clinical, ABA, I/O).
2. Identify appropriate applications of psychology, such as the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, the treatment of abnormal behavior, psychological testing and measurement, and psychology-based interventions in clinical, counseling, educational, I/O, and community psychology.
3. Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings to social issues and to everyday life, while recognizing and addressing ethical issues.

Goal 4: Personal and Career Development

Develop insight into their own and others' behavior and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement, including their own future educational and career paths.

Learning Outcomes

1. Apply psychological principles to promote personal development, such as demonstrating self-regulation in setting and achieving goals, assessing their own performance quality accurately, incorporating feedback for improved performance, and evaluating the quality of one's own thinking (metacognition).
2. Describe preferred career paths based on accurate self-assessment of abilities, achievement, motivation, and work habits, and develop skills and experiences relevant to achieving selected career goals.
3. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills in a variety of formats and for a variety of purposes.
4. Exhibit the ability to collaborate effectively by working with groups to complete projects within reasonable time frames, solicit and integrate diverse viewpoints, manage conflicts appropriately and ethically, and develop relevant workplace skills.

Curriculum Map

Course	Goals / Outcomes													
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
10	I	I	I			I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	
36		E												
42	R			I	I	R	E						R	
121		E												
122		E	R											
123		E	R											
124		E												
125		E												
126		E												
128		E												
136		E						R	R		R			
143	R			R	R	R	E						R	
144	E			E	E	E	E			R		R	R	E
145				R	R	R	R						R	
149	R		R	R	R	R	R	E	E					
154		E	R											
155		E	R											
156		E	R											
162		E	R					E	E			R		
166		E	R					E	E					
169		E	R					E	E					
172		E						E	E		R			
173		E						E	E					
175		E	R					E	E					
176		E						E	E					
177		E						E	E					
179			R					E	E					R
182	E	E	E										R	
184			R					E	E				R	R

Notes: I = Introduced, E = Emphasized, R = Reinforced. The approach taken here is conservative. A course is considered to address an objective only when the standard approach to that course across all instructors addresses the objective. Individual sections of these courses address more objectives than the ones shown here.

Assessment Activities

Direct Measures

ETS Major Field Test – This standardized test will be given at intervals to assess our knowledge goals and to see what content areas of psychology our students do well and poorly in, and how they compare to students at similar institutions.

Psych 144 Research Papers – All students write an APA style empirical research report in Psych 144. Samples of these will be evaluated according to a rubric to assess several of our methodology, critical thinking, and writing objectives.

9/16/2010

Psych 182 Embedded Exam Questions – All students must take Psych 182, which most do when they are seniors. We will embed essay questions in their exams to assess knowledge, critical thinking, and writing objectives.

Indirect Measures

Senior Survey – We will use a senior survey, given in Psych 182, to assess student perceptions of learning, satisfaction with the program, and objectives related to personal and career development.

Alumni Survey – We have a continuously available online alumni survey, which we are using to assess perceptions of student learning, satisfaction, and objective related to personal and career development. This also allows us to track the success of our students after they complete our program.

Participation Counts – Each year we will count the number of students who participate in faculty research, who become co-authors on articles or presentations, who present research at conferences, work as interns or volunteers, are involved in psychology related clubs, and so on. Because many of our objectives might be achieved through these means, it is important to know how many students take part in these activities.

Outcomes x Methods Matrix

The matrix below shows which objectives are going to be assessed by each of the proposed assessment activities.

Method	Goals / Outcomes													
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
ETS Exam	X	X												
Psych 144 Papers				X	X	X	X						X	
Embedded Essays	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X			X	
Senior Survey											X	X		X
Alumni Survey			X			X	X				X	X		X
Participation Counts			X		X					X				X

Timeline

The matrix below shows a tentative timeline for our assessment activities. We plan to repeat each of the activities on a regular basis to track changes over time. Of course, this schedule is subject to change depending on what the data tell us.

Method	Semester									
	S09	F09	S10	F10	S11	F11	S12	F12	S13	F13
ETS Exam			X						X	
Psych 144 Papers		X		X		X		X		X
Embedded Essays		X			X			X		
Senior Survey	X				X				X	
Alumni Survey			X				X			
Participation Counts		X		X		X		X	X	

9/16/2010

Closing the Loop

In the Department of Psychology, we have an Undergraduate Committee responsible for monitoring the undergraduate program, suggesting curriculum and other catalog changes, and reviewing changes proposed by others. The Chair of this committee is also the Assessment Coordinator.

The members of the Undergraduate Committee are responsible for designing and carrying out assessment activities with the help of the entire faculty as needed. The Undergraduate Committee also analyzes the resulting data and suggests changes to the program as necessary. Assessment data and suggested program changes are presented to the entire faculty in the monthly faculty meeting, and the entire faculty decides whether to implement any changes (and they are also free to suggest their own changes).