**Department of Psychology**

**M.A. Graduate Assessment Report 2015-2016**

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**1. What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?**

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| --- | --- |
| Learning Outcome 1: | Students can evaluate the appropriate use of various data analytic techniques for addressing different types of questions and hypotheses. |
| Learning Outcome 2: | Students can evaluate the logic and data of research. |
| Learning Outcome 3: | Students can use the library, data bases, and the internet to locate relevant research, theory, and information necessary to plan, conduct, and interpret results of research studies. |
| Learning Outcome 4: | Students can formulate a testable research hypothesis and design basic studies to address psychological questions using different research methodologies.  Students can apply the appropriate use of various research designs for addressing different types of questions and hypotheses. |
| Learning Outcome 5: | Students can enter and analyze data using a computer statistical package and interpret basic descriptive and inferential statistics.  Students can apply the scientific method and statistical techniques in research (e.g., thesis). |
| Learning Outcome 6: | Students can produce well-organized papers and essays without grammatical errors. |

**2. What instruments did you use to assess them?**

Embedded Questions

To assess learning outcomes 1 and 2, we used embedded questions in the final exam given in Measurement, Research Design, and Statistics (Psychology 244A), a course required for all first year graduate students. The ‘Selecting Statistics’ questions ask students to read a number of research scenarios and select the appropriate statistic to match the research scenario. This question addresses Learning Outcome 1. The ‘Interpreting SPSS Output’ questions ask students to inspect a SPSS output and answer a number of questions regarding the substantive meaning of the output. This question addresses Learning Outcome 2. Although no standards for these assessments are outlined in the current SOAP, it is generally expected that more than 75% of students will get each of these questions correct.

Thesis Evaluation Rubric

To assess learning outcomes 3-5, we use a thesis evaluation rubric that is filled out by all members of a thesis committee upon successful defense of that thesis. The rubric asks raters to rank the various components of the thesis (i.e., Introduction, Literature Review, Method, etc) on a 4-point scale (1 = Inadequate; 2 = Adequate; 3 = Good; 4 = Excellent). Learning Outcome 3 is assessed by thesis evaluation rubric questions 1 & 2 (pertaining to the Introduction and Literature Reviews, respectively). Learning Outcome 4 is assessed by thesis evaluation rubric question 3 (pertaining to the Method section). Learning Outcome 5 is assessed by thesis evaluation rubric questions 4 and 5 (pertaining to the Results and Discussion sections, respectively). Learning Outcome 6 is assessed by thesis evaluation rubric question 6 (pertaining to the overall mechanics of writing throughout the thesis). Although no standards for these assessments are outlined in the current SOAP, it is generally expected that all theses will be rated with 3s or 4s on each of the thesis rubric questions.

**3. What did you discover from these data?**

Embedded Questions

Learning Outcomes 1&2: The final exam for Psych 244 included ten embedded items testing students' ability to identify the correct statistical test to use to answer various research questions. The mean number correct was 7.78 (78%) with a standard deviation of 1.88 (12%), with n=30. The final exam also included eight items testing students' ability to read and interpret SPSS output. The mean number correct was 7.13 (89%) with a standard deviation of 1.17 (15%). These means are generally in line with the previous year’s values (84% & 77%, respectively). These data are slightly misleading because all Psychology graduate students are included in these data – both M.A. and Ed.S. students. Removing the Ed.S. students from this descriptive analysis, the mean correct percentage on the first set of statistical questions (i.e., identifying the correct statistical test) was approximately 82%, and approximately 91% for the ability to read and interpret SPSS output, with n=20.

We believe these data demonstrate that the Department is successfully meeting Learning Outcomes 1 and 2, particularly for the questions on interpreting SPSS output. We see room for improvement on proper training for identifying correct statistical tests. These data have been forwarded to the Psych 244A instructor to encourage reinforcing these concepts.

Thesis Rubric Evaluation

Learning Outcomes 3-6: 17 M.A. theses were evaluated using the rubric. Each thesis is associated with a committee of at least three members, each of whom is responsible for evaluating the thesis using the rubric. 46 evaluations were received, demonstrating an approximate 90% submission compliance rate for committee members. The following table outlines the proportion of each response for each of the evaluation questions relevant to the current assessment report. It should be noted that Learning Outcomes 3 and 5 each incorporate data from 2 questions, and thus have N = 92.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Learning Outcome | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate |
| 3 (Intro & Lit Review) | 40 (43.5%) | 35 (38%) | 17 (18.5%) |  |
| 4 (Method) | 16 (34.8%) | 26 (56.5%) | 4 (8.7%) |  |
| 5 (Results & Discussion) | 30 (32.6%) | 47 (51.1%) | 14 (15.2%) | 1 (1.1%) |
| 6 (Mechanics) | 21 (45.7%) | 17 (37%) | 6 (13%) | 2 (4.3%) |

For comparison, below is same table from data collected during the 2014-2015 academic year. Not only are there many more responses (46 versus 10) but most 2015-2016 values show a significant improvement from the previous year.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Learning Outcome | Excellent | Good | Adequate |
| 3 (Intro & Lit Review) | 3 (15%) | 11 (55%) | 6 (30%) |
| 4 (Method) | 3 (30%) | 5 (50%) | 2 (20%) |
| 5 (Results & Discussion) | 4 (20%) | 11 (55%) | 5 (25%) |
| 6 (Mechanics) | 5 (50%) | 2 (20%) | 3 (30%) |

The data are encouraging, both in terms of responses from committee members and in the distribution of responses. However, the Department would like to see improvement in the overall quality of the MA theses, with a particular emphasis on Results and Discussion. The Psychology Graduate Committee will address this issue, with a focus on how those components of the thesis might be improved.

**4. What changes did you make as a result of the findings?**

Although department standards were met in the assessment of each learning outcome, it is clear that steps must be taken to exceed the standards by a wider margin. The MA degree in psychology is currently undergoing a curriculum overhaul, and, consequently, the SOAP and assessment goals for the program are also being modified. It is expected that this overhaul will result in several changes consistent with the goal of exceeding current standards by wider margins:

* Explicit training in statistical methods by way of a lab class in statistics and a new “Statistical Proficiency Exam” that students will be required to pass before advancing to candidacy. This exam will be administered in the Psych 244B course, taught spring 2017.
* Two classes specifically targeted to the development and writing of the Introduction, Literature Review and Methods sections of theses.

These curriculum changes (and consequent SOAP and assessment changes) are currently being evaluated by the curriculum committee of the College of Science and Mathematics. It is expected that this changes will be adopted shortly, allowing implementation during the 2016-2017 academic year.

**5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2016-17 academic year?**

It is expected that all assessment activities reported for the 2015-16 year will also be conducted in the 2016-17 year. Additionally, the Psychology Department will administer an exit survey to all outgoing MA students. This was last given in 2014-2015 and will be revised for the 2016-2017 academic year. Notably, our assessment activities will also include an analysis of data from the Statistics Proficiency Exam, which will be administered as a part of the Psych 244B course in spring 2017.

**6. What Progress Have You Made on Items From Your Last Program Review Action Plan?**

The following goals are listed in our 2014-2018 Action Plan:

*Track graduate student alumni career progress via telephone survey of recent graduates.*

Data were collected from Psychology graduate student alumni Fall 2014 via telephone survey. A total of 127 alumni were identified who graduated between Fall 2007 and Spring 2014. Unfortunately, only 24 alumni were successfully contacted (19% response rate); 14 were School Psychology graduates, 8 were General/Experimental graduates, and 2 were Applied Behavior Analysis graduates. All respondents (100%) were glad they chose to further their education at Fresno State, and 87.5% were currently employed full-time. Because the response rate and the overall sample was so low, data were examined by the Chair, but results were not presented to the faculty nor were results presented in a scientific venue.

The College of Science and Mathematics is currently in the process of tracking and contacting alumni from across the entire college. A call went out to faculty Spring 2016, with follow up requests occurring this month, to identify alumni they know with interesting professions, with the hope that these alumni would be interested and able to reach out to current students. CSM alumni will be encouraged to post their information with the Fresno State Alumni Association “Career Connections.”

*Revise our M.A. SOAP*

We revised our SOAP, clarifying and simplifying goals and learning outcomes, and, in parallel, modified our course structuring for the General/Experimental students, adding a “research data analyst” track, including coursework and practicum experiences. Those documents were approved by the department Spring 2016, and are currently undergoing review at the College level.

*Coordinate with the Division of Graduate Studies to allow student thesis format to more closely approximate scientific manuscript format.*

This topic has been discussed in the Psychology Graduate Committee, and additional encouragement of this format will be seen from our new Graduate Coordinator and Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Karl Oswald.

*Increase number of tenure-track faculty*

2015-2016 we requested, searched for, and successfully recruited a new faculty member in Applied Behavior Analysis. Dr. Laura Grow has joined the faculty in fall 2016.