

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Psychology Department

Graduate Program

M.A.

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## **1. Introduction**

The M.A. program in the Department of Psychology is an integral part of the doctoral program and is designed to provide graduate-level training in the foundational areas of psychology in order to prepare students for more concentrated study at the doctoral level. Only one program emphasis within the department offers a terminal M.A. degree: the school psychology program admits students seeking Specialist-level certification as school psychologists. Although students seeking a terminal M.A. degree and those seeking the Ph.D. share many of the same experiences and requirements during the master's program, there are some differences in these programs, and these will be highlighted below.

Consistent with the doctoral program, students in the M.A. program develop familiarity with the methods of research relevant to the discipline and gain a broad understanding of the field through course work in such areas as clinical, cognitive, developmental, social, industrial/organizational, and neuroscience. Students planning to pursue an advanced degree demonstrate methodological and content mastery through the completion of a master's thesis, an original research project that makes a contribution to the field of psychology. For students in applied areas of psychology, specialized skills associated with professional practice are developed.

Although each student's curriculum and other pedagogical experiences are individualized, six primary learning objectives have been identified for students completing the M.A. program:

1. Students will develop an understanding of the basic methodology and content foundations of the field of psychology.
2. For those students in the thesis option, completion of a research project that makes a contribution to the field of psychology.
3. For those students in applied areas of psychology, the development of applied skills associated with professional practice in their area of specialty.
4. For those students planning to pursue the Ph.D. degree, the development of methodological and content expertise necessary to complete Ph.D.-level training.
5. For those students terminating at the M.A. level, the development of expertise necessary for successful entry into applied, academic, business, government, and health-related professional settings.
6. Matriculation and successful degree completion of students from protected-class groups.

## **2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Student Learning Outcome 1. Students will develop an understanding of the basic methodology and content foundations of the field of psychology.

- Completion of departmental foundation courses with at least a 3.00 grade-point average (1)

- For students terminating at the M.A. level, evaluation of a comprehensive examination by a committee of department faculty members (1)

Program-level Target: Students have an average proficiency in two research tools courses (“B”) or high proficiency (“A”) in one research tool course. 90% of program students will successfully reach that level of proficiency in the tool course(s).

Assessment Method: Doctoral students’ records will be evaluated to assess their performance in designated tool courses.

Student Learning Outcome 2. Doctoral students will have a comprehensive knowledge of their specialty area in psychology.

Program-level Target: The target will be that 90% of students sitting for the Candidacy Exam will successfully complete the exam.

Assessment Method: Evaluate the Candidacy Exam by a committee of department faculty members.

Student Learning Outcome 3. For those students in applied areas of psychology, the development of applied skills associated with professional practice in their area of specialty.

Program-level Target:

- a) 90% of students in applied programs (i.e.g clinical and school) will complete required practicum courses.
- b) 100% of students in applied programs (i.e.g clinical and school) seeking an internship will successfully obtain an approved internship and that 100% of interns will receive an acceptable evaluation by their supervisor.

Assessment Method: The placement records of each student will be examined in the applied programs (school and clinical psychology) every 3 years to assess success in practicum completion and internship placements.

Student Learning Outcome 4. All students complete a research project that demonstrates the ability to conduct original scholarship and makes a substantial contribution to the field of psychology.

Program-level Target:

- a) 80% of students will successfully complete the dissertation and 90% of students completing the dissertation will receive a Dean’s Designee rating of “agree” or “strongly agree” for the degree to which the dissertation made a “substantial contribution to knowledge.”
- b) 90% of students will successfully complete the oral defense and 90% of students completing the dissertation will receive a Dean’s Designee rating of “agree” or “strongly agree” for the degree to which the oral defense was “sufficiently rigorous for a research-doctoral degree.”

Assessment Method: Student records will be examined to assess whether the evaluation of the written and oral dissertation by the committee of department and outside department faculty members indicated a pass.

Student Learning Outcome 5. Demonstration of teaching effectiveness.

Program-level Target: 80% of students will receive student ratings of “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.”

Assessment Method: The Director of Graduate Studies, in conjunction with the appropriate faculty, will examine the evaluations of doctoral students serving as instructors or laboratory assistants for proficiency as defined above.

Student Learning Outcome 6. Successful entry into applied, academic, business, government, and health related professional settings.

Program-level Target: 90% of alumni will rate their initial placements as “related” or very related” to their graduate training.

Assessment Method: Prior alumni survey will be examined for alumni ratings.

Student Learning Outcome 7. Matriculation and successful degree completion of students from protected-class groups.

Program-level Target: None specified in current plan.

Assessment Method: Maintain a record of number of women and minority students admitted and graduated relative to published national data.

### 3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix – N/A

This second section of the assessment plan is optional but **highly encouraged**. It is an alignment of your degree program student learning outcomes with the university baccalaureate student learning outcomes. **This applies only to undergraduate degree programs.**

### 4. Curriculum Map

The third section is a curriculum map (and is also optional but **highly encouraged**). A curriculum map outlines the scope and sequence of courses students will take and aligns them with the degree program student learning outcomes. The curriculum map is an effective tool for not only sequencing the curriculum and instruction, but also for strategically identifying places for formative and summative assessments of student learning outcomes.

Required core courses are listed along the vertical axis of the matrix in chronological order. Degree program student learning outcomes are listed on the horizontal axis. For each course determine: (1) which outcomes are the *primary* focus of the course, and (2) the degree to which the course supports the outcome (i.e., at a beginning (B), developing (D), or proficient (P) level). Place a B, D, or P in the corresponding cell. It would be *unusual* to find all courses supporting all student learning outcomes—instead, concentrate on the primary focus of each course. This will map out the degree to which core courses support the development of your program student learning outcomes. The Four-Year Degree Path provided by the Office of Student Academic Success may be helpful ([www.niu.edu/osas/DegreePaths](http://www.niu.edu/osas/DegreePaths)). Look for strengths and gaps in the curriculum. Ideally, all outcomes should be supported with coursework through the proficient level. Below is an example of a curriculum map you can modify or model. Note that each course should address at least one student learning outcome, but does NOT have to support all learning outcomes.

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes						
	1 - Research Methodology	2. Knowledge in specific area	3. Professional skill development	4. Original scholarship	5. Teaching Effectiveness	6. Placement in field	7. Focus on protected-groups ?
PSYC 500		B					
PSYC 517		B/D					
PSYC 525		B/D					
PSYC 526		B					
PSYC 528		B/D					
PSYC 565		B/D					
PSYC 571		B/D					
PSYC 573		B					
PSYC 581		B/D					

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes						
	1 - Research Methodology	2. Knowledge in specific area	3. Professional skill development	4. Original scholarship	5. Teaching Effectiveness	6. Placement in field	7. Focus on protected-groups ?
PSYC 601	B	D					
PSYC 603		B/D					
PSYC 603	B	B/D					
PSYC 604	B			B			
PSYC 606	D			B			
PSYC 607	D	B		D			
PSYC 611	B	B					
PSYC 612	D	D					
PSYC 613		B/D					
PSYC 614					B/D		
PSYC 615	B	D	B				
PSYC 616	B	D	B				
PSYC 617	B	D	B				
PSYC 618	D	D	B				
PSYC 619	D	D	B				
PSYC 620	B	B/D					
PSYC 621	B	B/D					
PSYC 622	D	D					
PSYC 624	D	D					
PSYC 625	D	D					
PSYC 627	D	D	B				
PSYC 628	D	D	B				
PSYC 629	D	D	B				
PSYC 630	D	D	B				
PSYC 639		P	D			D	
PSYC 640	D	B	B				

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes						
	1 - Research Methodology	2. Knowledge in specific area	3. Professional skill development	4. Original scholarship	5. Teaching Effectiveness	6. Placement in field	7. Focus on protected-groups ?
PSYC 641	B	B	B				
PSYC 642	D	B	B				
PSYC 643	B	B					
PSYC 644		B	B/D				
PSYC 645	D	D					
PSYC 646	D	D	D			B	
PSYC 647		D	D			B	
PSYC 648		D	D			B	
PSYC 649		P	P			P	
PSYC 651			P			P	
PSYC 652-4			D			P	
PSYC 655-6			P			P	
PSYC 665	D	D					
PSYC 670-2	D	D		D			
PSYC 675	D	D		B			
PSYC 676	D	D		B			
PSYC 677	D	D		B			
PSYC 678	D	D		B			
PSYC 679	B	P					D
PSYC 680		P		D			
PSYC 681			D		P	D	
PSYC 685	D	D	D	D		D	
PSYC 690	D	D	D	D	D		
PSYC 699	P			P			

<b>Course</b>	<b>Program Student Learning Outcomes</b>						
	1 - Research Methodology	2. Knowledge in specific area	3. Professional skill development	4. Original scholarship	5. Teaching Effectiveness	6. Placement in field	7. Focus on protected-groups ?
PSYC 710	P	D		D			
PSYC 712	P	D		D			
PSYC 714	P	D		D			

*Note.* Course supports the outcome at the B=beginning, D=developing, or P=proficient level.

## 5. Assessment Methods

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Examination of graduate student records	<p>SLO#1 Grade records of M.A. students will be used to assess departmental foundation courses</p> <p>SLO#3 Clinical and school graduate students complete practicum courses to develop and refine their professional skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final letter grades or S/U/I of 20 students, randomly selected, will be assessed for the student learning outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For tool classes, a student will receive a letter grade of B or better on two tool courses, or a grade of A in one tool course.</li> <li>- For practicum courses, the student must pass the practicum courses (grading is S/U/I).</li> </ul>	90% of all students will meet the student-level target or better.	Following the spring semester, every 3 years.	Faculty for student-level achievement, Chair for program-level target.	1, 3
Evaluate Comprehensive Exams	<p>Students terminating at the M.A. level are required to take comprehensive exam that is customized to the sub-discipline of the student. A committee of faculty members with appropriate knowledge then reviews the written responses by each student to determine if the responses do not meet the expectation (0), partially meets expectation (1) or fully meets expectation (2). One year of students' exams will be assessed.</p>	To meet SLO a score of 2 must be met.	90% of all students will meet the student-level target (2).	Following the spring semester, every 3 years.	Faculty for student-level achievement, Chair for program-level target.	1

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Assess the evaluation by the internship supervisor	Clinical and school graduate students' complete approved internships to develop and refine their professional skills. One year of students' evaluations will be assessed.	A positive evaluation by the supervisor.	100% of all students will obtain an approved internship and receive a positive evaluation as indicated by their supervisor "good" or "excellent" for their performance.	Following the spring semester, every 3 years.	Supervisor for student-level achievement, Chair for program-level target.	3
Evaluate written thesis	The faculty members assembled as the thesis committee submit evaluations of the written thesis.	90% of all students will receive a positive evaluation by the committee, receiving a "pass" for their thesis.	75% of all students enrolled in the M.A. program will defend a thesis.	Following the spring semester, every 3 years.	Thesis committee members for student-level, Chair for program-level	1,2,4
Survey alumni	Alumni will be surveyed following their graduation to assess their placement in a graduate program or professional setting. The department will conduct their own surveys, as well as using the data from the alumni survey that NIU prepares each year.	On Q49 and Q50 of the alumni survey, the average response will be 5 ("agree") or greater in sample of M.A. graduates that responded.	Proportion of students who are accepted into a doctoral program will be reported for each graduating class. On Q32 and Q14 of the alumni survey, the average response will be 5 ("agree") or greater in sample of M.A. graduates that responded.	Every spring/summer for the department data, Alumni survey occurs after graduation within the academic year	Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, OIE.	4, 5

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Student-level target is the score or performance an individual student must demonstrate to say the student met the student learning outcome. <sup>b</sup> Program-level target is the percent of all students that must demonstrate they meet the student learning outcome.

## ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome					
	1. Research methodology	2. Knowledge in specific area	3. Professional skill development	4. Original scholarship	5. Placement in field	6. Focus on protected-groups?
Examination of graduate student records	F, I	F, I				
Evaluate Comprehensive Exams	S, D	S, D				
Assess the evaluation by the internship supervisor			S, I		S, I	
Evaluate written thesis	S, D	S, D	S, D	S,D		
Survey Alumni					S, I	

*Note.* F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment. See the paragraph above for an explanation of each type of assessment.