

Academic Degree Programs Assessment

Assessment Plan

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Psychology Department

Undergraduate Program

B.A./B.S.

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1. Introduction

A fundamental objective of the baccalaureate program in psychology is to prepare students to function as enlightened, effective citizens in a society that is highly dependent on complex interpersonal relationships. Our goal is to train the students to critically evaluate information that is variable in its quality, methodology, and modality. To achieve this overarching goal, the department's baccalaureate program emphasizes: (a) a broad understanding of current psychological theory and research across the areas of study within the field; and (b) an understanding of and ability to apply the scientific method to the investigation of psychological phenomena. To this end, the department has identified four fundamental learning outcomes appropriate for a B.A. or B.S. in psychology.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to summarize and critically examine psychological theory and research.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to conduct, critically interpret, and communicate about statistical analyses related to psychological research.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively about psychological theory and research.
4. Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings within the field of psychology.

3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

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.**

List each of your program student learning outcomes in the first column of the matrix below. Then identify the degree to which each program student learning outcome supports students meeting each of the eight baccalaureate student learning outcomes (see www.niu.edu/bacreview for additional information on the baccalaureate outcomes). Gauge whether each program outcome strongly supports (S), moderately supports (M), or doesn't support (leave blank) each baccalaureate learning outcome. It is not expected that all program student learning outcomes support all baccalaureate student learning outcomes. You may find that several of your program student learning outcomes moderately support a baccalaureate student learning outcome, and that overall, the program strongly supports the baccalaureate learning outcome. With that in mind, determine the overall support your program provides for each baccalaureate student learning outcome. Place an S or an M in the Overall row, or leave it blank if there is no support. A template follows.

Program Student Learning Outcome	Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes							
	A. Global inter-connections and inter-dependencies	B. Intercultural competencies	C. Analyze human life and natural world inter-connections	D. Critical, creative, and independent thought	E. Communicate clearly and effectively	F. Collaborate with others	G. Quantitative and qualitative reasoning	H. Apply knowledge/skills creatively
1. Summarize and Critically Think about Psychological Theory and Research				S	M		M	M
2. Conduct, Critique and Communicate Statistical Analyses				M	S		S	
3. Write Effectively about Psychological Theory and Research				M	S			M
4. Demonstrate a Broad Knowledge		M		M				
Overall	S	S		M	S		M	M

An optional, but highly encouraged curriculum map begins on the next page.

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). 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. Summarize and Critically Think about Psychological Theory and Research	2. Conduct, Critique and Communicate Statistical Analyses	3. Write Effectively about Psychological Theory and Research	4. Demonstrate a Broad Knowledge
PSYC102	B		B	B
PSYC219	B		B	B
PSYC225	B		B	B
PSYC245	B		B	B
PSYC300	D			D
PSYC305	D	B	D	
PSYC306	D	D	D	
PSYC315	P			
PSYC316		P	P	
PSYC324				
PSYC332	B		B	B
PSYC345	B		B	B

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes			
	1. Summarize and Critically Think about Psychological Theory and Research	2. Conduct, Critique and Communicate Statistical Analyses	3. Write Effectively about Psychological Theory and Research	4. Demonstrate a Broad Knowledge
PSYC351	B		B	B
PSYC360	D			D
PSYC372	D	B	D	D
PSYC400	D	D	D	D
PSYC410	D	P	P	
PSYC411	D	P	P	
PSYC412	D	P	P	
PSYC413	D		P	
PSYC417	D		D	D
PSYC418	D		D	D
PYSC424	D		D	D
PSYC425	D		D	D
PSYC426	D		D	D
PSYC428	D			D
PSYC431	D		D	D
PYSC433		P	P	
PSYC434		P	P	
PSYC464		P	P	
PSYC465	D		D	D
PSYC471	D	D	D	D
PYSC472	D		D	D
PSYC473	D		D	D
PSYC474	D		D	D
PSYC481	D			D
PSYC485		D	D	

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes			
	1. Summarize and Critically Think about Psychological Theory and Research	2. Conduct, Critique and Communicate Statistical Analyses	3. Write Effectively about Psychological Theory and Research	4. Demonstrate a Broad Knowledge
PSYC489				
PYSC495	D		D	D
PSYC496 X	D			
PYSC498	P	D	P	
PSYC499	P	P	P	
PSYC480	D		D	D
PSYC475	D		D	D
PSYC476	P		D	D
<i>Note.</i> Course supports the outcome at the B=beginning, D=developing, or P=proficient level.				

5. Assessment Methods

This final section of the assessment plan describes the assessment methods your degree program will be using to measure how well students are meeting program student learning outcomes. See the *UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a description of characteristics seen in well-functioning assessment methods.

EXPLANATION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS TABLE

The first part of the assessment methods section is an explanation of each assessment method you will be using to measure student learning outcomes. The description needs to be in enough detail to communicate to others what each assessment is, when it will be given, who is responsible for carrying out the assessment, what the desired target level of individual student performance is (to say a single student met the student learning outcome(s)), and what the desired overall target level of performance is for all students (to say the program is meeting the outcome(s)). Individual student-level achievement targets are often preset scores on an exam, scores on a rubric, etc. Program-level targets are often expressed as the percent of students demonstrating they meet individual student-level achievement targets. See the *UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a list of characteristics seen in well-functioning assessment methods. Below is the table you should use to clearly communicate each of the assessment methods to other stakeholders.

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement ^a	Program-Level Target ^b	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Evaluate Laboratory Report	Laboratory papers are 1 component for 400-level psychology laboratory courses. The papers are evaluated for the SLO's 1, 2 and 3. A random selection of student papers are sampled from different laboratory courses and then scored for components relative to each SLO.	80% of student papers sampled will receive a score of 3 or better (progressing or proficient) for the appropriate section.	80% of the student papers will meet expectations (i.e. receive a score of 3 or above).	At the end of the spring semester	Instructor for student level; chair for the program level.	1, 2, 3

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement ^a	Program-Level Target ^b	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Alumni Survey	Questions from the alumni survey conducted by NIU of recent graduates will be used to determine whether the respondents rate their academic training as challenging and focused on critical thinking skills (Q35/52 and Q62/70). In addition, responses from the alumni survey questions 65/48 and 66/49 will be examined for whether the respondents found their training effective in problem solving and analytical thinking, respectively.	90% of the respondents will rate their experience at NIU as helpful (2) or very helpful (1).	90% of the respondents will rate their experience at NIU as helpful (2) or very helpful (1).	Annually	Institutional Research, Chair	1,2
Evaluate Writing Sample	Papers from 400-level psychology courses are evaluated for the SLO's 1 and 3. A random selection of student papers are sampled from different 400 level topic courses and then scored on the VALUES rubric.	80% of student papers sampled will receive a score of 3 or better (progressing or proficient) for the appropriate section.	80% of the student papers will meet expectations (i.e. receive a score of 3 or above). Further analysis of the evaluation will allow comparison across domains for SLO#4. 75% of students will receive a score of 3 or better in 3 domains of psychology.	At the end of spring semester	Instructor for student level; chair for the program level.	1, 3, 4

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement ^a	Program-Level Target ^b	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Evaluate Student Transcripts	Randomly select 40 graduating seniors with a B.A./B.S. in psychology. Determine whether each student completed courses in 3 of the 4 domains of psychology (clinical, neuroscience, social/industrial organization, cognitive/school/developmental)	Students will successfully complete psychology courses from at least 3 domains.	100% of B.A./B.S. psychology students will complete courses in at least 3 domains.	May of each year, after final grades are entered	Chair	4
<i>Note.</i> ^a Student-level target is the score or performance an individual student must demonstrate to say the student met the student learning outcome. ^b Program-level target is the percent of all students that must demonstrate they meet the student learning outcome.						

ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

The assessment methods section concludes with an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix that maps which assessments will measure a given student learning outcome. Use your curriculum map to identify key places in the curriculum where you could capture already existing assessment data to use as a measure of program student learning outcomes (e.g., major projects/performances, capstone experiences, etc.). Outcomes are listed in the first row, and each assessment method is listed in the first column. It is useful if assessments are listed in chronological order, from the first students will see, to the last. For each assessment method determine: (1) which outcome(s) it *primarily* measures, (2) if it is being used for formative (F) or summative (S) purposes, and (3) whether it is an indirect (I) or direct (D) measure of the student learning outcome. Formative assessments occur earlier in the curriculum and are used to see if students are on track and progressing sufficiently; summative assessments occur at or near the end of the curriculum and are used to see if students have successfully met the program student learning outcomes. Direct assessments are those that compellingly and clearly measure student performance (e.g., exam score, performance assessment, direct observation). Indirect assessments are rough estimates and proxies of student performance (e.g., self-reports of learning, alumni perceptions, etc.). Place an F or S and an I or D in the corresponding cell. This will map out where your degree program is planning to conduct formative and summative assessments using direct and/or indirect methods. Look for opportunities and gaps. *Capitalize on what you are already doing.* See how it aligns with the curriculum map. Below is an example of an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix you can modify or model. Note that each assessment method does NOT have to measure ALL student learning outcomes. All assessment methods should be explained in the *Explanation of Assessment Methods* table.

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcomes			
	1. Summarize and Critically Think about Psychological Theory and Research	2. Conduct, Critique and Communicate Statistical Analyses	3. Write Effectively about Psychological Theory and Research	4. Demonstrate a Broad Knowledge
Evaluate Laboratory Report	S, D	F, D	S, D	
Alumni Survey	S, I	S, I		
Evaluate Writing Sample	S, D		S, D	S, D
Evaluate Student Transcripts				S, I
<i>Note.</i> 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.				