

**Department of Psychology**  
**Undergraduate Program Assessment Report, 2006-2007 Academic Year**  
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Overview of Assessment Activities

The Department of Psychology conducts an annual assessment program, evaluating students at two points in their education. First, students complete assessment materials at the beginning of their work in the psychology major when they enroll in PSY 201, Introduction to Research Methods. Typically, this course is completed in the second or third semester at ISU. Second, students complete the assessment materials near the completion of the major, when they enroll in the required “culminating experience” course: either PSY 484 (Field Work in Psychology) or PSY 486 (Research in Psychology).

Students in these three courses complete four assessment instruments each semester: (1) the Basic Terms and Concepts Test, a multiple-choice evaluation, (2) a Library Skills Assessment, (3) a Writing Skills Assessment, and (4) a Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. For each of these instruments, the mean score of entry-level, PSY 201 students will be compared to advanced-level, PSY 484/486 students. To test for statistical significance, independent sample *t*-tests will be performed for each assessment instrument. As in previous years, it was expected that PSY 484/486 students would significantly out-perform their entry-level PSY 201 counterparts on the four assessment instruments.

Assessment #1: Basic Terms and Concepts Test

The Basic Terms and Concepts Test is a 50-item, multiple-choice assessment designed to evaluate students' knowledge of core concepts in psychology. Although our Department has used a similar test in past years' assessments, the evaluation instrument was revised this year to better reflect the core areas taught in our undergraduate curriculum. Whereas in the past the assessment contained 40 items and encompassed six content areas in psychology, the newly re-designed one is 50 items in length and encompasses ten core areas of our curriculum. The 50 items are drawn from the areas representing our required and core courses: research methods, statistics, social psychology, developmental psychology, learning, perception, cognition, biological psychology, personality psychology, and abnormal psychology.

Advanced students in PSY 484/486 ( $n = 39$ ) were compared to entry-level students in PSY 201 ( $n = 106$ ). Results showed significantly higher scores for the advanced students ( $M = 32.33$ ) compared to the entry-level students ( $M = 25.74$ ):  $t(143) = -5.04, p < .001$ . Thus, as in previous years, these data show that knowledge is significantly enhanced in the core areas of psychology as students progress through the major.

Library Skills Assessment

The Library Skills Assessment evaluates students' abilities to obtain psychology-related information from the library; the assessment requires students to use psychology-related library

resources, search engines, and the internet. For example, students are required to find journal articles when only provided the authors' names, to find an article through an on-line data base and put its abstract into their own words, to locate a journal in current periodicals and provide the color of its cover, and to sign up for an Interlibrary Loan account (to name a few). Therefore, this instrument assesses students' abilities to access library information via the web and in-person at the library.

Advanced students in PSY 484/486 ( $n = 10$ ) were compared to entry-level students in PSY 201 ( $n = 58$ ). Scores were determined by summing the number of correct responses to the assessment; possible scores ranges from 0 to 16. Results showed that student performance was not significantly different: advanced students ( $M = 9.60$ ) performed no better than entry-level students ( $M = 10.28$ ) on this assessment:  $t(66) = .55$ , n.s.

We also collected self-report data on perceived difficulty of the assessment and time spent completing the assessment. Students were asked to rate how difficult they perceived the assessment to be along a 6-point scale (1 = *very difficult*, 6 = *very easy*). Students were subsequently asked to estimate how much time, in hours, they spent completing the assignment. Consistent with their overall performance, entry-level students ( $M = 2.60$ ) did not find the assessment to be more difficult than the advanced students ( $M = 2.89$ ):  $t(62) = -.63$ , n.s. In addition, the entry-level students ( $M = 1.71$ ) did not report spending more time (in hours) on the assessment than their advanced counterparts ( $M = 1.58$ ):  $t(59) = .43$ , n.s. Although these findings are not in the expected direction, they are consistent with data from the past several years. We believe there is a likely explanation. It is possible that the PSY 201 students were given an advantage because of the immediacy of their training: they completed this assessment shortly after receiving in-class instruction in how to use our library system.

### Writing Skills Assessment

The Writing Skills Assessment required students to read three article abstracts and compare/contrast the findings presented in those abstracts. Student responses were scored along a 5-point continuum according to clarity, organization, grammar/spelling, and proper citation style; higher scores reflect better writing ability. Advanced students in PSY 484/486 ( $n = 20$ ) were compared to entry-level students in PSY 201 ( $n = 90$ ). Results showed significantly higher scores for the advanced students ( $M = 3.40$ ) compared to the entry-level students ( $M = 2.56$ ):  $t(108) = -2.99$ ,  $p < .01$ . These data suggest that students' writing skills are more developed at the end of their tenure in the major as compared to when they begin the major.

### Critical Thinking Skills Assessment

The Critical Thinking Skills Assessment required students to critically evaluate a research study summarized in a newspaper article. Students were presented with information about a study examining the relationship between exercise and depression. Students were asked to critique the experiment as it was presented in the newspaper article, listing any additional information they would need about the study before reaching a conclusion about the study's validity. Student responses were scored along a 5-point continuum according to the number of critique points listed, clarity of argument, logical structure, and grammar/spelling; higher scores reflect better

critical thinking skills. Advanced students in PSY 484/486 ( $n = 21$ ) were compared to entry-level students in PSY 201 ( $n = 90$ ). Results showed significantly higher scores for the advanced students ( $M = 4.05$ ) compared to the entry-level students ( $M = 3.42$ ):  $t(109) = -2.24, p < .05$ . These data suggest that students develop a deeper understanding of the methodological issues underlying research in psychology. In addition, these data imply that students' abilities to intelligently question material presented as fact improves over the course of the major. Thus, not only is students' knowledge of psychological concepts and methods stronger when they graduate from our program relative to when they begin (as indicated by their significantly higher scores on the Basic Terms and Concepts Test), they also are able to better apply that knowledge to real-world problems and applications.

## **Appendix G: Student Outcomes Assessment Instruments**

Student Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Basic Psychological Terms and Concepts Test**

**(Revised Fall 2001)**

1. Which procedure helps to ensure that the participants in a survey are representative of a larger population?
  - a. random assignment
  - b. replication
  - c. correlation
  - d. random sampling
  
2. The ability to determine probable *causes* of behavior lies in the \_\_\_\_\_ method.
  - a. observation
  - b. correlation
  - c. experimentation
  - d. a priori
  
3. Looking for existing relationships between two variables (e.g., drinking habits and marital satisfaction) relies on the \_\_\_\_\_ method.
  - a. naturalistic
  - b. authoritative
  - c. a priori
  - d. correlational
  
4. The variable that is systematically manipulated or controlled by the experimenter is the \_\_\_\_\_ variable.
  - a. independent
  - b. dependent
  - c. extraneous
  - d. deliberate
  
5. A variable that the experimenter does *not* plan to manipulate or measure but that may have an important (and often systematic) effect on the results of an experiment is known as a (an) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. independent variable
  - b. dependent variable
  - c. extraneous or confounding variable
  - d. mixed variable

6. What does it mean when we describe experimental results by saying that the difference between two or more groups is “statistically significant”?
- a. the difference between the groups is large
  - b. the difference between the groups is probably not due to chance
  - c. the difference between the groups is not due to chance
  - d. the difference between the groups is small
7. Numerous experimental studies document that \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Southerners are not more aggressive than Northerners
  - b. Compared to Northerners, Southerners are more accepting of violence in defense of their honor
  - c. Southern violence is a result of living in a warm climate
  - d. Southern violence is a result of recent urban growth
8. The fundamental attribution error (also known as correspondence bias) is most likely to lead observers to conclude that unemployed people \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. are victims of discrimination
  - b. are irresponsible and unmotivated
  - c. have parents who provided poor models of social responsibility
  - d. are victims of bad luck

9. That people perform simple tasks better in the presence of others is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. social facilitation
  - b. self-referent effect
  - c. group polarization
  - d. social loafing
10. During a test, Abe impulsively copied several answers from a nearby student's paper. He felt very uncomfortable about having done this until he convinced himself that copying answers is not wrong if classmates are careless enough to expose their test sheets. Which theory best explains why Abe adopted this new attitude?
- a. frustration-aggression theory
  - b. attribution theory
  - c. social exchange theory
  - d. cognitive dissonance theory
11. Imagine that your uncle believes that men are better drivers than women. This would be an example of \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. gender stereotype
  - b. gender discrimination
  - c. outgroup homogeneity
  - d. gender role
12. According to Milgram, the most fundamental lesson to be learned from his study of obedience is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. people are naturally predisposed to be hostile and aggressive
  - b. even ordinary people, who are not usually hostile, can become agents of destruction
  - c. the desire to be accepted by others is one of the strongest human motives
  - d. people react negatively when they feel they are being coerced to do something
13. The best explanation of children's behavior is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. parenting determines how children act: good parents have good kids and bad parents have bad kids
  - b. genetic characteristics exclusively dictate psychological and physiological traits in infancy
  - c. the way children act is a function of biological factors and family/other social interactions
  - d. There is so much individual variation in children, it is not useful to talk about developmental norms in explaining children's behavior
14. When we study how people change across the life span, we find that \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. we become more similar to each other in behavior and attitudes as we get older
  - b. cultural differences influence social behaviors but not cognition
  - c. in general, people become less like they were in their youth
  - d. people become more different in how they think and act as they become elderly
15. The level of arousal typically associated with optimal performance tends to be \_\_\_\_\_ on tasks that are \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. lower; relatively difficult
  - b. lower; frequently practiced
  - c. higher; relatively difficult
  - d. lower; relatively easy
16. Which of the following is most clearly an obstacle to effective problem solving?
- a. use of trial and error
  - b. the use of heuristics or rule of thumb strategies
  - c. inability to see a problem from a new perspective
  - d. gathering lots of information about the problem
17. People's recall of events they have experienced \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. is accurate and complete
  - b. is stored in vivid detail for future use
  - c. can be recalled repeatedly without changing the memory
  - d. can be changed by our repeated recall, or people's questions about the event
18. Forgetting is most likely due to \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. the passage of time
  - b. decay of memory traces
  - c. interference of some kind
  - d. natural amnesia
19. The most important factor when you want to remember something effectively \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. is to rehearse items repeatedly and regularly
  - b. to use the same cues during learning and during retrieval
  - c. to relax and just enjoy leaning so you can later remember
  - d. to encode or create as many connections as possible to new information
20. On the telephone Melvin rattles off a list of ten grocery items for Pilar to bring home from the store. Immediately after hearing the list, Pilar attempt to write down the items. She is most likely to forget the items \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. at the beginning of the list



- b. at the end of the list
  - c. in the middle of the list
  - d. randomly throughout the list
21. After several pairings of some originally neutral stimulus along with some reflex-causing stimulus, animals (including humans) typically begin to respond to the originally neutral stimulus even when the reflex-causing stimulus does not occur. This sort of response is termed the \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. conditioned stimulus (CS)
  - b. unconditioned stimulus (US)
  - c. conditioned response (CR)
  - d. unconditioned response (UR)
22. Which of the following behaviors is typically reinforced on a variable-ratio schedule?
- a. studying for unexpected quizzes
  - b. playing the lottery or slot machines
  - c. paying a cashier for a candy bar
  - d. checking the mailbox to see if the mail has arrived
23. Little Albert's fear of white rats \_\_\_\_\_ to other furry white animals such as white rabbits; any furry white animal that Albert saw made him fearful.
- a. discriminated
  - b. generalized
  - c. counter-conditioned
  - d. was less than his fear
24. In general, reinforcement leads to \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. a decrease in the probability of the response that preceded the reinforcement
  - b. an increase in the probability of the response that preceded the reinforcement
  - c. superstitious behaviors
  - d. greed
25. Learned helplessness can result when an animal is exposed to \_\_\_\_\_ early in training.
- a. intense but avoidable aversive stimulation
  - b. intense and unavoidable aversive stimulation
  - c. response-contingent punishment
  - d. response-contingent negative reinforcement
26. The principles of classical conditioning apply to \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Russian dogs

- b. experimental psychologists
- c. a wide variety of animals including humans
- d. all mammals except humans

27. Which of the following is (are) true?

- a. Neurons are the building block of the brain.
- b. Neurons communicate using both electrical and chemical mechanisms
- c. Neurons interact by exciting or inhibiting one other
- d. All of the above.

28. The axon is that part of the neuron that \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. receives input from other neurons
- b. transmits information to other neurons
- c. manufactures specialized proteins
- d. contains the nucleus and its genetic instructions

29. Psychoactive drugs can act on \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. neurotransmitter synthesis mechanisms (e.g., serve as precursors or influence synthesizing enzymes)
- b. neurotransmitter storage or transport mechanisms (e.g., prevent storage in vesicles)
- c. neurotransmitter release, reuptake, or autoreceptor mechanisms (e.g., block reuptake)
- d. all of the above

30. \_\_\_\_\_ are sensitive to dim light and \_\_\_\_\_ are sensitive to brightly lit colors.

- a. rods : cones
- b. cones : rods
- c. newborns : adults
- d. paranoid schizophrenics : Alzheimer's patients

31. Which of the following systems is related to emotion and learning?

- a. limbic system (hippocampus, amygdala, and limbic cortex)
- b. basal ganglia (globus pallidus, caudate, and putamen)
- c. lateral geniculate nucleus of the thalamus
- d. medial geniculate nucleus of the thalamus

32. The "Dopamine Hypothesis" of schizophrenia states that schizophrenia is caused by \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. excessive activity of dopamine producing cells
- b. deficient monoaminergic neurotransmitters throughout the brain
- c. too much alcohol

d. genetic defects causing the nearly complete loss of dopamine producing cells

33. In general, drugs that have been successful in treating depression (Prozac, for example) are \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. dopamine agonists
- b. acetylcholine antagonists
- c. serotonin or norepinephrine agonists
- d. serotonin or norepinephrine antagonists

34. Following a lengthy period of sleep deprivation, people typically show \_\_\_\_\_ when finally allowed to sleep without interruption.

- a. subsequent depression
- b. prolonged non-REM stage 1 and 2 sleep
- c. increased REM sleep (REM rebound)
- d. excessive serotonergic and noradrenergic activity

35. The DSM-IV is most likely to be criticized for \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. attempting to explain behavior by simply labeling it
- b. classifying an excessively broad range of human behaviors as psychologically disordered
- c. failing to base diagnoses on observable behaviors
- d. inhibiting scientific efforts to discover the underlying causes of psychological disorders

36. In which disorder do people alternate between states of lethargic hopelessness and wild over-excitement?
- a. multiple personality disorder
  - b. bipolar disorder
  - c. obsessive-compulsive disorder
  - d. schizophrenic disorder
37. All of the following are symptoms associated with mania except \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. agitation
  - b. decreased need for sleep
  - c. hallucinations
  - d. flat affect
38. Which form of therapy challenges clients' illogical and self-defeating ways of thinking?
- a. person-centered therapy
  - b. Gestalt therapy
  - c. cognitive therapy
  - d. aversive conditioning
39. A breakdown in selective attention is most likely to be experienced by those who suffer from \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. bipolar disorder
  - b. schizophrenia
  - c. phobic disorders
  - d. generalized anxiety disorders
40. The most basic aim of attending or listening skills is \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. hearing the world from another person's point of view
  - b. demonstrating that you are in control of the interview session
  - c. being accurate in all interviewing responses
  - d. all of the above

**Student Number** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Critical Thinking Assignment**

Imagine that you are reading the “magazine” section of the Sunday paper when you run across a news brief reporting the results of a psychological study. The writer describes the results of an experimental study in which depressed individuals were randomly assigned to an “exercise” or “non-exercise” group in order to examine the relationship between exercise and depression. The results showed that exercise and depression were unrelated. The news writer concludes that there is no mental health benefit to be gained from exercise.

What is important to know before you accept the news writer’s conclusions?

Please think carefully about the question, and provide as many responses as you can in the space below:

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Writing Skills Assignment

Please provide a brief written discussion (1-2 paragraphs) in which you compare and contrast the findings presented in the following three brief summaries of research reports. Make sure to cite your source of information appropriately! **Please put your social security number at the top of your paper.**

1. **Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1985). Long term effects of divorce and remarriage on the adjustment of children. Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 24, 518-530.**

Conducted a 6-year follow-up of the author's 1982 longitudinal study of the effects of divorce on parents and children. Subjects were middle-class White parents and children (mean age 10.1 years) from 124 of 144 families who participated in the original study. Follow-up measures included parent rating scales, peer nominations, child self-ratings, behavior checklists, home and school observations, and the Life Experiences Survey. Results indicate that whereas divorce had more adverse effects for boys, remarriage was more disruptive for girls. Children in divorced families encountered more negative life changes than children in nondivorced families, and these life changes were associated with behavior problems 6 years following divorce.

2. **Allison, P., & Furstenberg, F. (1989). How marital dissolution affects children: variations by age and sex. Developmental Psychology, 25, 540-549.**

This study estimated the effects of marital dissolution on several measures of children's well being at two points in time using a nationally representative sample of 1,197 children. On the basis of reports from parents, teachers, and the children themselves, the outcome measures tap aspects of problem behaviors, psychological distress, and academic performance. Marital dissolution was found to have pervasive and long-lasting effects in all three areas. There is no evidence that dissolution effects are larger for boys than for girls. In fact, those differences that are significant show larger effects for girls. There is, however, evidence that effects are larger for children who are very young at the time of dissolution.

3. **Zaslow, M. (1988). Sex differences in children's response to parent divorce: I. Research methodology and postdivorce family forms. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 58, 355-378.**

This study evaluates the empirical basis for the hypothesis that boys are more negatively affected by parental divorce than girls. An examination of 27 studies showed discrepancies, with more than a third of the studies showing no support for sex differences, or greater negative influence for girls than boys. Findings that boys are more adversely affected appear to be concentrated in studies in which the parent having custody is an unremarried mother, indicating the need to consider type of postdivorce family. Other factors which may account for discrepant findings include: methodology (e.g. reliability and validity of measures used to assess child outcome), imprecise accounting for demographic factors, nature of the sample (clinical vs. nonclinical sample), age of the child, and the observational context (e.g. teacher report vs. parent report).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions on this sheet of paper. If you need additional space, please attach this sheet on top.

**Library Assignment** (updated and correct: Spring 2003)

1. Kim Updegraff published an article on parents' knowledge about children. She worked with Susan McHale and Ann Crouter. What was the name of the journal where it was published and where could we find it (library; call number)?
2. Beck, Scaffa, Swift, and Ko reported a study in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence in 1995. What was the name of the article?
3. J.P. Olie, C. Launay and M. Poirier published an article about lithium in 1995. What language was this article originally written in (HINT: NOT the language the abstract is shown in, but the language the entire article is written in)?
4. In 1995 Bruce Link and others published an article in the American Journal of Community Psychology on homelessness. According to the abstract, what is the public's view of homelessness?
5. Who wrote Emotional Intelligence, published by Bantam in 1995? According to LUIS, where might it be obtained?
6. In 1989 Gavin and Furman reported on adolescents' perception of their peers. What journal published this and what are its call numbers in our library?
7. List the title of a Howard Gardner book published in 1993. According to LUIS, where might it be obtained?
8. What color is the 1996 volume of Sex Roles?
9. June Maker published an article titled "Developing Multiple Talents in Exceptional Children." What journal does the article appear in?
10. Using the internet, find the name of a professional journal in biological bases of behavior. (Print the first page of the web page and attach it with this sheet.)
11. Using the internet, find the name of a professional organization in psychology. (Print the first page of the web page and attach it with this sheet.)
12. Using PsychInfo find a recent reference about people with seasonal affective disorder. (Print the first page and attach it with this sheet.)
13. On a scale of 1 (very difficult) to 7 (very easy), how challenging was this assignment?  
Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. Approximately how long did you spend working on this activity.

Information on Psychology Majors

1. Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Year in School: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Expected Date of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
5. GENDER:      Male              Female
6. What is your current GPA: \_\_\_\_\_
7. What kind of grades do you usually get ?

- Mostly A's
- Mostly A's and B's
- Mostly A's and B's, and some C's
- Mostly B's
- Mostly B's and C's
- Mostly B's and C's, and some D's
- Mostly C's
- Mostly C's and D's
- Mostly C's and D's, and some Fs
- Mostly D's
- Mostly D's and Fs

8. What is your family background? Mark the **one** best answer.

- White (Anglo), Non-Hispanic
- White Hispanic (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Latin American)
- or
- Black (African American)
- Indian (Native American)
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Other. What? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Which of the following psychology classes have you completed? (check all that apply)

- PSY 201 Fund. Psych. Science
- PSY 270 Social Psychology
- PSY 375 Statistics



0 PSY 310 Learning  
0 PSY 344 Cognitive Psych  
0 PSY 356 Physiological Psych  
0 PSY 362 Psych of Personality  
0 PSY 368 Abnormal Psych



10. How satisfied are you with the advising you have received from Psychology faculty (circle the number on the scale below which reflects your level of satisfaction)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Not at all                      somewhat                      extremely  
satisfied                      satisfied                      satisfied

11. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the Psychology courses you have taken up until now ?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Not at all                      somewhat                      extremely  
satisfied                      satisfied                      satisfied

12. What are your short term plans after you receive your Bachelor's degree in Psychology (e.g. plans for the first 3-5 years following graduation) ?

- get a Master's Degree
- get a Doctoral Degree
- find a job
- not sure
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

13. What are your long term goals following completion of your Bachelor's in Psychology? How do you hope to use your psychology degree ? (Check all that apply)

- private practice (Clinical)
- work in criminology and/or law enforcement
- research in Psychology
- teach at a college or university
- other teaching
- marriage and family Counseling
- agency Counseling
- school Counseling
- not sure
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

14. What areas of psychology most interest you ? (check all that apply)

- Social Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Clinical and/or Personality
- Cognitive/Learning
- Health Psychology
- Human Resources/Organizational Psy.
- Physiological/ Neuropsychology
- Women's Studies
- Psychology and the Law (Forensic)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Department of Psychology  
Student Outcomes Assessment Plan  
1997-98 Summary and Update**

**Undergraduate Assessment Plan**

The mission of the Psychology Department at the undergraduate level is to provide a comprehensive and liberal undergraduate education that provides students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will be crucial to their future educational, professional and personal success. The present undergraduate assessment plan was developed considering two primary goals related to this mission: (1) To assess student skills through the use of measures that are ecologically valid (e.g. the skills being assessed are skills that psychology majors will use in their professional careers); (2) To utilize an assessment procedure that is time efficient for students and faculty given the high number of majors in our department. The current assessment measures are tasks or assignments that can be readily incorporated into the curriculum of existing psychology courses. These measures are administered and scored by faculty teaching the core courses required for all majors. In most cases the outcome measures are utilized as class or homework assignments, thus faculty time is used towards class instruction, and students are given feedback on a task or assignment that facilitates learning the required skills.

Results of Data Collected during the 1997-98 Academic Year

The Psychology Department assessment plan employs a multi-method approach at three points in a student's education (entry level, mid-level, and exit level), and once after graduation.

Entry Level Assessment. Students enrolled in Psy 201, Fundamentals of Psychological Science are administered a total of four "baseline" measures including the Psychological Terms and Concepts Test, Library Skills Assignment, Critical Thinking Assignment, and Writing Skills Assignment. In the long term plan of the department, student "baseline" performance on these four measures will be compared with that same student's "exit level" performance on parallel forms of the same four measures. Currently, we have collected "baseline" data for 102 entry level students not expected to graduate until the 1999-2000 academic year at the earliest. Thus, results of longitudinal analyses, evaluating changes in individual students' performance over the course of the major will not be available for at least two more years. We are currently conducting cross-sectional analyses, comparing the results of entry level students with upper level

students to examine differences in knowledge and performance between these two groups (results of these analyses are presented below).

Mid-level Assessment. Students enrolled in Psy 375, Statistics and Research Design, are asked to complete the Progress Towards the Major Questionnaire (PTMQ) which requests information regarding students' progress towards completing requirements for the major, amount of contact with major advisor, satisfaction with psychology courses taken to date, and short and long term career goals. A pilot version of this measure will be administered to students during Psy 375 later this semester.

Exit-level Assessment. Students enrolled in the culminating experience courses (Psy 484, Psy 486, or Psy 499T) are given a parallel version of the four basic Student Outcome Assessment measures (Basic Psychological Terms and Concepts test, Library Skills Assignment, Critical Thinking Assignment, and Writing Skills Assignment). We currently have pilot data for a total of 37 upper level students who have completed the BPTCT and CTA and have been able to compare these results with the performance of lower level students in the major.

Results of our initial cross-sectional pilot data (Fall 97 and Spring 98) indicate that upper level students (those enrolled in Psy 484, Psy 486) do show significantly better performance on the BPTCT than do entry level students (Psy 201), though the mean performance for both groups of students was fairly low, likely due to the wide range of information covered on this test as well as the level of difficulty of the individual questions. Examining the content areas covered on the BPTCT, upper level students (Spring 98 data) performed an average of 13 to 15 percentage points higher in the areas of Experimental Design/Statistics, Social Psychology and Cognitive Psychology, indicating significant increases in learning in these areas. Significant, though lesser mean differences were found comparing lower level with upper level student performance in other topic areas. Although seniors showed greater knowledge for all topic areas than entry level majors, results indicate that both groups of students could benefit by teaching practices designed to improve retention and generalization of knowledge. The Psychology Department faculty are currently discussing how this may be achieved.

Initial results of the Critical Thinking Task show that upper level students provide greater quantity and quality of responses than do entry level majors. We are currently in the process of administering the Library Skills and Writing Skills assignments to both lower level and upper level students for the Spring 98 semester. We have limited results for these measures from the Fall 97 semester, as the tasks were not required for the upper level courses, and very few students completed the assessment assignments. We have

altered the administration procedures to address this problem, encouraging faculty to offer greater incentives for completing the student outcome assessment measures by including the measures as a course requirement or by offering extra credit.

Post-graduate Assessment. The present assessment plan indicates that contact will be initiated with students five years after their graduation at which time they will be surveyed as to their employment history since leaving ISU, and their employment at that time. This survey, the Survey of ISU Psychology Graduates (SISUPG) will also ask graduates about what they gained from their psychology education. We are currently in the process of developing a pilot version of the post graduate survey and anticipate collecting information from a small sample of recent graduates (Dec. 97 graduates) near the end of the Spring 98 semester.

Summary. In general, the department has been pleased with the initial results of our Student Outcome Assessment Plan, however, the pilot data continue to indicate the need for subtle refinement of some of the measures and administration procedures. For example, there are items on the BPTCP with low discriminate validity which need to be replaced with new questions. Also, the scoring criteria for the critical thinking and writing skills tasks require some modification. In terms of administration procedures, level of student participation in the upper level courses is approximately 80% and we would like to increase participation to 95 to 100% for both lower and upper level students. Finally, there is continued need to educate both faculty and students in the department about the importance of collecting outcome data and the relevance of these data in improving our undergraduate program.

### **Master's Program Assessment Plan**

The Department of Psychology offers a M.A. or M.S. degree in General Psychology. The majority of students who enter our program intend to pursue doctoral level study or study in another program with a terminal degree, such as a Master's in Social Work. Between Fall, 1988 and Fall, 1995 there were a total of 39 students enrolled in our program. Twenty-three (59%) completed the program. Of those completing, nine (39%) continued in doctoral programs, two (8.7%) continued in other Master's programs and three (13%) are working in psychology-related fields. Fifteen students left before completing their degrees. Of those 15, nine (60%) are either currently enrolled or have completed work in other graduate programs. The following assessments are under development and will be instituted during the Fall 1998 semester: 1). A survey of new students early in their first term to assess their reasons for coming to the program and a second survey during the students' second year to assess whether they have been able to achieve their goals. 2). A survey of students who were admitted to terminal degree

programs (e.g., Ph.D.) to assess their satisfaction with the training they received. 3). A survey of students who did not complete the program or who did not continue to other programs to assess their satisfaction with their training and the benefits of that training to their current job or career/educational aspirations.

### **Doctorate Program (Psy.D.) Assessment Plan**

The Psy.D Program in the Department of Psychology utilizes a variety of different methods to assess student progress over the entire course of the 5 year program. Activities monitored include: 1) entrance requirements - all students are required to achieve minimum standards for acceptance; 2) student evaluations - students' progress is evaluated twice yearly by psychology faculty; 3) teaching evaluations - faculty teaching is evaluated by students at the end of each course; 4) portfolio - students are to submit statements and/or work samples where appropriate for each of the clinical and research objectives listed in the assessment plan; 5) placement training - students are evaluated by psychologists outside the department while on placement; 6) preliminary examination - students must pass written and oral preliminary examinations; 7) internship training - students are evaluated by training directors and/or site psychologists while on Internship and students evaluate the sites in regard to training received; 8) research project - each student will complete a professional research project 9) alumni survey - each graduate is surveyed annually for five years following graduation.

#### Summary of Assessment Outcomes for 1997-98 Academic Year.

Entrance Requirements. A total of 221 students applied for admission to our program for the 1997-98 school year. Eight students were accepted for admission, three of whom had a master's degree. The average GPA for students admitted for the 1997-98 year was 3.32 undergraduate GPA and 3.82 graduate GPA (3 students). The average GRE scores for these students was Verbal- 535, Quantitative- 581, Total GRE -1116. These scores reflect the high quality of students accepted into the program.

Student Evaluations. Students in the first, second and third year class were evaluated once at the end of the Fall 97 semester, and will be evaluated again at the end of the Spring 98 semester. Generally speaking, all first, second and third year students were found to be making appropriate progress in the program or were provided with structured guidance to improve performance at the end of the Fall 97 semester.

Teaching Evaluations. Teaching evaluations for the 1996-97 academic year, and Fall 97 evaluations were generally positive. No recommendations for changes were made based on recent teaching evaluations. However, several curricular changes were made at the start of this academic year based on faculty desire to teach more elective courses at

the upper level. A tentative schedule outlining elective courses for the next three years was developed.

Portfolio. Students who began the doctoral program in 1993-94 (most of whom are currently on placement) were the first to develop a portfolio demonstrating competence in clinical and research skills. All students from this class, as well as all students from the 1994-95 class have completed portfolios that have been approved by faculty on the student's research committee. Portfolios are on file for review.

Placement Training. Seven doctoral students are currently on placement in mental health settings in the local area. Supervisor evaluations for the Fall 97 semester were generally extremely positive. We will be receiving additional feedback from supervisors at the end of the Spring 98 semester, as well as student ratings of the placement sites.

Preliminary Examination. The preliminary exam process was examined at the end of the 1996-97 year, as a results of student and faculty input, students who took the exam in August 1997 were given more time to answer questions. All seven students passed the written portion of the exam. It was felt that by allowing students more time, answers were better organized, better written, and a more true reflection of students' knowledge and ability.

Research Project. Six of the seven students currently on Internship (5th year students) have defended their doctoral proposals. Of the current 4th year class (entered program in 1994-95), six of seven students have defended their doctoral proposals.

Internship Training. A total of nine students applied for internships for the 1998-99 year. Of those students, seven received APA approved site placements, 1 received a placement at a site pending APA approval, 1 student withdrew from the internship selection process for personal reasons. Sixty three percent of students applying accepted internship offers at sites which were their first, second or third choice.

Alumni Survey. Results of the alumni survey for the 1997-98 year are not yet available. Results of the 1996-97 survey indicate that all graduates returning surveys are employed in professional settings working as licensed Psychologists. Many graduate respondents noted a number of professional achievements reflecting the professional success of our graduates.



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3-26-04

## Policy and Procedures for Assessment of Student Outcomes and Assessment of Advising

Department of Psychology  
Indiana State University

The Department of Psychology recognizes the need to assess the success of our students as they sojourn through our program. As a part of this recognition, the following assessment policies are proposed dealing with (1) the assessment of student outcomes and (2) the assessment of advising effectiveness.

### I. Policy: Student Outcomes Assessment

**A. Time line for assessment.** The Department mandates that student assessment will be performed every third academic year across both terms of that year.

**B. Types of Assessment.** There will be two general types of student outcomes assessment performed. The specific implementation of the outcome assessments is at the discretion of the Assessment Committee (within the guidelines outlined here).

**1. Knowledge/skills assessments for current students.** The current strategy compares entry-level students (*Psychology 201*) to exit-level students (*Psychology 484* and *486*) on a number of domains (basic knowledge of psychology, writing skills, critical thinking skills, and library skills).

**2. Assessment of graduate satisfaction.** In addition, the department would like to assess the satisfaction of graduates of our program *once they leave*.

### II. Policy: Advising Assessment

An important part of the health of any undergraduate program is the quality of career guidance that students receive in that program. Thus, in an attempt to maintain a high level of advising quality, the department mandates that advising assessment be regularly performed.

**A. Time line for assessment.** The Department mandates that advising assessment will be performed in the Spring term of every academic year.

**B. Type of assessment.** The department has developed its own instrument to assess academic advising. Changes to that instrument can be made with the approval of the assessment committee.

**C. Location of assessment.** Advising assessment instruments shall be given out in all psychology undergraduate classes during the spring term. (Students will be instructed to only complete the feedback form one time only.)

**D. Assessment results.** Results will be tabulated by the Department Office. Feedback presented in terms of mean scores for each category and a listing of student written comments would also be provided to individual faculty advisors. For faculty who do advising, these advising assessment reports are expected to be included in yearly performance/tenure reviews (just like teaching evaluations). In addition a copy of advising assessment results for ALL faculty will be given to the chair of the department.

From 2004 (Fall)  
 Program reviewed  
 self-study

#### IV. Curriculum

Because the curriculum for undergraduate and graduate programs are quite different, they are discussed separately below.

##### *Undergraduate Program*

1. *Assessment.* In addition to normal "course-based" assessments of student learning such as oral presentations, research papers, and objective examinations that are regularly a part of undergraduate courses, the Psychology Department has a multi-method assessment program in which specific student goals and learning objectives are assessed at entry and exit points in the major. During Introduction to Research Methods (PSY 201), the first required course specifically for our majors, students complete the following assessment measures: a 40-item Basic Psychological Terms and Concepts test, a Library Skills Assignment, a Writing Skills Assessment, and Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. These assessments are repeated during the capstone courses (PSY 484, PSY 486, PSY 499T) that are taken during students' senior year. These face-valid measures (see Appendix E) provide an ability to compare students' performance at the beginning and end of their Psychology studies. Table 2 below shows the knowledge, skills, and values are tapped by these various assessment measures.

**Table 2. Assessment of Curricular Goals (Undergraduate).**

<b>Curricular Goal</b>	<b>Psychological Concepts Test</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Writing Skills</b>	<b>Library Skills</b>
<i>Discipline-Specific</i>				
Theory & Content	X			
Research Methods	X	X	X	
Critical Thinking		X	X	
Applications	X	X		
Values		X	X	
<i>Liberal-Arts</i>				
Information Technology				X
Communication Skills			X	
Sociocultural Awareness	<i>No Formal Assessment (outside of class)</i>			
Personal Development	<i>No Formal Assessment</i>			
Career Planning	<i>No Formal Assessment</i>			

The Director of Undergraduate Studies provides analysis and reports assessment results to the faculty and/or Psychology Chair and the Dean of the

College of Arts and Sciences annually. Six years of results have generally shown that students in the capstone courses perform significantly better than students in PSY 201 on most, if not all measures. For instance, the most recent assessment report (based on 2002/2003 data) show significant gains from entry to exit points on all six sub-disciplines represented on the test: biopsychology, methods/statistics, learning, social, clinical, and cognitive psychology.

Exit-point students performed significantly better than entry-level students on critical thinking and on numerous measures of writing as well. Although the most recent cohort of 484/486 students did not perform significantly better on the library task than 201 students, they reported that the assignment took them less time, suggesting that it was less difficult. Last year (2004) was intended to be a year of "closing the loop," during which data collection activities were suspended so that the data could be considered and assessment activities discussed. We anticipate renewing data collection during the Spring 2005 semester.

One area where the Department would like to expand its assessment is through initiation of a formal post-graduate assessment. Anecdotal reports by the faculty confirm that students who work in faculty labs are typically successful at getting into desirable graduate programs, although we have no reliable data on what happens to the many students that do not pursue graduate study. Perhaps more importantly, we have no information from our students about which aspects of our undergraduate program were most (or least) useful as preparation for their later careers. This is seen as an area for development.

*2. Currency and Relevance.* Review of undergraduate syllabi (Appendix F) reveals that psychology faculty insure that their instruction reflects the current state of knowledge in every course and faculty use up-to-date textbooks and/or readings. All faculty maintain active programs of research that inform their teaching of particular courses.

The undergraduate curriculum in Psychology is designed to provide students with information relating to human physiology, mental processes, and individual and social behavior. Such courses are relevant to students in career fields that involve relating to and motivating others, including advertising and sales, personnel management, medicine, criminal justice, social services and others. Psychology also provides a basis from which to explore the causes and possible solutions of many social and personal problems and may be usefully studied for individual rather than career goals.

*3. Hours Required.* An undergraduate major in psychology requires completion of 37 credit hours. Required courses include: Introductory Psychology (3hrs), Introduction to Research Methods (3hrs), Statistics (4 hrs). Students also take at least 5 of the following "core" courses: Developmental (3 hrs), Social (3 hrs), Learning (3 hrs), Perception (3 hrs), Cognition (3 hrs), Physiological (3 hrs), Personality (3 hrs), or Abnormal (3 hrs). Students also take a capstone experience that involves either Field Work (3hrs) or a research internship class, Research in Psychology (486, 3hrs) or Honor's Thesis (499T, 3-6 hrs). The remainder of the major consists of 9 or more hours of directed

electives; students who choose the Field Work capstone must elect a preparatory course in Interviewing Skills as one of their electives (PSY 384: 3 hrs). A minor in psychology requires 18 hours, including Introductory Psychology (3 hrs), Introduction to Research Methods (3 hrs), and 12 hours of electives.

4. *Contributions to Other Programs.* The Psychology faculty also offer numerous "service" courses that complement students' educational goals in other majors. For instance, the Department teaches seven different courses that qualify for "general education" credit and/or serve as preferred electives in various programs (e.g., women's studies, liberal studies, etc.). These include: Human Sexuality, Introductory Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Psychology of Women, Theories of Personality, Cognition in Everyday Life, and Environmental Psychology. In addition, two faculty members have taught special seminars for the ISU Honor's program in recent years, and several others offer Honor's options in their courses by special arrangement with students.

### *Graduate Program*

1. *Assessment.* The purpose of the General-Experimental master's program is to prepare students for doctoral-level study in psychology. Unlike undergraduate training that follows a standard curriculum and mostly occurs in the courses and organized placements, graduate training is highly individualized, and much, if not most, of it occurs in research labs. In addition, graduate students (unlike undergraduates) are subject to constant and comprehensive evaluation of their attainment of knowledge, skills, and values associated with psychology. Thus, our graduate program assessment is oriented toward evaluating students' individual goals upon entering the program and their satisfaction with the training experiences they received.

Our current assessment procedures were instituted in Fall 1998. The assessment consists of two parts. Students complete the "First Year Master's Student Questionnaire" early in the fall term of their first year. This questionnaire asks for information on why they chose to attend our program, what skills and information they hope to acquire from the program, and about their goals upon completing their master's degree. Upon completion of degree requirements, or before they leave the program for another reason, students are asked to complete the "Follow Up Questionnaire" that assesses students' satisfaction with instruction, advising, research experiences, etc.

The data from these instruments, as averaged across the past six years (N = 19 for the First-Year Questionnaire and N = 10 for the Follow-up Questionnaire) suggest that, consistent with our primary program objective, the most common reasons for enrolling in a master's program are to gain more research experiences and prepare for doctoral study (selected by 79% of students). The most common reasons students give for coming to ISU include: 1) faculty research interests (53%), 2) availability of financial support (53%), 3) affordability (47%), and 4) entrance requirements (47%). Students expect to receive training in research methods (100%), statistics (84%), to write research

**Department of Psychology**  
**Undergraduate Student Outcome Assessment Report: 2002/2003**

**A and B**

**Overview of Data Collection and Analysis**

The psychology department assessment plan employs a multi-method approach, evaluating students at two points in their education (entry level and exit level). Psychology 201 (Psychological Methods) students are at the entry level in the major, and seniors in Psychology 484/486 (Field Work/Research) are at the exit level. Both groups of students complete the following assessment measures: Basic Psychological Terms and Concepts Test (BPTCT), Library Skills Assignment, Writing Skills Assessment, and Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. For each variable produced by these various measures, the mean score of the 201 students was compared to the mean score from the 484/486 students. To test for statistical significance, a *t*-test was performed. In previous years, similar comparisons on these same measurement instruments have generally suggested that 484/486 students outperform 201 students. Therefore, we expected this robust tendency to continue in the present set of assessment data.

**Basic Psychological Terms and Concepts Test**

The BPTCT is a forty item test used to assess students' knowledge of core concepts in psychology, and their knowledge related to specific courses in psychology. The six subdisciplines of psychology from which questions on the BPTCT are based include: biopsychology, methods/statistics, learning psychology, social psychology, clinical psychology, and cognitive psychology. Overall performance on the BPTCT among 484/486 students was superior to Psychology 201 students; this difference was statistically significant ( $t[315] = -6.51, p < .001$ ). Further, 484/486 students' performance was also statistically significantly better than 201 students on all 6 subdisciplines assessed (all  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ). Thus, like previous years' assessment, these data show that knowledge is significantly enhanced in all core areas of psychology as students move from the entry to the exit level in the major.

**Library Skills Assignment**

The Library Skills Assignment evaluates students' ability to obtain information related to psychology through the use of psychology-related resources, including PsycInfo abstracts and Internet web pages. This assessment measure was graded on a twelve point scale, and included a measure of perceived difficulty in completing the assignment, as well as an estimate of the total time required to complete the assignment. Surprisingly, and inconsistent with previous assessments, 201 students outperformed 484/486 students on the 12-point scale ( $t[160] = 4.91, p < .001$ ). However, consistent with previous years, 484/486 students did judge the assignment to be less difficult and took substantially less time in completing the assignment, although only the time variable was statistically significant ( $t[150] = -2.33, p < .03$ ).

Why might the 201 students have outperformed the 484/486 students on the 12-point scale, even though they reported that the assignment was more difficult and took longer to complete it? Several possibilities exist. First, it is possible that 201 students were given an advantage in terms of the immediacy of their training – they completed the assignment immediately after receiving library training, whereas 484/486 students had not received that training for 1-3 years. (It is worth noting, however, that this