

**DEPARTMENT REPORT
OF
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT**

Department: Psychology

Program (Degree): Psychology Sequence Assessment in General Psychology (PSY
121 & 122 and PSY 119)

Type of Degree: AAS AA AS ATS AIS

Chairperson: Solomon Fulero Date: 2/20/01

Person(s) Interviewed: Solomon Fulero

- I. **Program Curriculum:** A description of the basis for the program curriculum (i.e., how it is derived and validated). Include accreditation organizations, advisory committees or external groups that influence curriculum. Describe curriculum review activities including the review of course master syllabi*.

The American Psychological Association (APA) provides general information which faculty can use in the development of psychology curriculum and content.

The faculty of the Psychology Department designed the content in the general psychology sequence to match that of four-year institutions since the department serves a significant number of transfer students. It is not uncommon for faculty in four and two-year institutions to use the same psychology textbooks.

Psychology faculty from Sinclair have many professional contacts with psychology faculty and chairpersons from neighboring four-year institutions. This provides an indirect means of sharing information about the general psychology curriculum.

The last external department review was conducted in 1997.

Updates and changes to the curriculum and course master syllabi have been handled through Keyfile as needed.

- * Note: Every department is required to review Master Syllabi and Program Learning Outcomes a minimum of every two years.

II. **Program Learning Outcomes:** A description of what you intend for students to know (cognitive), think/feel (affective), or do (psychomotor), when they have completed your degree program. A suggested manageable number of outcomes should be in the range of five to ten. Describe Program Learning Outcomes review activities*.

a. Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) Outcomes:

The Psychology faculty selected two of the program learning outcomes from the seven adopted by the Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the AA and AS Degrees to be assessed through end-of-sequence assessment in PSY 121 & 122 and PSY 119:

- Demonstrate a problem-solving capability through analysis/synthesis.
- Recognize the ways in which a scientific approach can be used to formulate an understanding of the observable world.

b. End-of-sequence Learning Outcomes

End-of-sequence learning outcomes for PSY 121-122 are:

- Discuss and evaluate psychological theories of language development.
- Discuss and evaluate thought and problem-solving skills in the humans.
- Discuss and evaluate theories and issues regarding intelligence and its measurement including the topics of giftedness and mental deficiency.
- Integrate the theories and concepts of language, thought and intelligence and apply these concepts to everyday life problems.
- Describe theories of psychological and social development that takes place during one's life span.
- Provide a brief history of the subfield of abnormal psychology, including psychological disorders and therapies.
- Describe and evaluate various types and theories of human motivation.
- Describe and evaluate various theories regarding the physiology and psychology of human emotion.
- Discuss psychological theory and research on the effects of stress on physical and mental health, as well as, effective coping strategies.

End-of-sequence learning outcomes for PSY 119 are:

- Define the development of the field of psychology, its major theoretical developments and methods of study.
- Describe the basic nervous system and how it relates to human behavior.
- Describe the basic elements of sensory processes.
- Describe basic perceptual laws and processes.
- Define consciousness and various altered states of consciousness.
- Define the major forms of learning, how each occurs and the role of reinforcement.
- Discuss forms of memory, ways of improving memory and theories of forgetting.
- Define the major theories of personality.

- Describe major elements of social psychology including attitudes, violence, aggression and interpersonal relations.
- Evaluate various types and theories of different facets of human motivation.
- Evaluate various theories regarding the physiology and psychology of human emotion.
- Discuss psychological theory and research on the effects of stress on physical and mental health, as well as, coping strategies.

III. **Assessment Method(s)**: A measurable indicator of success in attaining the stated learning outcome(s). The methodology should be both reliable and valid. Please describe in detail.

- a. **Formative Assessment Method(s) and Description**: a measurable indicator of student in-progress success in attaining the stated learning outcome(s).

A ten-question critical thinking test has been used in PSY 119 as a pre and post-test for a couple of years. The questions used are stated in a psychology context but the emphasis is on critical thinking skills. The test is not calculated as part of the student's final grade; students are instructed that the test is being used to provide information the faculty can use to make improvements in the course.

The faculty in the Psychology department are investigating development of a content-based test to replace the critical thinking tool currently in use in PSY 119. It has been determined that departmental efforts to measure critical thinking could be done through the efforts of the LAS summative assessment team to assess critical thinking for all Liberal Arts degree-seekers.

The Psychology Department has a faculty assessment committee headed by Ann McCrea. The assessment committee piloted a five part 20 question assessment tool in PSY 122 and PSY 119 during Fall of 1999. This comprehensive test was modeled after an instrument used by the College of DuPage. The pilot raised more issues about the core knowledge retained by students and has initiated a new assessment test which will be piloted in the near future.

The department continues to discuss the many aspects of the content-based assessment tool and is working on coming to some consensus. Items being discussed are the number of questions, whether or not the questions will be randomly selected, whether to use the pre and post-test format, and which students will be tested. Another concern is how to handle the pre and post-test format which will be different for PSY 121-122 than PSY 119. A pre-test would be administered in PSY 121 followed by a post-test in PSY 122 whereas in PSY 119, the same class of students would be given both a pre-test and a post-test within the course time frame. Other concerns include "teaching to the test" and how to get students to take it seriously.

- b. **Summative Assessment Method(s) and Description**: a measurable indicator of end-of-program success in attaining the stated program learning outcome(s).

Not applicable to end-of-sequence assessment. Refer to the section on summative assessment of the program learning outcomes for Liberal Arts and Sciences.

IV. Results: A description of the actual results of overall student performance gathered from the assessment(s). (see III.b.)

The ten question pre/post critical thinking test for PSY 119 shows slight improvement even though it is administered to a small sample of students.

No comparative results are available for the comprehensive five-part content-based assessment tool being developed at this time.

Informal feedback from students who transfer indicate they perform as well or better than their counterparts at four-year institutions.

V. Analysis/Actions: From analysis of your summative assessment results, do you plan to or have you made any adjustments to your program learning outcomes, methodologies, curriculum, etc.? If yes, describe. If no, explain.

As mentioned in Section III the Psychology Assessment Committee members are exploring a content-based tool for assessing student performance levels at the end of the general psychology sequence PSY 121 & 122, and in PSY 119.

Efforts are being made through support from Institutional Planning and Research to track Liberal Arts students who transfer to four-year institutions. The department would like to know how students who completed Psychology courses at Sinclair perform at four-year institutions.

VI. General Education: A description of where and how the three primary general education outcomes* (communication, thinking, values/citizenship/community) are assessed.

- a. Where do you assess written communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Written communication skills are reinforced through various required papers and written assignments.

* Note: The oral communication checklist and the written communication checklist developed by the General Education Committee were adopted for college-wide use during the 1997-98 academic year by Academic Council. Thinking Guidelines developed by the General Education Committee were piloted by faculty during the 1998-99 academic year. A student honor code will be piloted in Spring 2001.

- b. Where do you assess oral communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Some general psychology faculty require students to collaborate on team projects and present results orally.

- c. Where do you assess thinking? Thinking might include inventing new problems, seeing relationships and/or implications, respecting other approaches, demonstrating clarity and/or integrity, or recognizing assumptions. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Thinking skills are reinforced in psychology primarily through the integration of course content and utilization of thinking activities that are included in the text, particularly in the area of research methods. Students are encouraged to apply and explore theoretical information in the Psychology Lab through the use of computer demonstrations and many hands-on experiments. Some faculty require students to participate in the Psychology Lab and some faculty allow students to earn extra credit for student participation.

- d. Where do you assess values/citizenship/community? These activities might include behaviors, perspective, awareness, responsibility, teamwork, ethical/professional standards, service learning or community participation. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

A specific chapter in general psychology is devoted to the topic of ethical behaviors. Students are assessed on the topic of ethics through written examinations.

Students might be introduced to ethical standards through the Code of Ethics used by the APA.

Values are explored in PSY 217, Abnormal Psychology; PSY 225, Social Psychology; and PSY 297, Drugs and Behavior.

- e. Other

The Psychology department contributed samples of student work from PSY 225 Spring Quarter 2000 to an assessment project conducted by the General Education Committee to determine college-wide assessment of communication, thinking and values/citizenship/community.