

Assessment Plan for the Department of Psychology, University of Hawaii at Manoa

The Board of Educational Affairs of the American Psychological Association has identified 10 major learning goals for an undergraduate program in psychology, along with specific learning outcomes associated with each goal. The Department has adopted these goals and has developed an assessment plan based upon them. The goals and their accompanying learning objectives are as follows:

- 1) Theory and Content of Psychology
 - a) describing and applying psychology's concepts, language and theories
 - b) explaining its major perspectives
 - c) demonstrating understanding of its breadth and depth
- 2) Research Methods in Psychology
 - a) differentiating research methods
 - b) evaluating aptness of research conclusions
 - c) designing and conducting basic studies
 - d) generalizing research conclusions appropriately
- 3) Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology
 - a) using and engaging in critical thinking
 - b) using reasoning in arguments and persuasion
 - c) approaching problems with sophistication
- 4) Application of Psychology
 - a) identifying psychology's major applications
 - b) articulating how it can be used toward social understanding and public policy
 - c) recognizing the ethical complexities of applying psychology
- 5) Values in Psychology
 - a) understanding the need for ethical behavior
 - b) tolerance of ambiguity
 - c) demonstration of skepticism and intellectual curiosity
 - d) attunement to scientific evidence
 - e) civic responsibility
 - f) respect for human diversity
- 6) Information and Technological Literacy
 - a) demonstrating competent, ethical and responsible use of information in academic work
 - b) applying software in research reports
 - c) mastering such computer basics as Internet navigation and spreadsheet generation
- 7) Communication Skills
 - a) demonstrating effective writing, interpersonal and oral communication skills
 - b) showing quantitative literacy
 - c) collaborating effectively with others
- 8) Sociocultural and International Awareness

- a) showing sensitivity to and respect for diversity
 - b) being able to consider and explain the role of cultural, racial, ethnic and economic factors, and of privilege and discrimination, in people's behaviors
- 9) Personal Development
- a) the ability to apply psychology to personal and professional development
 - b) to self-regulate and display personal integrity
- 10) Career Planning and Development
- a) applying psychology principles to career decision-making
 - b) aiming for feasible career paths
 - c) identifying realistic graduate-education pathways
 - d) taking practical career steps
 - e) valuing life-long learning and professional development

Data are being collected for an ongoing evaluation of the degree to which these outcomes are being met:

- 1) Syllabi are being collected for each course, accompanied by a statement by each faculty member, including the specific outcomes expected from that course.
- 2) An entry and exit survey is being administered. The goal of these surveys is to assess the degree to which outcomes have been enhanced upon graduation.

These data will be evaluated by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. A report is made to the faculty each year on the degree to which the various outcomes are being met. Curriculum deficiencies will be referred to the Department Undergraduate committee for action.

It is recognized that assessment is a continuous, ongoing process. Therefore, course syllabi and outcome data will be reviewed on an annual basis

In addition, anyone proposing a new course or a substantive modification of an existing course will be asked for information regarding the outcomes to be addressed within the course and the course-embedded assessment tools to be used. The Department Undergraduate Studies Committee will make a report to the Department each year regarding problems, progress, and improvements in the assessment process.

Outcome Data From Entry and Exit Surveys, 2003-2004

Date: **2003-2004**

University of Hawaii at Manoa Undergraduate Psychology Entrance Survey (about 150 respondents)

- 1) I currently feel knowledgeable about psychological concepts, theoretical perspectives, research findings, or historical trends. **3.2**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 2) I have a background in basic research methods, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation **2.6**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 3) I am able to use critical and creative thinking skills in solving problems. **3.7**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 4) I understand how psychological concepts can be used in everyday life and organization. **3.8**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 5) I currently feel comfortable with my communication skills including writing, interpersonal and oral skills, showing quantitative literacy and collaborating with others. **3.5**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

Please indicate the number of psychology courses you have already taken: **3.3**

Date 2003-2004

University of Hawaii at Manoa Undergraduate Psychology Exit Survey (upon graduation) (About 130 respondents)

1) As a result of majoring in Psychology, I feel more knowledgeable in psychological concepts, theoretical perspectives, research findings, or historical trends. **4.4**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

2) I have a better understanding of basic research methods, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation **4.1**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

3) I am better able to use critical and creative thinking skills in solving problems. **4.2**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

4) I understand how psychological concepts can be used in everyday life and organization, as well as the ethical complexities involved in applying psychology to social situations. **4.4**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

5) I understand the values and need for ethical behavior, tolerance of ambiguity, scientific practice, and intellectual skepticism as well as the civic responsibility of respect for human diversity. **4.5**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 6) I learned to use technology such as computers for purposes relating to the field of psychology, such as in researching topics on the internet and using software for statistical analyses. **3.6**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 7) I developed effective communication skills including writing, interpersonal and oral skills, showing quantitative literacy and collaborating with others. **3.9**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 8) I learned to recognize and understand sociocultural and international diversity and how factors such as cultural, racial, ethnic and economic factors may have significant ramifications regarding the behavior of individuals. **4.3**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 9) I benefited from studying psychology with regards to developing an understanding of mental processes, applying effective strategies for self management, including self-regulation, and demonstrations of integrity. **4.3**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

- 10) I feel capable of applying the skills, values and information I received as a psychology major in my future career. **4.3**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree

Please estimate the number of psychology courses that you have taken at the Manoa campus: **10.2**

**Assessment of Learning Outcomes for Graduate Degrees in Psychology
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

Dr Edward Chronicle, Graduate Chair in Psychology

Preamble

The Department of Psychology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa offers graduate education through a single program of study, which is best described as “PhD with MA en route”. There is no provision for standalone (terminal) master’s degrees. Within this program, there are several concentrations that map onto professional and research specialties within the Department. These concentrations are as follows: clinical studies, behavioral neuroscience, community and culture, developmental, social/personality, cognition, and experimental psychopathology.

1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1.1. General. A student who has successfully completed the graduate degree program in psychology should be able to:

- 1.1.1. Demonstrate mastery of appropriate literature, methodology and techniques
- 1.1.2. Communicate both orally and in writing at a high level of proficiency in the professional and academic fields of psychology
- 1.1.3. Conduct independent research to a high standard
- 1.1.4. Function as a professional in psychology

1.2. Specific to MA training. The SLOs for the MA component of the graduate program in psychology include but are not limited to the following:

- 1.2.1. Acquisition of a common core of empirical and analytic methods currently in use in psychological research
- 1.2.2. Acquisition of specialist techniques, knowledge and (as appropriate) clinical skill according to the concentration in which the student is working
- 1.2.3. Completion of a significant piece of empirical work, under the supervision of faculty member and guided by other members of the student’s MA committee, culminating in the MA thesis
- 1.2.4. The development of transferable skills in computing, statistics, oral and written presentation, professional and academic standards, and personal interaction.

1.3. Specific to PhD training. The SLOs for the PhD component of the graduate program in psychology include but are not limited to the following:

- 1.3.1. Acquisition of in-depth knowledge of the theory, empirical findings, statistical and/or other analytic techniques, controversies and debates in a specialist area of research, and if necessary in one or more related areas. Demonstration of this knowledge through the comprehensive examination process
- 1.3.2. Proposal of a major piece of independently-motivated empirical work (the PhD dissertation proposal), including articulation of the details of rationale, method,

ethical issues, statistical outcomes, and likely outcome and significance. Successful oral defense of the PhD proposal in front of a five-member committee of faculty from inside and outside the Department of Psychology.

1.3.3. Timely completion of the proposed empirical research

1.3.4. Publication of findings from that research and/or dissemination of results at academic and professional conferences

1.3.5. Completion of the PhD dissertation according to the regulations of the University of Hawaii. Successful public oral defense of the PhD dissertation in front of the five-member committee of faculty.

2. Publication of Student Learning Outcomes

SLOs are published as follows:

- General expectations of progress mileposts and learning outcomes are published by the Graduate Division on their website, which is regularly updated
- Departmental SLOs will be listed in the next edition of the Departmental Graduate Student Handbook (fall 2005), which is to be given to all new graduate students and will also be posted on the Departmental website.
- SLOs that are specific to concentrations (for example, those that specify clinical learning outcomes) are published in the handbooks produced by those concentrations, posted on the Department website, and updated annually.

3. Mapping of Student Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum

This section makes reference to the SLOs numbered in Section 1.

SLOs 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 are generic outcomes, and should be achieved by any student completing the graduate program in psychology, regardless of the particular concentration and combination of classes taken.

SLO 1.2.1 is met by the requirement upon all graduate students in psychology to take the following classes. All students take PSY600, “Methodologic Foundations of Psychology”, which builds upon the research training students have received in undergraduate and/or professional contexts, and aims to prepare them for the design, implementation, management and communication of research in psychology at graduate level. Students take either PSY610 “Introduction to Quantitative Methods” or PSY611 “Design and Analysis of Psychological Experiments”. These classes provide an overview of important designs and statistical techniques (e.g. analysis of variance; multiple regression) that are widely used in psychological research. Some concentrations require additional course work in statistics and research methodology.

SLO 1.2.2 is met by the requirement of each concentration for students within that concentration to take certain foundation courses. For examples, students in the clinical studies concentration are required to take PSY 670 “Introduction to Clinical Psychology”; students in the cognition concentration are required to take PSY 626 “Cognitive Psychology”; students in behavioural

neuroscience are required to take PSY 634 "Physiological Psychology." Such foundation classes provide a graduate-level knowledge base for students.

SLO 1.2.3 is met by two requirements. First, students are required to register for six credits of directed research in their concentration, as part of the MA. This provides them with hands-on experience with the research process, in a formative environment, often as part of a larger laboratory or clinical team and working together with faculty, post-docs and senior graduate students. Second, students work with their primary faculty advisor throughout their MA training to formulate their MA thesis project, make a formal proposal, conduct the research in a timely fashion, write their MA thesis and defend it in front of a committee of three faculty.

SLO 1.2.4 is integrated into the total learning experience in this graduate program. Throughout their graduate studies, students are (a) provided with learning opportunities for transferable skills such as classes in using statistical software, and (b) given opportunities to practice and improve more generic transferable skills such as oral presentation, computer skills and teamwork. Students in the clinical studies concentration are also given specific feedback on their personal and professional development (see also section 5).

SLO 1.3.1 is met through two routes. First, in the PhD component of the program, the emphasis is on the development of a constructive mentoring relationship between the student and his/her advisor (and also the other members of his/her dissertation committee). As part of this relationship, it is expected that the advisor will negotiate an extended program of reading, directed research and other scholarly activities with the student. Second, depending on the concentration, the student may be required to take further specialist classes, practica and internships. As a result of these activities, students are expected to become well-prepared for the doctoral comprehensive examination (see section 5).

SLO 1.3.2 is a formal milestone in the development of PhD students and typically involves the student in preparing a substantial dissertation proposal document, responding to comments on this document from the dissertation committee, and making an oral presentation of the dissertation proposal, usually lasting at least one hour. Both written and oral feedback from the committee members is expected to be incorporated into the final version of the dissertation proposal.

SLO 1.3.3 requires each graduate student to make timely progress through their program of studies, according to the rules of the Graduate Division. Students failing to make timely progress are identified by the Graduate Division, and corrective action is then initiated by the Graduate Chair of the Department.

SLO 1.3.4 stems also from the mentoring relationship referred to previously. Advisors of graduate students are expected to play a proactive role in the development of graduate students, assisting them with the identification of appropriate routes for dissemination of research findings, and helping with the process of responding to reviewers and editors.

SLO 1.3.5 comprises the final formal mileposts, in which students complete their doctoral dissertation according to the guidelines of the University of Hawaii, and defend their work in public in front of their dissertation committee.

4. Population Covered by Assessments

All graduate students in Psychology

5. Assessment Events and Devices

- 5.1. Initial admission requirements. Entry into the graduate program in Psychology is competitive: in the 2004/5 cycle, about 1 in 12 applicants was accepted. Each applicant is reviewed on the basis of academic achievement at baccalaureate level, scores on the graduate record examination and tests of English language competence if necessary, their personal statement, and three letters of reference. The entire faculty of the department meets to approve admissions.
- 5.2. Advancement to Candidacy for the Degree of MA This is typically done by proforma approval via the Graduate Chair, although there may be cases where undergraduate deficiencies must be remedied.
- 5.3. Knowledge assessment for graduate classes. Each graduate class will have its own assessment devices, at the discretion of the instructor. Typically, each graduate student will encounter a variety of assessment devices over the range of core and foundation classes. This range includes formal written examination, extended essay, oral presentation, oral examination, poster presentation, and clinical skills observation. Students receive feedback and letter grades for each graduate class (including directed research classes).
- 5.4. Advancement to Thesis Stage (MA). This assessment event involves a written thesis proposal which is reviewed by a three-member committee of faculty (all selected from the Department of Psychology). If the thesis requires human participants or the use of animals, a prerequisite is that the student must obtain IRB approval prior to advancement. Typically, the student then makes a short oral presentation to his/her committee, responds to questions, and implements any changes requested. The resultant paperwork is reviewed by the Graduate Chair prior to acceptance.
- 5.5. Final Examination and Approval of Thesis (MA). The student will complete his/her empirical work and write the thesis in consultation with his/her primary faculty advisor. When appropriate, a thesis defense is scheduled. Typically, the student makes an oral presentation of about one hour, and responds to questions from the committee. The final form of the thesis is signed by all committee members, and all paperwork is reviewed by the Graduate Chair prior to acceptance.
- 5.6. Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy. All students who have successfully obtained the degree of MA are reviewed by the entire faculty of the Department, following recommendation by the concentration faculty. Students submit a full curriculum vitae and covering letter explaining their progress to date, academic and professional accomplishments, and plans for doctoral study. The faculty meet to discuss each case

for advancement, and consider both the student's documents and comments from teachers and advisors of the student. Advancement to doctoral candidacy may be denied, in which case the student exits the University with the degree of MA only. It should be noted that this scenario is rare.

- 5.7. **Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations.** The Comprehensive Examination ensures that doctoral students have a thorough and adequate comprehension of their chosen field of study. The form of the examination is subject to negotiation between the student and his/her advisor and dissertation committee: this allows flexibility and appropriateness of the comprehensive examination process to the student's research and professional areas. Some examples of comprehensive examinations include (a) formal written examinations designed to assess knowledge of a specified body of literature; (b) a portfolio of research and professional activities, examined by the dissertation committee and subject to oral examination; (c) a dossier of accomplishments in three of four professional activity domains (for the clinical studies concentration).
- 5.8. **Advancement to Dissertation Stage.** This assessment event is similar to 5.4 in that students submit a substantial written research proposal, accompanied by IRB approval if necessary. The student then makes an oral presentation to his/her dissertation committee, which must consist of four faculty members from the Department of Psychology, plus one outside member from a separate Department. The student responds to questions and implements any required changes to the research proposal. Paperwork is reviewed by the Graduate Chair prior to acceptance.
- 5.9. **Final Examination and Approval of Dissertation.** The student will complete his/her empirical work and write his/her dissertation in consultation with his/her advisor and members of his/her dissertation committee as appropriate. When the dissertation is complete, a public defense is undertaken in front of the committee. The doctoral dissertation defense is a public event that must be publicized according to the Graduate Division's rules. The defense is oral, is never less than one hour in length, and the committee is expected to subject the student to rigorous questioning. Major or minor changes to the dissertation may be required prior to final approval. The Graduate Chair has oversight of the paperwork and signs his/her approval as a final step.
- 5.10. In addition to stages 5.1 – 5.9 above, the Department strongly encourages advisors to review student progress on an annual basis. In some concentrations, notably the clinical studies concentration, this annual review process is formalized and extensively documented (to meet requirements of the American Psychological Association). The Graduate Chair is actively working to encourage standardization of the annual review process across the concentrations.

6. Contribution of Graduate Students to Discipline

The general expectation of the Department is that graduate students will publish the results of their research in appropriate scholarly journals, and present at national and international conferences in their field. This expectation is clearly being met: for example, in the period 2002-2003, students in the clinical studies concentration published 84 papers (26 with students as first authors). Typically, when the faculty meet to consider advancement to doctoral candidacy cases,

students already have several conference presentations and one or two publications to their names; this total usually increases during the PhD years.

Graduate students are also actively involved in the teaching activities of the Department, both as Teaching Assistants and as Instructors. They are also often involved in teaching for the Outreach College of the University. All graduate students who function as course instructors (only post-MA students are allowed to function as course instructors) are required to submit formal course evaluations, which are reviewed by the Department chair, and the Department Chair of Undergraduate Studies.

Graduate students also have a major community impact by virtue of their professional and research activities: much of the clinical and applied research takes place in community settings, and there is extensive liaison between the Department and other local organizations in the fields of health, education, culture, medicine and technology.

7. Monitoring of Post-Graduate Professional Activities

At present, there is no central Departmental record of students' post-graduate activities. In certain concentrations, notably the clinical studies concentration, notes of students' first professional destinations are kept. The Graduate Chair is currently developing a system by which all students will be surveyed at the time of graduation and a central record held. The Department Chair is also involved in a general initiative to improve the Department's contact with alumni and to maintain our outreach activities.

8. Use of Assessment Results

Assessment data are used in three general ways to inform the development of the graduate programs in psychology.

First, they form an important input into professional accreditation through the American Psychological Association, which is required for the clinical studies concentration. All aspects of program provision, student progress and pedagogy are considered, and accreditation reports then inform future changes.

Second, the Graduate Chair and Graduate Studies Committee oversee the progression of students and make recommendations to the Department about curriculum design. One of the Graduate Chair's duties is to sit on the Departmental Scheduling Committee to ensure that graduate course provision is appropriately coordinated on a yearly basis.

Third, in consultation with graduate student representatives, policy and administrative procedures are discussed regularly by the Graduate Studies Committee, taking input from both formal assessment events and less formal student feedback.