Psychology Department Learning Outcomes Evaluation Plan

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Introduction and Overview

Learning outcomes were adopted from the American Psychological Association in the 2014-2015 academic year, and are as follows (brief formulations). Students finishing a baccalaureate degree in Psychology at the University of Utah should:

1. Demonstrate a fundamental knowledge base in Psychology
2. Demonstrate capacity for scientific inquiry and critical thinking within Psychology
3. Demonstrate ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world
4. Demonstrate the capacity to communicate about psychological knowledge in writing, oral presentation, and interpersonal interactions.
5. Demonstrate preparation for post-baccalaureate careers in terms of self-knowledge, broader knowledge (about options and careers) and skills.

The goal of our evaluation plan is to develop and implement evaluations of whether Psychology majors meet these learning outcomes as a function of their degree completion. Our ultimate goal is to assess pre-majors and graduating seniors independently of their coursework on the five learning outcomes. Constructing such an assessment procedure is a long-term goal. In the interim, we have put into place one direct (syllabus-based evaluation of learning outcomes and assignments in the curriculum) and one indirect (student surveys embedded with student evaluations) assessment method for addressing learning outcomes on an annual basis. In AY 2016-2017, we will implement an additional interim direct method (examination of artifacts from lower- and upper-division courses), as described below. It is our hope that by AY 2018-2019, we will be positioned to move from an artifact-analysis based approach to a more direct assessment of student outcomes approach. We expect, as noted in more detail below, that our curriculum will shift over the course of these years in response to our evaluations.

**General Overview**

The undergraduate committee will be the body that oversees learning outcome review although other faculty may be called upon to participate.

Learning outcomes assessment will take place in the fall semester..

**Timeline**

**2014-2015**

Learning outcomes adopted and ratified by the faculty. Learning outcomes were added to faculty syllabi, and assessment of curriculum coverage of learning outcomes was initiated.

**2015-2016**

Completion of learning outcomes assessment of curriculum coverage indicates that the curriculum is well designed to address learning outcomes 1 and 2, and likely to also address outcome 4, but at present may be less well designed to address outcomes 3 and 5. This information will be brought to the attention of the full faculty, for consideration of how particular courses might improve our ability to address outcomes 3 and 5.

Indirect learning outcomes assessments for each class, as part of standard student evaluations, were implemented. These provide instructors with end-of-semester feedback about whether students perceive the course to address the learning outcomes, and will be used by the Undergraduate committee in their annual review process to examine whether courses that claim (via syllabus review) to be addressing learning outcomes are perceived by students as doing so.

The Undergraduate Committee will pull artifacts from General Psychology, Psychology and As a Science and Profession, Research Methods, four upper division core classes (representing four areas of the major), and two upper division high-engagement courses (honors thesis and internships/field experiences) to provide a preliminary examination of learning outcomes for Fall 2016.

**2016-2017**

In Fall 2016, the UG committee will review the three sources of data (syllabi, student evaluations, and artifacts) on learning outcomes. In doing so, we will seek to evaluate whether some outcomes are, as we expect, less well addressed by the curriculum.

The committee will seek to define the learning outcomes in ways that are amenable to direct assessment, using the artifacts to provide insights about how to build an assessment tool that is economical and efficient, but adequately captures each learning outcome of interest.

Revised definitions of learning outcomes, and a proposal about direct assessment, will be reviewed and approved by the full faculty.

We will implement an exit survey for graduating seniors to assess post-baccalaureate career plans, learning outcomes perceptions, and other aspects of the major. Exit survey results will be reviewed in the fall with learning outcomes.

**2017-2018**

In this year, we plan to develop and implement a direct assessment procedure. This assessment may involve use of available assessments that target learning outcomes 1 and 2 (the Psychology GRE, the Academic Concentration Applied Testing Psychology – ACAT), as well as either developing or identifying potential methods for assessing learning outcomes 3-5. While the details will be dependent on our discoveries in previous years, at present, we anticipate a process in which a sample of Psy 1010 (General Psychology) students, and a sample of graduating seniors, will be invited to participate in the assessment. Research findings suggest we will need to motivate performance on the assessment in some way if we are to adequately capture information about the effectiveness of the major. Results of the assessment process will be scored and evaluated each fall. Direct assessment of student learning outcomes will replace the annual collection of artifacts from courses, and the annual review of syllabi. Indirect assessment of student perceptions of learning outcomes will continue to be part of our approach.