Undergraduate Program Assessment

Department of Psychology

Student Learning Objectives

Conceptual skills
• Critically evaluate empirical support for various theories and findings
• Conduct literature searches using traditional and technology-based methodologies and critically evaluate and synthesize findings
• Understand the interconnections of psychology with other disciplines

Research skills
• Use and evaluate research methods and designs
• Employ and evaluate basic statistics

Applications skills:
• Appreciate how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy

General skills
• Speak and write effectively in the discourse of the discipline
• Understand the diversity of behavior and experience
• Work effectively with others and on teams
• Synthesize natural science and social science aspects of psychology
• Understand the ethical practice of scientific inquiry
• Think scientifically, understanding the relationships between theories, observations, and conclusions

Assessment tools

Direct measures of student learning objectives
• We reviewed each syllabus from the courses that all Psychology majors are required to take: Introduction to Psychology, Statistics in Psychology, Methods in Psychology, Junior Writing, and Integrative Experience. Each of these courses is built around the department learning goals and includes a variety of assessments that directly measure acquisition of these skills. We are prepared to provide the syllabi for these classes if it would be helpful. Further, we put in a request for information from the Registrar’s Office concerning the numbers of students who received passing grades in these courses each semester. However, those requests will not be answered for several weeks and the information is not available through inquiries we can conduct through SPIRE.
  • Introduction to Psychology emphasizes 1) Critical evaluation of empirical support for various theories and findings, 2) Understanding the interconnections of psychology with other disciplines, 3) Appreciating how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy, 4) Understanding the diversity of behavior and experience, 5) Synthesizing natural science and social science aspects of psychology, 6) Understanding the ethical practice of scientific inquiry, and 7) Thinking scientifically to understand the relationships between theories, observations, and conclusions.
  • Statistics in Psychology emphasizes 1) Critical evaluation of empirical support for various theories and findings, 2) Use and evaluation of research methods and designs, 3) Employing and evaluating basic statistics, 4) Appreciating how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy, 4) Understanding the diversity of behavior and experience, 5) Working effectively with others and on teams, and 6) Thinking scientifically to understand the relationships between theories, observations, and conclusions.
  • Methods in Psychology emphasizes 1) Critical evaluation of empirical support for various theories and findings, 2) Conducting literature searches using traditional and technology-based methodologies and critically evaluating and synthesizing findings, 3) Use and evaluation of research methods and designs, 4) Employing and evaluating basic statistics, 5)
Appreciating how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy, 6) Speaking and writing effectively in the discourse of the discipline, 7) Working effectively with others and on teams, 8) Understanding the ethical practice of scientific inquiry, and 9) Thinking scientifically to understand the relationships between theories, observations, and conclusions.

- Junior Writing emphasizes 1) Understanding the interconnections of psychology with other disciplines, 2) Using and evaluating research methods and designs, 3) Appreciating how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy, 4) Speaking and writing effectively in the discourse of the discipline, 5) Understanding the diversity of behavior and experience, 6) Synthesizing natural science and social science aspects of psychology, and 7) Thinking scientifically to understand the relationships between theories, observations, and conclusions.

- Integrative Experience emphasizes 1) Understanding the interconnections of psychology with other disciplines, 2) Appreciating how psychological findings can be used to make informed judgments that strengthen the community and build public policy, 3) Speaking and writing effectively in the discourse of the discipline, 4) Understanding the diversity of behavior and experience, 5)Synthesizing natural science and social science aspects of psychology, and 5) Understanding the ethical practice of scientific inquiry.

Indirect measures of student learning objectives
- We are currently developing an online survey that will be completed by each class of students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) each April. Participation in the survey will be encouraged by entering every student who provides a response into a drawing. For each class, one name will be drawn randomly and that individual will receive an iPAD (which will be updated to newer electronic devices of similar value as the technology progresses). The survey will focus on acquisition of the learning goals for our students and the ways in which the students foresee that these skills will be useful to them in the future.

Recent activities
- The Undergraduate Studies Committee reviewed the student learning objectives for undergraduates and reported their conclusions to the Executive Committee.
- The link to the student learning goals (http://psych.umass.edu/undergraduate/learning_objectives/) is being included in the newsletter that goes to all psychology majors each month.
- The learning goals and the extent to which they are being reached will be discussed in person by faculty advisors who hold a meeting with freshmen each fall, sophomores each spring, and with seniors each fall.