

## Indiana University South Bend

### *Department of Psychology*

## **Assessment Plan**

### **A. Mission Statement**

The Department of Psychology offers a major in psychology leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. The Department also offers a minor and associate degree in psychology as well as course work that satisfies distribution requirements for undergraduates majoring in other fields. Finally, the Department also offers a Master of Arts in Applied Psychology degree. The Department of Psychology provides a curriculum designed to reflect psychology's status as a science and helping profession. As a science, psychology is concerned with an understanding of behavior and mental processes. As a helping profession, psychology is committed to the amelioration of human suffering using techniques that are solidly grounded in scientific psychology. Students are expected to learn critical thinking and problem solving skills by exposure to current theory, research methodology and techniques of statistical analysis. Personal growth and the development of communication skills are emphasized throughout the curriculum and students are encouraged to apply psychological knowledge to real world situations. Students who earn the B.A. in Psychology are prepared to enter graduate school or to seek employment in a variety of workplace settings.

### **B. Desired Student Outcomes**

Students who major in psychology will be able to do the following:

1. Describe, compare and critique major theories and theorists in psychology. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of psychological theory and method.
2. Demonstrate the ability to locate and obtain relevant information from a wide range of periodicals and other library resources.
3. Describe, compare and critique the commonly employed research methodologies used by psychologists. Demonstrate the ability to select methods appropriate to a variety of research questions.
4. Demonstrate the ability to conduct common statistical analyses and draw appropriate conclusions therefrom. Gain familiarity with use of the computer for statistical analysis.
5. Formulate a research question, conduct an appropriate literature review, and write a research proposal in American Psychological Association (APA) style.
6. Conduct a methodologically and ethically sound experiment and write a research report of the findings in APA style.
7. Explain and defend a research proposal (hypothesis, methodology, anticipated findings and conclusions) in an oral report to mentors and peers.
8. Apply problem solving skills and research techniques to a real-world problem.
9. Appreciate individual differences and human diversity.

### C. Conceptual Framework

The desired student outcomes (above in B) and the methods of assessment (below in D) are conceptually organized around a core curriculum that is required of our majors and minors. For the major, the core curriculum consists of courses in General Psychology (P103), Methods of Experimental Psychology (P211), Statistical Analysis in Psychology (P354), Nonexperimental Research Methods in Psychology (P403), History and Systems of Psychology (P459), and one advanced laboratory course (P420, P421, P429, P435). In addition, students must choose one course from four of five emphasis areas within modern psychology. Outcomes 2-7 are emphasized in the methods, statistical analysis and advanced lab courses. Outcome 1 is emphasized at different levels of sophistication in several courses, from P103 to P459. Outcomes 2, 3, and 9 are emphasized in the diversity of courses comprising the areas of emphasis. Moreover, by requiring that students choose from among broadly defined emphasis areas, we are giving students an opportunity to learn about a wide range of theories and viewpoints in psychology. For the minor, core requirements include exposure to critical methodology (P211) as well as broad exposure to two of the five emphasis areas (three of the five for AA degree students). Finally, students are encouraged to take P495, Professional Program Internship, in order to put into practice all they have learned during their undergraduate program (Outcome 8).

### D. Assessment

1. *Coursework*: The assessment of desired student outcomes occurs continuously during the student's progress through the curriculum, but especially in those courses comprising the core. In P211, students are required to formulate a research question, conduct a relevant literature review, and write a research proposal in APA style. This written proposal constitutes the basis for assessing outcomes 1, 2, and 5. In the advanced laboratory course, students must design and carry out an experiment and then defend it in oral argument in class as well as in a public poster session. These exercises constitute the basis for assessing outcomes 3, 4, 6, and 7. The ethical component of Outcome 6 is primarily demonstrated by successful completion and approval of their research proposal in the advanced laboratory by the IUSB Institutional Review Board (IRB). Outcome 4 is assessed in the execution of the experiment in the advanced laboratory course as well as in the P354 course. Examinations and term papers constitute the basis of assessing Outcomes 1-4 in all psychology courses. A principal focus of the work in P459 is on comparisons among important theorists in psychology and thus, written work in P459 constitutes an important component of the assessment battery. Students' research proposal from P211 and paper from P459 are placed in their student record file in our department's office.
2. *Survey*: The long range success of the psychology department in preparing its students for work or graduate school will be measured through the academic and professional achievements of its graduates. A survey of past graduates and their employment will be undertaken once every five years.

3. *Standardized Testing:* All psychology majors must take P459 History & Systems of Psychology, one of the two capstone experiences in the curriculum (along with our Advanced Labs). This class is nearly always taken during the student's senior year (though it is taken by a small number of other students as well). In the Spring semester of each year, all senior psychology majors enrolled in P459 will take the Psychology Major Field test developed by Educational Testing Services (ETS). This test provides overall measures of students' achievement and knowledge of basic concepts and principles of psychology as well as separate subscores for major topic areas of the field. A major advantage of this exam as a primary measure of student performance is that there are national norms with which our student performance can be compared. The test has been administered annually since 1998 and the scores over time can also be compared to those obtained each year. This can give us specific content performance as well as the progress of our majors over time.

#### **E. Program Improvement**

At least one department meeting each Spring semester will be devoted to curriculum review and an analysis of assessment results. Insofar as assessment is grounded in the core curriculum, the faculty is in an advantageous position to monitor student progress toward achieving the desired outcomes. Individual students who fail to achieve the expected outcomes can be counseled in their classes or during advisement. A review of the student's records in such cases likely would result in the recommendation to select additional courses that would compensate for deficiencies or buttress weaknesses. Moreover, since curriculum review is an ongoing concern in the Department of Psychology, systematic failure to achieve one or more outcomes by large numbers of students would be detected early and corrected by adjustments in the curriculum.

#### **F. Additional Resources Needed**

Most of the assessment in the Department of Psychology occurs during the normal course of teaching, student advising, and department meetings. The 5-year surveys and the standardized tests, however, require some budgetary support in the form of supplies (paper, duplicating, postage, phone) and released time for a faculty member to conduct the survey (estimated cost of the survey is \$2500) as well as the annual cost of the standardized tests (at \$25 each and a maximum of 20 students per year, a total annual cost of up to \$500 at present).