

Department of Psychology
Assessment Plan and Activities

Department of Psychology Mission Statement

The Department of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (1) provides students with an understanding of the content and methods of psychology, (2) prepares students for a lifetime of learning and thinking by cultivating intellectual skills, and (3) promotes personal characteristics that are consistent with high ethical standards and sensitivity to issues of diversity. We strive to acquaint students with research findings and theories in numerous areas. This goal is accomplished through a curricular structure that ensures students take courses that survey the processes influencing behavior. The Department of Psychology further strives to instill in students a basic science orientation and develop their ability to evaluate and conduct psychological research. Our department recognizes that many students are seeking careers in human services and other applied fields. Thus, we offer a variety of courses and experiences that enable students to apply psychological principles to promote human welfare.

I. Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

A. Knowledge Base

- 1. Content areas. Students will demonstrate acquisition of knowledge across the following areas: History, Biological Bases, Learning and Cognition, Development, Individual Differences.**
- 2. Methodology. Students will demonstrate understanding of the various research methodologies of psychology.**
- 3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of theoretical perspectives and schools of thought in psychology.**

B. Intellectual Skills

- 1. Thinking skills. Students will be able to think critically and synthesize multiple sources of information.**
- 2. Students will be able to gather information.**
- 3. Scientific Skills. Students will be able to evaluate research in the social sciences, as well as conduct research and analyze and interpret their results.**
- 4. Students will be able to communicate in accord with APA style.**

C. Personal Characteristics

- 1. Students will display and support high ethical standards.**
- 2. Students will appreciate individual and cultural differences.**
- 3. Students will assess their own abilities in relation to career choices.**

II. Identification of where Objective/Outcomes are Being Achieved

	Courses (required unless otherwise noted)
Content areas	
History	History and Systems (401)
Physiological	Choose 2 of 3 below Animal Behavior (340) Sensation and Perception (350) Physiological Psychology (355)
Learning and Cognition	Choose 1 of 2 below Learning and Motivation (305) Memory and Thinking (310)
Development	Choose 1 of 2 below Childhood and Adolescence (236) Adulthood and Aging (336)
Individual Differences	Choose 2 of 3 below Social Psychology (265) Psychology of Personality (320) Abnormal Psychology (325)
Methodology	Research Methods (205) Choose 1 of 2 below Psychological Measurement and Evaluation (315) Advanced Research Methods (developing option)
Theoretical perspectives and schools of thought	History and Systems (401)
Thinking skills	Research Methods (205) Advanced Research Methods (developing option)
Information gathering skills	Research Methods (205) Advanced Research Methods (developing option)
Scientific skills	Behavioral Statistics (201) Research Methods (205) Advanced Research Methods (developing option)
Communication in APA Style	Research Methods (205) Advanced Research Methods (developing option)
Personal Characteristics	Research Methods (205) History and Systems (401)

III. Assessment Tools Used to Measure Objective/Outcomes

A. *Knowledge Base*

- 1. Direct measures:** In addition to traditional classroom assessments (exams, quizzes, written projects, oral presentations), the department developed and validated an assessment test, called the Psychology Department Assessment Test (PDAT) in 1993. This test has undergone one minor (PDAT I-R) and one major (PDAT II) revision during the ensuing years and has been administered nearly every semester since spring 1996. It assesses learning outcomes in thirteen major areas of psychology by identifying gains in psychological knowledge from the freshman to the senior level.
- 2. Indirect measure:** Every program on campus undergoes an external review every seven years. Part of this review includes the collection of data from a survey of alumni.
- 3. Proposed indirect measure:** Senior exit survey. During Spring 2008 the Department of Psychology will develop and pilot a detailed Senior exit survey. Seniors will report their impressions of how well the major met the stated learning objectives.

B. *Intellectual Skills*

- 1. Direct measure:** classroom assessment, PDAT
- 2. Proposed indirect measure:** Senior exit survey

C. *Personal Characteristics*

- 1. Proposed indirect measure:** Senior exit survey

IV. Timetable Indicating the Cycle of Assessment and Continuous Improvement

A. *Cycle of Assessment*

- 1. PDAT.** The PDAT is administered to incoming freshmen psychology majors within the early weeks of their first semester and again to seniors upon completion of their capstone course in the major (Psychology 401: History and Systems).

2. **Senior exit survey.** The Senior exit survey will be administered every semester as part of the requirements for completion of their capstone course in the major.

B. Cycle of Continuous Improvement:

1. **Early in every fall semester, a department meeting is devoted solely to assessment issues, including the following**
 - a) **Review of previous year's assessment data**
 - b) **Implementation of current year's assessments**
 - c) **Recommendations for improving the assessment process**

V. Data Presentation and Discussion Process

- A. It is the responsibility of the Psychology Department Assessment Coordinator, currently Dr. Lisa Isenberg, to ensure assessment data are collected, compiled and analyzed throughout the year, and presented to the department for discussion every fall.***

VI. Implementation of Revisions Based on Assessment Results

- A. Changes to the assessment process will take place under the advisement of the entire psychology faculty in response to recommendations from the yearly fall assessment meeting. Depending on the nature of the change, implementation will take place during the following spring semester.***

VII. Results Availability

- A. For faculty, assessment information is stored and available in the following places:***
1. **Raw data are kept in the Psychology Department in Room 170, Centennial Science Hall. PDAT answer sheets and summary reports are in one box, filed by semester. All other raw data, and summaries thereof, are kept in a second box, filed by semester.**
 2. **Copies of data summaries and assessment reports are kept in a binder housed in the Psychology Department Main Office, 151**

CSH, as well as in the office of the Department Assessment Coordinator (currently 171 CSH).

3. Electronic files are maintained and backed up by the Psychology Department Assessment Coordinator.

B. For students and others, assessment results will be available on our Department website, <http://www.uwrf.edu/psych/>.

VIII. Psychology and General Education

A. The Department of Psychology also carries out a separate assessment of student learning outcomes associated with two general education courses—Psychology 101: General Psychology and Psychology 201: Behavioral Statistics.

B. Assessment data from these courses are compiled by the Department Assessment Coordinator, who generates and forwards a yearly assessment report to the University General Education Committee.

C. General education assessment data are housed in 170 CSH.