

**Template  
Degree Program  
Assessment of Student Learning Plan  
Kansas State University**

- Check the box if your program's student learning outcomes have been modified since November 2003. If so, please email ([apr@ksu.edu](mailto:apr@ksu.edu)) or attach a hard copy to this document.

**A. College, Department, and Date**

College: Arts and Sciences  
Department: Psychology  
Date: February 15, 2005

**B. Contact Person(s) for the Assessment Plans**

Richard J. Harris, Professor  
Patrick A. Knight, Associate Professor

**C. Degree Program**

B.A. in Psychology  
B.S. in Psychology

**D. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan**

**1. Student Learning Outcome(s)**

**Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology:** Demonstration of respect for, and use of, critical thinking, skeptical inquiry, and the scientific approach

**Research Methods in Psychology:** Understanding and application of basic research methods, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

**Communication Skills:** Ability to communicate effectively.

**Special rationale for selecting these learning outcomes (optional):**

These outcomes reflect the emphasis placed on critical thinking in the design and/or interpretation of research in the upper-level psychology courses required for our majors. By selecting these outcomes, the Department of Psychology will be able to assemble an adequate sample of the work of advanced psychology majors, while focusing on skills that should distinguish these students from others in the university.

**Relationship to K-State Student Learning Outcomes (insert the program SLOs and check all that apply):**

| Program SLOs                              | University-wide SLOs ( <u>Undergraduate Programs</u> ) |                   |               |           |                                   | Program SLO is conceptually different from university SLOs |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | Knowledge                                              | Critical Thinking | Communication | Diversity | Academic / Professional Integrity |                                                            |
| 1. Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology |                                                        | X                 |               |           |                                   |                                                            |
| 2. Research Methods in Psychology         | X                                                      | X                 |               |           |                                   |                                                            |
| 3. Communication Skills                   |                                                        |                   | X             |           |                                   |                                                            |

**2. How will the learning outcomes be assessed? What groups will be included in the assessment?**

The Department of Psychology offers seven advanced undergraduate courses that are primarily intended for our own majors (see list below). In fact, only one of these courses is open to non-psychology majors. The learning outcomes specified above will be assessed through two methods, both utilizing samples of psychology majors from these courses.

| Course    | Title                        | Typical Enrollment | Offered               |
|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| PSYCH 460 | Cognitive Psychology         | 45                 | 3 out of 4 semesters  |
| PSYCH 470 | Psychobiology                | 75*                | “ “                   |
| PSYCH 475 | Principles of Learning       | 35                 | “ “                   |
| PSYCH 480 | Fund. Perception & Sensation | 45                 | “ “                   |
| PSYCH 605 | Advanced Social Psych        | 45                 | Every spring semester |
| PSYCH 620 | Personality                  | 45                 | Every fall semester   |

\*This is the only course that includes non-PSYCH majors; typically, half the enrollment is made up of PSYCH majors, however.

The first assessment method is a direct measure of learning, and will involve the review of research papers assigned in these courses. These papers were selected for review because they will provide data directly relevant to all three of the learning outcomes. Students will turn in two copies of their reports, only one of which will have identifying information (graded for course credit); the second copy will have no identification and it will be used for assessment purposes.

The review of the research papers will be guided by a rubric developed by the faculty who teach these courses. Specifically, this rubric will specify points to look for in the students' papers that

the instructors believe would indicate successful achievement of the learning outcomes. It is recognized that the specific topics and requirements of papers assigned in these several courses will vary. However, the outcomes selected for assessment are not dependent upon any specific body of literature or topical issues in the field of psychology. Rather, these outcomes are not only relevant, but critical, in each of these courses. We are confident that a coherent rubric can be developed to assess these outcomes across all of these courses.

The second assessment method is an indirect measure of learning, and will involve a survey of all psychology majors in these seven courses. This survey will ask the students to evaluate the effectiveness of the course in enhancing their skills in the areas of critical thinking, research methods, and communication.

**3. When will these outcomes be assessed? When and in what format will the results of the assessment be discussed?**

We intend to assess each of the three learning outcome every semester during the three-year period of the plan, using both assessment methods described above. Once the rubric and the assessment survey have been developed, there is only minimal additional effort or time necessary to assess all of the outcomes, as opposed to assessing only some of the outcomes.

A random sample of approximately 20% of the research papers submitted by psychology majors in the relevant courses will be selected each semester for review. Each paper will be reviewed by at least two faculty members, using the rubric described above. The faculty member who assigned any specific paper will not be among those who review that paper. Each reviewer will summarize his or her evaluation of the paper in each on each of the three learning outcomes, and submit those evaluations to the department head, who will summarize and report the evaluation results.

All psychology majors in the relevant courses will complete the assessment survey described above. The survey responses will be summarized for each course, and for each semester.

**4. What is the unit's process for using assessment results to improve student learning?**

The results of the assessments will be summarized by the department head, or other faculty appointed by the department head, every semester. These reports will be distributed to the faculty and discussed at faculty meetings, also every semester. At those meetings we will use the results of the assessment to plan ways by which we improve student learning in all of our courses.