

FEB 17 2005

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

*received*

- 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: Graduate School  
Department: Psychology  
Date: 12/07/2004

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

J. J. Uhlarik, Graduate program director  
S. W. Kiefer, Head

**Degree Program**

M.S. in Psychology  
Ph.D. in Psychology

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

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

The psychology department has identified the following <sup>Six?</sup> ~~seven~~ student learning outcomes (SLO) for its graduate program:

- 1. Theory and content in psychology** – Students are expected to be able to integrate a broad understanding of psychological theories, principles, and expertise in specific basis and applied domains of psychology.
- 2. Research methodologies** - Students are expected to be able to utilize research methodologies, data analyses and statistical interpretation relevant to their area of specialization.
- 3. Critical thinking skills** – Students are expected to respect and utilize critical and creative thinking as it applies to the scientific approach to psychology.

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4. **Applications of psychology** – Students are expected to be able to understand and apply psychological theories, principles and methodologies to real world domains relevant to their areas of specialization.
5. **Ethical principles** – students are expected to understand and apply the *American Psychological Association's* ethical principles in their scientific, educational and professional roles as psychologists.
6. **Communication Skills** – Students are expected to demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills.

These SLOs are generally consistent with a more generic list of SLOs proposed by the Graduate School having to do with “knowledge,” “skills” and “attitudes and professional conduct”.

The Department intends to focus on three of the SLOs for its initial assessment plan: 2) Research methodologies; 5) Ethical principles; and 6) Communication skills.

Relationship to K-State Student Learning Outcomes & Designated Program SLOs

Program SLOs	University-wide SLOs (Graduate Programs)					Program SLO is conceptually different from university SLOs
	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes & Professional Conduct			
2. Research Methodologies	X	X				
5. Ethical Principles			X			
6. Communication Skills		X				

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

All graduate students taking their preliminary examinations for advancement to Ph.D. candidacy will serve as the group to be assessed. By the time preliminary examinations occur, graduate students will have taken the majority of their coursework that addresses the SLOs listed. An assessment plan is proposed that assesses *direct* measures of 3 SLOs (shown in the matrix labeled “*Relationship to K-State Student Learning Outcomes*”) that the department will evaluate during the next three years. Specifically it is intended that the preliminary examinations include a few questions designed to assess:

- A. Student abilities to utilize research methodologies, data analyses and statistical interpretation.
- B. Ethical principles.
- C. Written communication skills (optional).

In addition to the preliminary examinations, written communication skills will be monitored in publication submissions that graduate students have co-authorship (particularly those that have a graduate student as first author). To the degree possible, reviewers’ comments concerning the written communication of the manuscript will be collected.

For the preliminary examinations and the specific questions, a select faculty committee (independent of the student’s supervisory committee) will evaluate the exam answers to determine the degree to which the department is achieving the designated SLOs. The exact questions on the exams will vary from student to student but will include the general topics listed in the SLOs. The rationale for choosing SLOs A and B is that all students are required to take common courses dealing with these topics (PSYCH 802, 805, and 806 which are research design and analyses courses; PSYCH 968 Seminar in Professional Problems – Ethics). The written communication skills SLO runs through virtually all courses offered in the graduate program. The preliminary examinations can be used for the assessment of this SLO as it is a relatively spontaneous source of written material by the student. Written manuscripts (and their reviews) represent a much more polished source of communication.

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

The results of the assessments will be accumulated and summarized by the department head, or other faculty appointed by the department head, on an *annual basis*. These reports will be distributed to the faculty and discussed at faculty meetings. At those meetings we will use the results of the assessment to plan ways by which we improve student learning in those courses that particularly address the three SLOs listed. These discussions will focus on areas of concern, and specifically how these concerns can be addressed in the graduate core courses common to all students in the program. An additional vehicle for potentially addressing the SLOs listed will be in the generation of these proposals and final copies.