

SACS OUTCOME MAPPING FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM (2010-2011)

The Psychology program has established measurable outcomes for self-evaluation based on the learning goals and outcomes recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2006; see www.apa.org/ed/resources.html). Outcomes were selected from those offered by the APA based on their relative importance and measurability (see below).

Overall, the data suggest that our program is teaching core content exceptionally well, as represented in the high percent of students performing well on the ETS exit exam (see outcome 1), and the strength of our students' communication skills (see Outcome 3). As part of our plans for improvement, we have decided to increase these benchmarks for the 2011-2012 academic year to ensure that these domains remain strengths of our program.

We did not consistently meet our benchmarks for two of the outcomes – those regarding understanding and application of research methods (see Outcome 2) and information competence through technology/computer skills (see Outcome 4). We already spend a considerable time training students in these domains and believe that these scores do not necessarily represent a failure to achieve the outcome as a whole; rather they may reflect preparation for the culminating experience itself. As part of our plans for improvement on these outcomes, we first attempted to better link the experiences in the two experimental psychology classes to ensure that the measured outcomes represent a culminating, sequential experience rather than an experience in that individual course (beginning spring 2011). This did not result in an immediate improvement in the benchmarks, and the program has decided to reorganize the courses. The previous format taught the content as basic statistics and methods (315) followed by advanced stats and methods (318). We were concerned that there was too much overlap between the courses, resulting in too much work for students, which could explain the benchmark shortcomings. Thus, beginning in fall 2011, we will switch to a statistics (315) and methods (318) division of content, with the hope that this will produce a more favorable outcome by allowing students to focus on smaller segments of content at a time and hopefully better master the material. See Outcomes 2 and 4 for more detail.

OUTCOME 1	Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
COURSES THAT ASSESS OUTCOME	Psych 110 and 120, Psych 475, Psych 480
KEY ASSESSMENT TOOLS	Tests, Presentations
KEY EXPERIENCES THAT HELP STUDENTS MEET OUTCOMES	History paper, Senior Seminar presentations, Class debates
CULMINATING PROFICIENCY MEASUREMENT	Major Field Exam (Psych 480)
BENCHMARK	70% of students scoring above the 25th percentile
DATA	F2010: 13/14 (92.9%) – GOAL IS MET S2011: 21/22 (95.5%) – GOAL IS MET
PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT	Because our program has been highly successful for this outcome, we plan on raising this benchmark. The new benchmark, starting Fall 2011, will be changed to 80% of students scoring above the 25th percentile. We also plan on adding a new benchmark incorporating the final exam from Psych 475 (History of Psychology).

OUTCOME 2	Students will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.	
COURSES THAT ASSESS OUTCOME	Psych 315, Psych 318, Psych 320 or 470	
KEY ASSESSMENT TOOLS	SPSS assignments, Writing literature reviews, Quizzes over research content areas	
KEY EXPERIENCES THAT HELP STUDENTS MEET OUTCOMES	Group oral presentation, Professional presentations	
CULMINATING PROFICIENCY MEASUREMENT	Successful completion of Psychology 315	Successful completion of Psychology 318
BENCHMARK	70% of students receiving a 70% (C) in the course or above	70% of students receiving a 68% (C) in the course or above
DATA	F2010: 35/40 (87.5%) – GOAL IS MET S2011: 17/21 (81%) – GOAL IS MET	F2010: 13/24 (54.2%) – GOAL IS NOT MET S2011: 11/22 (50%) – GOAL IS NOT MET
PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT	These benchmarks are being met with mixed results. Some adjustments were made in spring 2011 to the courses to reduce content. Because this did not significantly improve our performance, the program elected to change the content of the experimental course sequence to fit a stats/methods format. The goal was to reduce the overlap of class content, allowing students to focus on smaller chunks of content in each class and learn both sets more completely.	

OUTCOME 3	Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.
COURSES THAT ASSESS OUTCOME	Psych 315, Psych 318, Psych 475, Psych 480
KEY ASSESSMENT TOOLS	Written assignments, In-class debate, Oral presentations
KEY EXPERIENCES THAT HELP STUDENTS MEET OUTCOMES	Job interviews, In-class debates, oral presentations
CULMINATING PROFICIENCY MEASUREMENT	Professional Portfolio Overall Grade (Psych 480)
BENCHMARK	70% of students receiving an average of 70% overall on the assignment or above
DATA	F2010: 11/14 (78.6%) – GOAL IS MET S2011: 21/22 (95.5%) – GOAL IS MET
PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT	Because our program has been highly successful for this outcome, we plan on raising the benchmark. The new benchmark (starting Fall 2011) will be 80% of students receiving an average of 70% overall on the assignments or above.

OUTCOME 4	Students will demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes.
COURSES THAT ASSESS OUTCOME	Psych 110 and 120, Psych 315, Psych 318, Psych 475, Psych 480
KEY ASSESSMENT TOOLS	Typed assignments/papers, SPSS assignments/quizzes
KEY EXPERIENCES THAT HELP STUDENTS MEET OUTCOMES	PowerPoint presentations, SPSS training/assignments, Computer simulations, Blackboard class integration
CULMINATING PROFICIENCY MEASUREMENT	SPSS-based Laboratory Exam (Psych 318 2011 and earlier, Psych 315 starting 2012)
BENCHMARK	50% of students receiving a grade of C (68%) on the SPSS lab exam or above
DATA	F2010: 16/25 (64%) – GOAL IS MET S2011: 6/25 (24%) – GOAL IS NOT MET
PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT	These benchmarks are being met with mixed results. Given the mixed success, adjustments were made in spring 2011 to the courses to reduce content with the goal to reduce overlap of class content. This should allow students to focus on smaller chunks of content in each class and focus better on specific content.