

Undergraduate Degree Program Assessment Plan Cover Sheet (rev. 07):  
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK Plan No. 22 Degree Program: \_\_BA  
in Psychology Department and College: \_\_Psychology, AAHS Degree type  
: \_BA\_\_\_\_\_ Prepared by: Roger A. Webb rawebb@ualr.edu Submitted to  
College Assessment Committee on March 5, 2007 Approved on  
\_\_\_\_\_ Submitted to Provost Assessment Advisory Group on

Approved on \_\_\_\_\_ Respond to all four questions, following the  
Degree Program Assessment Plan Form Instructions. Attach additional pages as  
needed. 1. What are your student learning goals for this degree program?  
Include which core competencies are addressed by these goals where applicable.  
It is the mission of the Psychology Department to produce graduates who have a  
thorough grounding in current academic psychology as a vehicle for making  
them intelligent citizens who are capable of functioning in the modern workplace,  
and for those who wish, prepared to go on to graduate study in psychology or  
related fields. Like most departments at UALR, the Psychology Department has  
focused its assessment efforts in the past narrowly on student learning in its  
academic field. Up to this point, our stated goals have been 1) knowledge of  
modern psychology, 2) a scientific understanding of behavior, 3) statistical  
thinking, 4) critical thinking, 5) social and cultural awareness, 6) professional  
writing skills, and 7) knowledge of psychology as a professional field and of  
related professional fields. The American Psychological Association has developed  
a set of ideal learning goals for an undergraduate program, and the Department  
began the process of adopting those goals last year. An expanded version of the  
APA goals with suggested learning outcomes is appended. The University's  
reexamination of assessment this year also refocused our attention on UALR's  
core competencies. Members of the Department rated the ten APA goals and  
voted whether they thought each goal was appropriate for our program. It is  
clear that there is considerable overlap between UALR's core competencies and  
the APA goals. An attempt to link the APA goals with the core competencies is  
given below in order of the Department's PVC 2/07 ranking of the APA goals.  
Note that this is done at the level of similarities of statements and not more  
detailed definitions. The APA statements are expanded below. The University's  
statements on core competencies are largely irrelevant, since they were written  
to meet the political needs of departments. Adopting the APA goals would bring  
the Department into line with national standards for psychology programs and  
cover the core competencies. APA Goals (ranked) Core Competencies 1.  
Knowledge base in Psychology not directly covered 2. Research Methods  
Scientific thinking/mathematical competence 3. Critical thinking Critical thinking  
4. Applications of Psychology not directly covered 5. Values in Psychology Ethical  
and moral consciousness 6. Social, Cultural, International Awareness Social and  
Cultural, International Awareness 7. Career Development not directly covered 8.  
Communication skills Verbal literacy 9. Information technology Information  
technology 10. Personal development not directly covered not covered Aesthetic  
experience not covered Historical awareness While there are a number of  
apparent discrepancies, the divergence is less than appears at first glance. The  
knowledge base in psychology may cover all the core competencies. The  
Department is revising its History of Psychology course for majors, and  
Developmental Psychology takes a historic perspective on people's lives. A major  
part of values in psychology concerns ethical treatment of human and animal  
subjects. Aesthetic experience is covered in developmental, cognitive and

sensation and perception courses. The Department has misgivings about taking on Personal development as a goal, and we are working on the specific definition for that. PVC 2/07 2. What are your learning objectives or outcomes associated with each student learning goal? The APA working group provided a set of behavioral outcomes for each of the learning objectives in its ideal program. The Department will use this document as a first draft content domain as we develop new assessment tools. We still have to develop measures that will function as operational definitions of the objectives. In the past, we measured academic knowledge with scores on the ACAT that is an externally developed objective test of areas of psychology and ratings on essay questions. 3. Where will the objectives be addressed in your program? In which courses and through which activities will they be assessed? (see Curriculum Assessment Map below.) Curriculum Map: APA Task Force objectives linked to psychology courses and other features of BA program. This is where we think the objectives will be covered, not assessed. 1. Knowledge Base in Psychology: 2300 (intro) and upper level courses 2. Research Methods: 2310, 2340, 2341 (stat courses) 4460 (testing). We are trying to increase the methodological content of all our course offerings. 3. Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology: 2300 and all upper level courses. 4. Applications of Psychology: 3320 (Applied), 3330 (Health), 3370 (Industrial), 4310 (Counseling), 4325 (Personnel), 4363 (Organizational). One course is required. 5. Values in Psychology: Section of ethical treatment of subjects added to 2300; topic considered in all applied courses and Developmental and Abnormal Psychology. 6. Information and Technological Literacy: Presently not covered systematically. Computer support for stat course is available. Many course now using on-line support, email. 7. Communication Skills: Dept has formed a writing committee, but has achieved little evidence of success to date. A proposal to add writing requirements to some upper level courses must be considered. Writing samples are collected in Senior Synthesis. 8. Sociocultural and International Awareness: Major focus in 3356 (Developmental), 3330 (Health), 3350 (Social), 3365 (Psychosexual), 3366 (Psych of Women) 9. Personal Development: Not a major focus on any course, but related material in 3330 (Health), 3365 (Psychosexual), 4300 (Drugs & Behavior), 4335 (Personal Adjustment). 10. Career Planning and Development: 3320 (Applied Psych) is now a required course for majors. All instructors in 2300 are supposed to devote one class to the topic of psychology as a profession. Also covered in Psychology Club that is optional for majors. PVC 2/07 4. How will you assess each objective? (a) Methods; b) Design; c) Assessment cycle; d) Stakeholder involvement.) We will continue to assess the objectives we have addressed in the past with the same methods for the time being. Beyond the objectives we have assessed in the past, we are not able to answer this question in detail at this time. It will take at least a year to develop assessment methods for the objectives. A general plan follows. The APA working group provided a matrix of optimal methods for assessing each of the objectives. Only academic knowledge of the field lends itself naturally to objective (i.e. multiple choice) tests. The Department intends to continue our use of the ACAT test for that purpose on a periodic basis. Until the scores show change, doing the ACAT test every three years should be enough. It is the most expensive component of the assessment program. The Department has assessed its other learning objectives over the years with essay questions given in the Senior Synthesis course and rated using the SOLO taxonomy that were designed to tap specific objectives

(statistical thinking, critical thinking, etc.). For example, in one question, we give the student numerical data on an educational intervention program. The rating of the essays depends on the students' ability to detect a main effect, an interaction and a failed main effect. We intend to continue to collect and evaluate assessment data in the Senior Synthesis course. In the future, we would like to expand it to a three SSCH course, but we do not know how we could staff it. We have 60 to 80 students taking the one hour course each semester now, and that will expand to 100 or so as more majors have to graduate under the current catalog. If we had fewer majors, we would like to require a senior project in which students could demonstrate most of the objectives in a practical form. If we develop an honor's major, as we are considering, a senior project will definitely be part of that program. Since we cannot assess all objectives in a one hour course, the Department needs to embed new assessment activities into its upper level courses using a sampling design that insures each objective be evaluated in courses on a periodic basis that all, or nearly all, or our majors will have to take. Also, the majority of our new objectives need to be assessed with methods other than written tests. Coordination with faculty members and development of the assessment tools will be required. We do not think it is appropriate to use course exams in courses that are supposed to cover various objectives as the sole measures of the degree to which objectives are mastered. Also, even if course exams are used, they should be evaluated by someone other than the professor teaching the course. The pressure to give grades compromises the assessment process. There may be some courses for which the course exam will serve as an assessment tool, but in more cases, other exercises will be required. Knowledge of the licensing laws covering professional psychology and professional standards in related fields is something we can assess in Applied Psychology that is now a required course for majors. Questions about the application of statistical thinking are simpler and more general than the usual exam questions in our statistics and testing courses. We think we are teaching cultural and social awareness in many of our courses, but that is probably not an appropriate exam question in any course. PVC 2/07 Consider the APA's proposed learning outcomes for social, cultural and international awareness. Objective 8. Sociocultural and International Awareness Recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity. Suggested Learning Outcomes 8.1 Interact effectively and sensitively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives. 8.2 Examine the sociocultural and international contexts that influence individual differences. 8.3 Explain how individual differences influence beliefs, values, and interactions with others and vice versa. 8.4 Understand how privilege, power, and oppression may affect prejudice, discrimination, and inequity. 8.5 Recognize prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors that might exist in themselves and others. Notice that none of the outcomes are simple academic knowledge. Notice also that these are not measurement or test items: they are a basis for developing assessment exercises. Obviously, the best assessment of 8.1 would be to set up groups of students with mixed ethnic, cultural, national backgrounds and give them a group project. Participation could be rated on dimensions of sensitivity and effectiveness. Outcomes 8.2 through 8.4 could conceivably be measured with essay questions, but it might be difficult to determine what the right answers were. Are "privilege, power and oppression" bad things? And who gets to say? Outcome 8.5 appears to be the critical one: college graduates should

have self awareness about their own prejudices. How does one evaluate that? Assessing writing skills, values, sociocultural and international awareness, historical awareness and personal development will all require the development of new tools which the Department has yet to do. The question of which objectives to handle first remains to be answered, though we have already begun on social and cultural awareness in the context of core assessment. Let us note that the list of learning outcomes provided by the APA is a body of content that is related to the goals and objectives that we have said we want to measure. We have to come up with tests or exercises that give us measurable samples of the outcomes. Our first concern will be with content validity. This involves a demonstration that whatever we use as assessment tools constitutes a representative sample of the defined body of content. Then we are obliged to study the results to see if the exercises we employ appear actually to work to measure the objectives in question. This is a process, hopefully, of continuing revision and improvement. At this point, we have only begun to consider the question of acceptable levels of performance on the new goals. On the ACAT test, we used a regression analysis with ACT scores to argue that our students were doing about as well as we could expect. We have used a 4 on the SOLO scale as the minimal college graduate level response. (There seems to be some national consensus on that.) We wonder what an appropriate level of cultural, social and international awareness might look like. That is knowledge that must be self reflective to be effective, and we need to measure whether students actually apply their educations to self understanding. PVC 2/07 Appendix I: Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with the Science and Application of Psychology Objective 1. Knowledge Base of Psychology Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology. Suggested Learning Outcomes 1.1 Characterize the nature of psychology as a discipline. a. Explain why psychology is a science. b. Identify and explain the primary objectives of psychology: describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling behavior and mental processes. c. Compare and contrast the assumptions and methods of psychology with those of other disciplines. d. Describe the contributions of psychology perspectives to interdisciplinary collaboration. 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology: a. theory and research representing each of the following four general domains: (1) learning and cognition (2) individual differences, psychometrics, personality, and social processes, including those related to sociocultural and international dimensions (3) biological bases of behavior and mental processes, including physiology, sensation, perception, comparative, motivation, and emotion (4) developmental changes in behavior and mental processes across the life span b. the history of psychology, including the evolution of methods of psychology, its theoretical conflicts, and its sociocultural contexts c. relevant levels of analysis: cellular, individual, group/systems, and culture d. overarching themes, persistent questions, or enduring conflicts in psychology, such as (1) the interaction of heredity and environment (2) variability and continuity of behavior and mental processes within and across species (3) free will versus determinism (4) subjective versus objective perspective (5) the interaction of mind and body e. relevant ethical issues, including a general understanding of the APA Code of Ethics 1.3 Use the concepts, language, and major theories of the discipline to account for

psychological phenomena. a. Describe behavior and mental processes empirically, including operational definitions b. Identify antecedents and consequences of behavior and mental processes c. Interpret behavior and mental processes at an appropriate level of complexity d. Use theories to explain and predict behavior and mental processes e. Integrate theoretical perspectives to produce comprehensive and multi-faceted explanations

1.4 Explain major perspectives of psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, evolutionary, humanistic, psychodynamic, and sociocultural). a. Compare and contrast major perspectives b. Describe advantages and limitations of major theoretical perspectives

Objective 2. Research Methods in Psychology Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation. Suggested Learning Outcomes

2.1 Describe the basic characteristics of the science of psychology. 2.2 Explain different research methods used by psychologists. a. Describe how various research designs address different types of questions and hypotheses b. Articulate strengths and limitations of various research designs c. Distinguish the nature of designs that permit causal inferences from those that do not 2.3 Evaluate the appropriateness of conclusions derived from psychological research. a. Interpret basic statistical results PVC 2/07 b. Distinguish between statistical significance and practical significance c. Describe effect size and confidence intervals d. Evaluate the validity of conclusions presented in research reports 2.4 Design and conduct basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods. a. Locate and use relevant databases, research, and theory to plan, conduct, and interpret results of research studies b. Formulate testable research hypotheses, based on operational definitions of variables c. Select and apply appropriate methods to maximize internal and external validity and reduce the plausibility of alternative explanations d. Collect, analyze, interpret, and report data using appropriate statistical strategies to address different types of research questions and hypotheses e. Recognize that theoretical and sociocultural contexts as well as personal biases may shape research questions, design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation 2.5 Follow the APA Code of Ethics in the treatment of human and nonhuman participants in the design, data collection, interpretation, and reporting of psychological research. 2.6 Generalize research conclusions appropriately based on the parameters of particular research methods. a. Exercise caution in predicting behavior based on limitations of single studies b. Recognize the limitations of applying normative conclusions to individuals c. Acknowledge that research results may have unanticipated societal consequences d. Recognize that individual differences and sociocultural contexts may influence the applicability of research findings

Objective 3. Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology Respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes. Suggested Learning Outcomes

3.1 Use critical thinking effectively. a. Evaluate the quality of information, including differentiating empirical evidence from speculation and the probable from the improbable b. Identify and evaluate the source, context, and credibility of information c. Recognize and defend against common fallacies in thinking d. Avoid being swayed by appeals to emotion or authority e. Evaluate popular media reports of psychological research f. Demonstrate an attitude of critical thinking that includes persistence, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity and intellectual engagement g. Make linkages or connections between diverse

facts, theories, and observations

3.2 Engage in creative thinking. a. Intentionally pursue unusual approaches to problems b. Recognize and encourage creative thinking and behaviors in others c. Evaluate new ideas with an open but critical mind

3.3 Use reasoning to recognize, develop, defend, and criticize arguments and other persuasive appeals. a. Identify components of arguments (e.g., conclusions, premises/assumptions, gaps, counterarguments) b. Distinguish among assumptions, emotional appeals, speculations, and defensible evidence c. Weigh support for conclusions to determine how well reasons support conclusions d. Identify weak, contradictory, and inappropriate assertions e. Develop sound arguments based on reasoning and evidence

3.4 Approach problems effectively. a. Recognize ill-defined and well-defined problems b. Articulate problems clearly c. Generate multiple possible Objectives and solutions d. Evaluate the quality of solutions and revise as needed e. Select and carry out the best solution

PVC 2/07 Objective 4. Application of Psychology Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues. Suggested Learning Outcomes

4.1 Describe major applied areas of psychology (e.g., clinical, counseling, industrial/organizational, school, health). 4.2 Identify appropriate applications of psychology in solving problems, such as a. the pursuit and effect of healthy lifestyles b. origin and treatment of abnormal behavior c. psychological tests and measurements d. psychology-based interventions in clinical, counseling, educational, industrial/organizational, community, and other settings and their empirical evaluation 4.3 Articulate how psychological principles can be used to explain social issues and inform public policy. a. Recognize that sociocultural contexts may influence the application of psychological principles in solving social problems b. Describe how applying psychological principles can facilitate change 4.4 Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings as these relate to everyday life. 4.5 Recognize that ethically complex situations can develop in the application of psychological principles. Objective 5. Values in Psychology Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a science. Suggested Learning Outcomes

5.1 Recognize the necessity for ethical behavior in all aspects of the science and practice of psychology. 5.2 Demonstrate reasonable skepticism and intellectual curiosity by asking questions about causes of behavior. 5.3 Seek and evaluate scientific evidence for psychological claims. 5.4 Tolerate ambiguity and realize that psychological explanations are often complex and tentative. 5.5 Recognize and respect human diversity and understand that psychological explanations may vary across populations and contexts. 5.6 Assess and justify their engagement with respect to civic, social, and global responsibilities 5.7 Understand the limitations of their psychological knowledge and skills. Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with Liberal Arts Education that are Further Developed in Psychology Objective 6. Information and Technological Literacy Demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes. Suggested Learning Outcomes

6.1 Demonstrate information competence at each stage in the following process: a. Formulate a researchable topic that can be supported by database search strategies b. Locate and, choose relevant sources from appropriate media, which may include data and perspectives outside traditional psychology and Western boundaries c. Use selected sources after evaluating their suitability based on –appropriateness, accuracy, quality, and value of the source –potential bias of the source –the relative value of primary versus

secondary sources, empirical versus non-empirical sources, and peer-reviewed versus nonpeer-reviewed sources d. Read and accurately summarize the general scientific literature of psychology

6.2 Use appropriate software to produce understandable reports of the psychological literature, methods, and statistical and qualitative analyses in APA or other appropriate style, including graphic representations of data.

6.3 Use information and technology ethically and responsibly.

- Quote, paraphrase, and cite correctly from a variety of media sources PVC 2/07
- Define and avoid plagiarism
- Avoid distorting statistical results
- Honor commercial and intellectual copyrights

6.4 Demonstrate these computer skills:

- Use basic word processing, database, email, spreadsheet, and data analysis programs
- Search the World Wide Web for high quality information
- Use proper etiquette and security safeguards when communicating through email

Objective 7. Communication Skills Communicate effectively in a variety of formats. Suggested Learning Outcomes

7.1 Demonstrate effective writing skills in various formats (e.g., essays, correspondence, technical papers, note taking) and for various purposes (e.g., informing, defending, explaining, persuading, arguing, teaching).

- Demonstrate professional writing conventions (e.g., grammar, audience awareness, formality) appropriate to purpose and context
- Use APA style effectively in empirically-based reports, literature reviews, and theoretical papers

7.2 Demonstrate effective oral communication skills in various formats (e.g., group discussion, debate, lecture) and for various purposes (e.g., informing, defending, explaining, persuading, arguing, teaching).

7.3 Exhibit quantitative literacy.

- Apply basic mathematical concepts and operations to support measurement strategies
- Use relevant probability and statistical analyses to facilitate interpretation of measurements
- Articulate clear and appropriate rationale for choice of information conveyed in charts, tables, figures, and graphs
- Interpret quantitative visual aids accurately, including showing vigilance about misuse or misrepresentation of quantitative information

7.4 Demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills.

- Listen accurately and actively
- Use psychological concepts and theory to understand interactions with others
- Identify the impact or potential impact of their behaviors on others
- Articulate ideas thoughtfully and purposefully
- Use appropriately worded questions to improve interpersonal understanding
- Attend to nonverbal behavior and evaluate its meaning in the communications context
- Adapt communication style to accommodate diverse audiences
- Provide constructive feedback to colleagues in oral and written formats

7.5 Exhibit the ability to collaborate effectively.

- Work with groups to complete projects within reasonable timeframes
- Solicit and integrate diverse viewpoints
- Manage conflicts appropriately and ethically
- Develop relevant workplace skills: mentoring, interviewing, crisis management

Objective 8. Sociocultural and International Awareness Recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity. Suggested Learning Outcomes

8.1 Interact effectively and sensitively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives.

8.2 Examine the sociocultural and international contexts that influence individual differences.

8.3 Explain how individual differences influence beliefs, values, and interactions with others and vice versa.

8.4 Understand how privilege, power, and oppression may affect prejudice, discrimination, and inequity.

8.5 Recognize prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors that might exist in themselves and others. PVC 2/07

PVC 2/07 Objective 9. Personal Development Develop insight into their own and

others' behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement. Suggested Learning Outcomes 9.1 Reflect on their experiences and find meaning in them. a. Identify their personal and professional values b. Demonstrate insightful awareness of their feelings, emotions, motives, and attitudes based on psychological principles 9.2 Apply psychological principles to promote personal development. a. Demonstrate self-regulation in setting and achieving Objectives b. Self-assess performance quality accurately c. Incorporate feedback for improved performance d. Purposefully evaluate the quality of one's thinking (metacognition) 9.3 Enact self-management strategies that maximize healthy outcomes. 9.4 Display high standards of personal integrity with others. Objective 10. Career Planning and Development Pursue realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings. Suggested Learning Outcomes 10.1 Apply knowledge of psychology (e.g., decision strategies, life span processes, psychological assessment, types of psychological careers) to formulating career choices. 10.2 Identify the types of academic experience and performance in psychology and the liberal arts that will facilitate entry into the work force, post-baccalaureate education, or both. 10.3 Describe preferred career paths based on accurate self-assessment of abilities, achievement, motivation, and work habits. 10.4 Identify and develop skills and experiences relevant to achieving selected career Objectives. 10.5 Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of lifelong learning and personal flexibility to sustain personal and professional development as the nature of work evolves.