



ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT ANNUAL REPORT

If you have any questions, comments or ideas about this form, please consult the **GUIDE** or email assessmentacademy@ualr.edu.

Academic Program	Psychology
Data Collection Period	Fall 2020-Spring 2021
Report Contact	Elisabeth Sherwin
Date Submitted to College Dean’s Office	December 21, 2020

A. Academic Program Overview

1. Is your program covered by SKIM legislation? Yes No

Refer to the Guide for a list of SKIM-legislated programs.

2. Academic Program Mission

Your program’s student learning goals should tie to your mission. Please state your department’s or program’s mission.

The Department of Psychology applies psychological knowledge, skills, and tools to further benefit the understanding of behavior by using the scientific method to enhance the lives of our students, the UA Little Rock community, and the citizens of the state of Arkansas and beyond.

3. Student Learning Goals for Academic Program

List all student learning goals (“At the end of this program, students will be able to...”) for the academic program identified above, and—if your program is covered by SKIM—how the SKIM goals map to your program goals. If you prefer to provide the list as an appendix, type “See appendix” in box below and attach appendix to this report. For guidance in writing measurable student learning goals and for a list of SKIM goals, please see the GUIDE.

GOAL 1: KNOWLEDGE BASE

- 1.1 Develop a working knowledge of psychology’s content domains
- 1.2 Describe applications of psychology

GOAL 2: SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY & CRITICAL THINKING LEARNING GOALS & OUTCOMES

- 2.1 Demonstrate psychology information literacy (SKIM Information Tech:Technology)
- 2.2 Engage in integrative thinking and problem solving (SKIM-Critical Thinking)
- 2.3 Interpret, design and/or conduct psychological research based on the scientific method (SKIM: Information Technology:Research)

GOAL 3: ETHICAL & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD

- 3.1 Apply ethical standards to evaluate psychological science and practice. (SKIM- Ethics and Ethical Reasoning)

3.2 Incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific inquiry addressing issues at local, national, and global levels.

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION GOAL

4.1 Demonstrate effective writing for different purposes (SKIM-Communication)

4.2 Exhibit effective presentation skills for different purposes (SKIM-Communication)

5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Apply psychological content and skills to career goals

B. Reflecting on Last Year's Improvement Plans and Communication

1. Continuous Improvement Initiatives Based on Results from Last Year's Report

Describe actions taken based on results from your last assessment report (For example, what aspects of the curriculum were revised, developed, or maintained? Did you adjust assessment methods, change learning objectives or revise target achievement levels? If you received feedback from your college assessment committee, how did you incorporate it?)

The program has been in a continuous improvement cycle for the past 4 years. This included revamping our Statistics course in response to concerns over students' lack mastery of essential statistical concepts and exhibition of a weak skill set in managing data. The new Statistics course includes a lab that requires data management as well as a mandatory portal to increase interaction and practice. Our Capstone was created to address concerns over the failure of our previous "final course" to include a culminating academic experience and to provide preparation for life-after-graduation. Both these courses were introduced two years ago (Fall 2019). In Spring 2020 the department adopted Academic Writer as a tool to improve the quality of student writing and adherence to APA Style. The tool also includes modules required in all courses on the mechanics of style, bias-free language, and ethics of research. Finally, in Fall 2020 the department introduced required writing assignments in all its courses – again in response to the issues identified in Capstone.

COVID and other logistical challenges have disrupted the formal assessment cycle. We are working on streamlining our current efforts.

2. Involvement/Communication with Program Stakeholders Based on Results from Last Year's Report

All program assessment reports are posted on college websites. Beyond posting, did you communicate your results with your program's stakeholders? If so, how, and what feedback did you receive (if any)? (The Guide includes more information on communicating assessment results and involving stakeholders in assessment analysis and results.)

In the summer of 2019, the department instituted concerted efforts to reach out and identify external stakeholders. Matters were disrupted by the loss of an administrative assistant and then COVID. This meant that communication of assessment efforts has been inconsistent. With the increased stability in the program, we anticipate a more effective communication plan.

C. Current Year's Assessment Report

1. Student Learning Goal(s) Assessed for This Report

List which specific goals are assessed in this report. If these map to the SKIM goals, please indicate which ones (Refer to the Guide for a list of SKIM goals).

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION GOAL

4.1 Demonstrate effective writing for different purposes (SKIM-Communication)

GOAL 2: SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY & CRITICAL THINKING LEARNING GOALS & OUTCOMES
 2.2 Engage in integrative thinking and problem-solving (SKIM-Critical Thinking)

2. Assessment Methods and Results for Student Learning Goals Assessed This Year

Identify and briefly describe method or methods used for each learning goal assessed and identify the location where the data are stored. Identify the target achievement level for each learning outcome and describe the assessment results. See list of common assessment methods in the Guide for reference.

Student Learning Goal:

GOAL 2: SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY & CRITICAL THINKING LEARNING GOALS & OUTCOMES
 2.2 Engage in integrative thinking and problem solving (SKIM-Critical Thinking)

If this goal maps to SKIM, indicate which SKIM goal: Critical Thinking

Methods

The Critical Thinking Test and the Thinking about Texts Survey were given to students in the capstone course. The Critical Thinking Test was composed of ten multiple-choice questions from the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) Critical Reasoning measure. These questions are designed to measure the reasoning skills used to construct evaluate arguments, and formulate plans of action. Permission was given by GMAT to use the questions. Data was collected in Fall 20 and Spring 21.

Another measure of critical thinking was based on the student final assignment, a research report, for Research Methods in Fall 21 and Summer 21. An additional measure of critical thinking came from a paper assignment in Developmental Psychology in Spring 21 and Summer 21. In both courses student writing was evaluated for the presence of critical thinking.

This selection of courses represents different levels: sophomore/junior level, junior/senior level, and senior level

Data Repository

Google Drive

Target Achievement / Benchmark

3 on a 0 to 4 scale

Results

A. Performance on the Critical Thinking Instrument (multiple-choice instrument, 10 questions provided by GMAT, given to senior capstone students)

N=72 This sample includes students from Fall 20 and Spring 21.

On 8 of the 10 questions, 50% or more of the students missed the question. The mean on the test was 4.28, with a standard deviation of 2.32. This is similar to the results collected in 2018-19.

B. We used the data from the Thinking about Texts Survey as an indication of whether students' reading skills were a possible mediator of their critical thinking performance. This test was also given to senior capstone students

N=74 This sample includes students from Fall 20 and Spring 21.

On 1 the 11 questions, 50 % or more of the students missed the question. The mean on the survey was 8.14 and the standard deviation was 1.96.

The strong performance on the reading measure (Thinking about Texts) suggests that reading, as measured by this instrument, was not the primary reason for the low scores on the Critical Thinking Test.

	<p>C. <u>Performance on the final project in Research Methods</u></p> <p>N=26 This sample includes students from Fall 20 and Spring 21.</p> <p>On a 0 to 4 scale, with 4 representing advanced and 0 representing ungradable: 42% of students scored at the proficient level or above on the 4 applicable rubric elements, 47% were below expectations, and 11% were ungradable.</p> <p>D. <u>Performance on the paper in Developmental Psychology</u></p> <p>N=52 This sample includes students from Fall 20 and Spring 21.</p> <p>On a 0 to 4 scale, with 4 representing advanced and 0 representing ungradable: 34% of students scored at the proficient level or above on the 4 applicable rubric elements, 64% were below expectations, and 3% were ungradable.</p> <p><u>Conclusions</u></p> <p>We set our benchmark at 3. At both mid-major, and end of major many students scored below the benchmark. Student performance on the multiple-choice measure of critical thinking provides converging evidence for the data collected in our courses. Critical thinking is an area for further work. We anticipate that progress will be slow due to the nature of the skill. The department has started requiring more writing assignments. The requirement that students use Academic Writer provides another avenue of training in critical thinking.</p> <p>It should be noted that the majority of our courses, including Developmental Psychology, include nonmajors. Often our majors are in the minority. Due to the complexity of recording keeping for only majors, our assessments of students in most of our courses will include everyone.</p>
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Student Learning Goal: GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION GOAL	
4.1 Demonstrate effective writing for different purposes (SKIM-Communication)	
If this goal maps to SKIM, indicate which SKIM goal: Communication	
Methods	<p>The Capstone research paper was employed as a measure of communication, a demonstration of effective writing for different purposes.</p> <p>The paper requires students to read 6 assigned articles and summarize them in a literature review format. This is a central assignment in the course. To scaffold the assignment, students are required to use Academic Writer (AW) which provides templates for different types of writing assignments, guided to an American Psychological Association (APA).</p>
Data Repository	Google Drive and BlackBoard
Target Achievement / Benchmark	3 on a 0 to 4 scale
Results	<p>Each essay was assessed with a rubric. Two of categories (with 4 levels of performance: Excellent, Good, Unsatisfactory, Not Present/Ungradeable) were chosen for the purpose of this assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Ideas (Accuracy and logical flow of idea/content):</u> The papers assessed the writer's ability to focus on the topic, integrate the literature, rather

	<p>than summarize each article separately. The writing was evaluated on the logical development of arguments based on details from theory and literature, employing the relevant literature to support the argument.</p> <p>N= 19 This sample includes students from Fall 2020 (the third semester we employed Academic Writer).</p> <p>On a 0 to 4 scale with 4 representing advanced/excellent quality of writing and integration of ideas and 0 representing ungradable/not present: 36.9% of students scored at the excellent-proficient level or above on the 4 applicable rubric elements, 36.8% were below expectations/needing improvement, and 26.3% were unsatisfactory and ungradable.</p> <p>2. <u>APA format: Employing APA style mechanics</u> and format is a hallmark of education in Psychology. Not only is the style employed by other disciplines, but it is also part of the language of Psychology along with Statistics, Research Methods (i.e. the Scientific Method.) In Fall 2020 the department adopted the tool requiring it in every course and assigning a core of standard modules to be completed in each course (that is, completion in one course did not satisfy the requirements of another.)</p> <p>N= 19 This sample includes students from Fall 2020 (the third semester we employed Academic Writer).</p> <p>On a 0 to 4 scale with 4 representing advanced/excellent application of APA formatting and 0 representing ungradable/not present: 42.1% of students scored at the excellent-proficient level or above on the 4 applicable rubric elements, 31.6% were below expectations/needing improvement, and 26.3% were unsatisfactory and ungradable.</p>
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3. Action Plan Based on Assessment Results for This Year’s Report

Describe conclusions drawn from assessment results and any plans for improvement. For example, what aspects of the curriculum will be revised, developed, or maintained? Will assessment methods be adjusted? Will learning objectives or benchmarks be revised?

Reviewing the results of the two student learning goals: Critical Thinking and Communication it is clear that the department faces two challenges: (1) Student performance is not meeting the desired benchmarks and (2) The population assessed mixes majors and non-majors. Critical thinking and writing were recently embedded in all courses. The adoption of universal writing assignments suggests that, in the future, majors should perform better. The writing exercises are expected to improve critical thinking through analysis of the literature as well as the writing skill (communication.) Data that will be collected in Spring 2022 should reflect: (1) a more unified articulated expectation for the writing exercise across all courses: Reading of original articles, with the number of articles and level of analysis increasing as the level of the course increases. (2) Furthermore, data may include the notation of the artifact as generated by a major vs non-major. (3) The department will discuss the utility of creating a standardized rubric to assess these artifacts that, in addition, may be employed by the faculty for grading. There is no expectation that the benchmarks will be modified as they are pedagogically sound.

4. Communication to Stakeholders

All program assessment reports are posted on college websites. Beyond posting, will you communicate or have you communicated your results with your program’s stakeholders? If so, how, and what feedback did you receive (if any)? (The Guide includes more information on communicating assessment results and involving stakeholders in assessment analysis and results.)

In anticipation of a more robust assessment process, the next report will be posted on the department website. Under consideration is the dissemination of the information to all majors. Employing university email, a concise narrative outlining the purpose, method, conclusion and future goals of the assessment effort may be employed. This same narrative may then be shared with others that may be identified as stakeholders.

5. Faculty Involvement

For the assessment roles and activities listed below, indicate what percentage of the program’s faculty members were involved. (This information is requested for reporting to HLC and will not be used for purposes of evaluating faculty workload.)

Creating assessment plan	90%
Learning activity design	80%
Rubric design	30%
Rubric norming	30%
Evaluating learning activities	50%
Analyzing data	30%
Developing improvement plans	100%
Communication with stakeholders	n/a
Other (please describe below)	

6. Future Professional Development

Are there any areas of assessment, continuous improvement and/or communication with stakeholders in which you would like to have professional development in the coming year?

We have active participation of a faculty member who is a leader in assessment. Thus, professional development efforts will be coordinated with her. This will include next steps in our commitment to writing across the department. Also, under consideration is devoting faculty meeting times to the creation of a universal rubric for grading essays.