

# Wells College Psychology Major Assessment Plan

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Wells College psychology major is to provide a solid foundation in the study of behavior and mind and to help students apply their knowledge of the field toward achieving a just and sustainable world. The major aims to develop critical analysis, sound reasoning, effective oral and written communication, a humane and ethical stance, and methodological skills in its students. The overarching goal of the major is to help prepare students for global citizenship and contribution through appreciation of the diversity of human experience, participation in service and/or experiential learning opportunities, and cultivation of a sense of responsibility for making a positive impact on the world through their understanding of self and others.

## Learning Goals and Outcomes

The American Psychological Association provides parameters for the development of learning goals and outcomes for undergraduate psychology programs. This year, we have adopted the newest version of these guidelines, *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, Version 2.0*, which was released in 2013 and can be found here: <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf>. We have adapted these parameters as a template for our assessment plan, modifying them where appropriate to address the mission statement and institutional goals of Wells College.

### Learning Goals:

#### Goal 1. Knowledge Base in Psychology

**Objective 1:** Describe key concepts, themes, and overarching principles in psychology.

**Outcome 1:** Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the concepts, constructs, theory, empirical research, and trends of the field through objective evaluation.

**Measurement:** Scores on the ETS Major Field Test – both overall and subtest scores – are used to demonstrate proficiency in each content and skill area of the field (cognitive, social, developmental, clinical, biological, statistics, and research methods). We are using these data both to assess improvement over time as well as how we compare against other psychology programs across the nation.

**Objective 2:** Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains.

**Outcome 2:** Students will take courses in all major areas of the field.

**Measurement:** This is assured in our curriculum structure and major field graduation requirements and confirmed via ETS Field Test scores.

**Objective 3:** Apply psychological principles to real life problems and questions.

**Outcome 3:** Students will experience and reflect on applications of psychology in the context of their senior thesis (either a traditional literature review, research proposal, or applied service-learning project) and through their psychology internship.

**Measurement:** This is measured by achieving a passing grade on the senior capstone project and by fulfilling the internship in psychology major requirement.

## **Goal 2. Scientific Inquiry, Critical Thinking, and Technology Literacy**

**Objective 4:** Use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological data and phenomena.

**Outcome 4:** Students will develop the skills necessary to apply inductive and deductive reasoning skills to explore empirical questions about behavior and mind.

**Measurement:** Students demonstrate these skills throughout the Psychology curriculum by achieving passing grades in their coursework, by successfully completing formal critical analyses of the empirical literature in the PSY 270 course, and through successful completion of the ETS exam which requires students to interpret results of empirical inquiry.

**Objective 5:** Demonstrate information & technology literacy skills.

**Outcome 5:** Students will develop the skills necessary to discover, evaluate, and ethically use information and to use technological tools in discovery, analysis, and communication.

**Measurements:** Students will develop and demonstrate these skills throughout the curriculum, but especially in the senior seminar through literature review, comprehensive exam through poster

production and delivery, and in the PSY 270 course through an information literacy assignment and use of Facebook and Powerpoint technologies in public presentation. They will gain technological analysis skills through the successful completion of MATH151/251 (statistics).

**Objective 6:** Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving

**Outcome 6:** Students will develop the skills necessary to critically and reasonably evaluate psychological research and theory.

**Measurement:** This is evaluated throughout the curriculum by achieving passing grades in Psychology coursework, and demonstrated in the senior thesis.

**Objective 7:** Interpret, design, and conduct psychological research.

**Outcome 7:** Students will develop the ability to understand research, and conceptualize and execute a research study

**Measurement:** Currently, students demonstrate their ability to interpret research primarily through the article critique assignments in PSY 270 and in the senior thesis (all options require a literature review, analysis, and synthesis). There is, however, currently no systematic opportunity for students to practice applying (design, conduct) research methods through research projects. This is exactly the hole we wish to patch through the curriculum, by offering opportunities to engage in independent research and participate in presenting it.

**Objective 8:** Incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific inquiry

**Outcome 8:** Students will understand the impact of social, cultural, racial, economic, and other contextual factors in the scientific process and in their use and application of data.

**Measurement:** Students demonstrate this understanding through successful completion of the Psychology curriculum (much of which focuses on diversity), and are assessed through the ETS exam. Successful completion of research into, and class presentations on, under-represented groups and individuals in the development of the field (PSY 270).

**Goal 3: Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World**

**Objective 9:** Apply ethical standards in psychological science and practice

**Outcome 9:** Students will know how to conduct ethically sound research and how to evaluate the research of others for its ethical soundness.

**Measurement:** While ethical conduct is addressed throughout the Psychology curriculum, students will demonstrate their understanding of conducting ethically sound research in the behavioral sciences by achieving CITI certification (PSY 270). They also must successfully evaluate research ethics of others research through the article critique assignments in PSY 270. They have further opportunity to conduct ethical research in PSY 404 and PSY 398.

**Objective 10:** Build and enhance interpersonal relationships

**Outcome 10:** Students will apply course material to better understand and appreciate others and improve interpersonal relationships.

**Measurement:** Students will have the opportunity to build and enhance interpersonal relationships through the implementation of a team-based service-learning capstone project in the senior seminar, in their internship experience, and through peer review and critique of each other's theses. Certain other courses in the curriculum incorporate service projects that require teamwork/interpersonal relationships (e.g., Psychology of Environmental Sustainability) or to better appreciate and understand diverse others (e.g., Cognition & Culture, Psychology of Art).

**Objective 11:** Adopt values that build community at local, national, and global levels.

**Outcome 11:** Students will possess the character, skills, and values to make a positive difference at Wells and in the wider world.

**Measurement:** Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their character, skills, and values through the implementation of a team-based service-learning capstone project in the senior seminar and in their internship activity. Faculty will also insist on civil classroom behavior, respect towards others, tolerance of others' diverging viewpoints and ideas, and academic and personal integrity within their classrooms, as a way of modeling these values; this can be measured via Questions 19-23 on the Wells College Course Evaluation.

## **Goal 4: Written and Oral Communication**

**Objective 12:** Demonstrate effective writing for different purposes

**Outcome 12:** Students will develop the skills to write effective papers and reports.

**Measurement:** Writing is a focus throughout the Psychology curriculum, and students will demonstrate this skill through successfully completing Psychology coursework, as well as through successful completion of the senior thesis.

**Objective 13: Exhibit effective presentation skills for different purposes**

**Outcome 13:** Students will develop the skills to make effective oral presentations, poster presentations, and/or portfolio presentations.

**Measurement:** Students make presentations in most (if not all) courses in the Psychology curriculum. They are required to complete three oral presentations, including a poster presentation, to pass PSY 270 Foundations and Methods and are required to publically present their thesis work as part of the Senior Comprehensive Exam.

**Objective 14:** Interact effectively with others

**Outcome 14:** Students will apply the knowledge gained in their coursework to their interpersonal interactions

**Measurement:** Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their interpersonal effectiveness through the implementation of a team-based service-learning capstone project in the senior seminar, in their internship, as well as through their interactions with their advisors and peers in PSY 403 Senior Seminar in Psychology.

## **Goal 5: Professional Development**

**Objective 15: Apply psychological content and skills to career goals**

**Outcome 15:** Students will explore ways in which they might incorporate their knowledge of psychology into their future careers

**Measurement:** Completion of an internship in psychology (guaranteed through major field requirement) and exit interview responses pertaining to this objective. We have created a database of

the careers our graduates go on to pursue and internships they participate in.

**Objective 16:** Refine project management skills & enhance teamwork capacity

**Outcome 16:** Students will demonstrate their ability to complete a project and participate effectively on a team

**Measurement:** Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their teamwork through a team-based service-learning capstone project in PSY 403 (if they choose), and/or through participating in peer review and critique of each other's work in PSY 403. They demonstrate their ability to manage a project through successful completion of their capstone thesis project.

**Objective 17: Develop meaningful professional direction for life after graduation**

**Outcome 17:** Students will explore ways in which they might incorporate their knowledge of psychology into their future careers

**Measurement:** Completion of an internship in psychology (guaranteed through major field requirement) and exit interview responses pertaining to this goal/objective. Completion of PSY 270 Foundations and Methods, which contains a unit on careers in psychology, and the Senior Seminar in Psychology, which includes a focus on careers in psychology and career/graduate school preparation.

### **Outcomes Assessment**

The outcomes listed above will be assessed through components of the courses in the psychology curriculum (esp. PSY 270, PSY 290, MATH 151/251), the senior seminar, and the senior comprehensive exam, and Questions 19-23 on the Course Evaluation. These measures are mapped to Goal/Objective/Outcome in the chart below. Many of the outcomes can also be measured through 'successful completion of the psychology major requirements'. These requirements are as follows:

All students who major in psychology are required to take the following courses:

PSY 101, General Psychology

PSY 270 Foundations and Methods in Psychology  
PSY 290, Internship in Psychology  
Math 151, Elementary Statistics **OR** Math 251, Probability and  
Statistics  
PSY 403, Senior Seminar in Psychology

Each student selects at least one course each from six broad areas of the field: Social, developmental, clinical, cognitive, biological, and intradisciplinary.

Courses within the major have their own objectives but also align with the objectives for the psychology major and the College. A variety of course components may address the objectives, including readings, papers, projects, exams, discussions, presentations (oral, poster, etc.), and service/experiential learning.

The following represents the components of the senior capstone experience (Senior Seminar and Comprehensive Exam in Psychology):

- . A1 The Senior Thesis (PSY 403) is a four-credit project that can take the form of a literature review, a theoretical paper, a research proposal, or a team-based service-learning project. The student works independently on the researching and writing of the paper, under the supervision of a member of the psychology faculty.
- . A2 The Comprehensive Exam, taken in the spring of the senior year, consists of the following components:
  - . A2.1 The ETS Major Field Test. This is a national exam that assesses the students' knowledge of the field of psychology.
  - . A2.2 Senior Thesis Presentation. At the end of the spring semester of the senior year, students present posters of their thesis work.
  - . A2.3 Exit Interview. At the end of the spring semester, each psychology senior completes an anonymous exit interview to aid in the assessment of the psychology major, as well as their plans beyond graduation.

## Psychology Learning Goals, Objectives, and Outcome Measures

Goal	Objective	Outcome	Experience
1	1	1	A2.1
1	2	2	A2.1; major requirements/ curriculum structure
1	3	3	A.1; PSY 290
2	4	4	A2.1; PSY 270
2	5	5	A1; A2.2; PSY 270; MATH 151/251
2	6	6	A1
2	7	7	A1; PSY 270
2	8	8	A2.1; PSY 270
3	9	9	PSY 270 (CITI Certification); PSY 404/398
3	10	10	A1
3	11	11	A1; Course Evaluation Questions 19-23
4	12	12	A1
4	13	13	A2.2; PSY 270
4	14	14	A1; PSY 290
5	15	15	PSY 290; A2.3
5	16	16	A1
5	17	17	A1; A2.3; PSY 270; PSY



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### **Criteria for Success**

Criteria for success in the capstone experience will be determined as follows:

**A1** Senior Thesis project. Students work on an independent research project, or team-based service-learning project, under the supervision of a thesis advisor. The course results in a letter grade.

**A2.1** ETS Major Field Test in Psychology. Students should obtain at least the national mean score on the exam. In order to be considered for distinction on the comprehensive exam, students must achieve at least the local median score.

**A2.2** Senior Thesis Poster Presentation. Students will be expected to make a professional poster presentation that is judged to be satisfactory by the psychology faculty.

**A2.** Exit Interview. Students must complete an anonymous exit interview.

### **Periodic Evaluation of the Psychology Assessment Plan**

The psychology faculty meet at the end of each academic year for the sole purpose of evaluating the efficacy of the psychology major in terms of meeting our stated goals, objectives, and outcomes. We begin by assessing the seniors' performance on the capstone measures (thesis, comprehensive exam) to determine whether we need to make adjustments in the curriculum. Each faculty member is responsible for assessing her or his own courses and reports on changes made to achieve better alignment with the major's goals, objectives, and outcomes. Each faculty member is reminded to have learning objectives clearly stated on course syllabi to facilitate this. Contingent faculty are provided with the major's assessment plan in order to be mindful of them and to develop their courses and align their syllabi with the major's mission, goals, learning objectives and outcomes.

Next, we examine the measurements for the particular goals we chose as the focus of assessment work for the year, and determine what those tell us. If warranted, action steps will be taken to improve the program on those dimensions.

At this meeting, we also discuss, debate, and choose which goals to address in the following academic year, along with how we will focus on these in our program. We assign tasks for completion of the year-end assessment report and strive to submit that report in a timely manner. At about the half way mark of the academic year (end of the fall semester), we meet to discuss how our assessment plan for the year is working to date and make any necessary adjustments.