



## Outcomes-Based Assessment of Student Learning at Berea College:

Berea's Academic Assessment Plan for Ensuring High Quality and Continuous Improvement of Student Learning

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*“We know, in short, what we want students to learn and carry with them from their college studies. We also have begun to create, for the first time, a culture of inquiry about how well students are achieving essential learning outcomes across their studies. The challenge now is to make assessment an integral part of faculty and student work, and a significant resource in strengthening learning.”*

-Carol Geary Schneider, Ph.D. and Terrel L. Rhodes, Ph.D.

# Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	5
SECTION 1: Backdrop and Context for Outcomes-Based Assessment in Higher Education.....	6
SECTION 2: Outcomes Assessment at Berea College .....	7
SECTION 3: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Academic Programs .....	10
Appendix A: SACSCOC Resource Manual (2012) Excerpt .....	14
Appendix B: Glossary of Common Terms and Language for Assessment.....	17
Appendix C: Writing Effective Student Learning Outcomes for Assessment and Improvement.....	25
Appendix D: Example Curriculum Map .....	28
Appendix E: Example Three-Year Assessment Plan .....	29
Appendix F: Example Annual Assessment Summary Report .....	30

## Best Practices for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

*The best assessment of student learning outcomes happens when:*

- Student learning outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and focus on knowledge, skills, behaviors, or values.
- Direct assessment methods (e.g., examinations, research essays, theses, oral presentations, capstone projects, portfolios, performances, etc.) are used as the primary (but not necessarily the only) means of assessing student learning outcomes.
- Indirect assessment methods (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, etc.) are used as secondary means of assessing student learning outcomes.
- Assessment measures clearly address the degree to which students attain well-defined learning outcomes.
- Assessment measures are distinct from course grades and teaching evaluations (but they may involve graded materials).
- Data and information are collected over time and analyzed longitudinally.
- Improvements in programs and student learning are planned and enacted in response to regular assessment findings.
- Assessment reports are completed regularly, evaluated by peers, collected and shared publicly by the Institution, and provide the impetus for continuous cycles of improvement.

Adapted from:

Banta, T. W., Jones, E. A., & Black, K. E. (2009) - *Designing effective assessment: Principles and profiles of good practice*. National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment. <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>  
New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning & Accountability. (2012). *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for Assessment & Accountability in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: Self. Available at [www.nla-assessment.org](http://www.nla-assessment.org)

## **Outcomes-Based Assessment: Berea's Academic Assessment Plan for High Quality and Continuous Improvement of Student Learning**

Berea College's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning is reflected in our constant efforts to assess and reflect on how well we are doing and to continuously look for opportunities for growth and improvement where possible. By engaging in an ongoing process of outcomes-based assessment of our academic programs and student learning outcomes (SLOs), we not only gain a better understanding of the quantity and quality of student learning that is occurring across our campus, we also are better able to make informed, evidence-based decisions about our programs and curriculum. These assessment efforts also allow us to recognize and celebrate efforts that lead to transformative and engaged learning experiences for our students. Likewise, good assessment practices allow us to improve those areas where learning is not yet meeting our expectations. In short, a robust and dynamic program of outcomes-based assessment at Berea College is the means by which faculty and staff identify and gather the evidence that informs and drives our continuing quest for excellence.

This manual provides an overview of outcomes-based assessment at Berea College and describes the processes by which this type of assessment is accomplished. It is not intended to be a definitive "cookbook" or set of rules, but rather a guide to help faculty and staff better understand the processes and expectations for assessment.

## SECTION 1: Backdrop and Context for Outcomes-Based Assessment in Higher Education

The landscape of higher education has witnessed phenomenal change over the past two decades. Against a backdrop of calls for increased access to higher education and a remarkable growth in the technological and pedagogical innovations that are profoundly affecting how, when, and where our students are able to learn, a chorus of voices at the local, state, and federal level have simultaneously been calling for increasing levels of accountability in higher education. In response, institutions and accrediting agencies have now focused on clearly articulating what it is that students should be expected to learn in college, to what extent they are learning those things, and how, exactly, they can be expected to demonstrate that learning. Learning outcomes assessment is about trying to answer those questions in an effort to identify opportunities to improve the way we serve our students.

One result of this shift in emphasis has been the emergence/resurgence of professional organizations such as the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment ([NILOA](#)), the Association of American Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#)), and the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education ([AALHE](#)). By promoting the inherent value of assessment as one tool for continuous improvement, organizations such as these have promoted the notion that outcomes-based assessment should be a natural part of faculty's own intellectual curiosity and professional development. Hence, the momentum has gradually been shifting away from a culture of compliance and toward a culture of evidence and improvement regarding what students are learning.

Berea's own accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges ([SACSCOC](#)) clearly states in its [2012 Principles of Accreditation](#) that, for educational programs, *"The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results..."* (Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, pg. 25; See also the [Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation](#), pp. 48-51 for a more detailed description of the relevant requirements and criteria). Failure by an institution to document and provide evidence for its ongoing and intentional use of assessment for improvement of student learning can result in serious actions/sanctions, up to and including the loss of accreditation.

In much the same way that faculty value the process of peer review as a way of holding their discipline to a high standard, Berea's accreditation by SACSCOC serves as an affirmation of the high standards we set for our students, as well as ourselves. While our assessment efforts are not (nor should they ever be) driven by the requirements of SACSCOC, our accreditation is largely dependent on our ability and willingness to carry out a coherent and systematic program of learning outcomes assessment. If we regularly assess students' learning and make regular use of those results because we believe that doing so can lead to improved learning, compliance will take care of itself.

## SECTION 2: Outcomes Assessment at Berea College

### What Assessment Is and What It Is Not

"Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning" (Huba & Freed, 2000<sup>1</sup>). In particular, it involves the following:

- Clearly articulating our expectations for what students should be learning;
- Setting appropriate criteria and high standards for quality;
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine the extent to which students' performance reflects our expectations and standards; and
- Making explicit use of the results of assessment to document, explain, and improve students' learning.

Conversely, a well-functioning process of learning outcomes assessment does not involve:

- Use of vague or esoteric outcome statements that cannot be readily demonstrated by students;
- Setting unrealistically low criteria or standards so that all (or most) students can be said to be achieving them;
- Conducting useless assessments just for the sake of "compliance"; or
- Using assessment results to make judgements or tenure/promotion decisions about individual faculty;

### Five Principles of Assessment at Berea College

Berea's assessment process is guided by five principles:

1. The primary emphasis of outcomes-based assessment is on **continuous improvement** of student learning. At its core, outcomes assessment should be about gaining a better understanding of the extent to which our students are actually learning what we expect them to learn. Assessment data should never be collected for the simple purpose of documenting our achievements. Rather, assessment data should, directly or indirectly, lead us to a better understanding of the specific outcomes being demonstrated by students. In turn, this better understanding can lead us to new strategies and pedagogies that may improve both teaching and learning.
2. Assessment should be **sustainable** and consistent with the activities and work that we already do. To be sustainable means that assessment activities should not become burdensome additions to our already-heavy workloads. Good assessment makes use of already-existing student evidence whenever possible (e.g., course assignments, portfolios, exams/quizzes, etc.) and minimizes the use of surveys or special tests/quizzes created for the singular purpose of assessment. In other words, good assessment merely formalizes and documents the evaluative activities that are already occurring in our programs, systematically using those activities to foster improvements to student learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Huba, M. E. & Freed, J. E. (2000). *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

3. The process of assessment is both ***continuous and incremental***. Similar to the concept of “lifelong learners,” the process of assessment should always be seen as a steady and self-perpetuating search for knowledge and growth. Good assessment is grounded in methods that lead us to discover those areas where at least some improvement is possible or continue to do what is already working well. Good assessment does not attempt to assess everything at all times. Rather, it relies on small but meaningful and incremental efforts over time that lead to larger improvements in student learning.
4. Good assessment is ***developmental in nature*** rather than evaluative or judgmental. Assessment results should not be used in tenure and promotion decisions or specific decisions to reward individuals or programs. Except in extreme cases where a program fails to look seriously at student learning data or continually fails to use assessment data to improve, assessment is not a process by which administrators interfere with or attempt to exercise control over the curriculum or other matters of importance to programs. Instead, good assessment acts as a form of in-house professional development that helps programs and their faculty identify potential improvements.
5. Lastly, good assessment activities are those that are ***meaningful and useful*** to the programs and faculty carrying them out. Assessment data is expected to be used for the purposes of curriculum planning, resource allocations, and long-term planning. Moreover, the assessment process described in this manual should help programs see how they align with the broader mission of the College and the strategic plan. Lastly, a robust assessment process provides a vehicle through which programs communicate their expectations to students, allowing students to play a more active role in their own learning.

#### *Berea’s Commitment to (Improving) Student Learning*

The first two Great Commitments (“*To provide an educational opportunity primarily for students from Appalachia, black and white, who have great promise and limited economic resources*” and “*To provide an education of high quality with a liberal arts foundation and outlook*”) reflect the College’s commitment to high quality student learning. This is further reflected in the College’s strategic plan which identifies “*engaged and transformative learning*” as the first key issue requiring attention. Central to these propositions is the vision of Berea College as an “*integrated and continuous learning community*” where “*students, faculty, and staff actively engage in intellectual growth as well as personal and professional development in all aspects of their campus life...*” A strong culture of assessment not only supports each of these ideas by providing knowledge about how well each is being accomplished, but the assessment process itself becomes a tool by which faculty and staff regularly put these ideas into practice. Actively participating in regular and systematic assessment activities becomes a form of professional growth and development that leads to both individual and institutional improvement.

As an accredited member institution of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the college also has a responsibility to maintain the standards that we, along with our peer member institutions, have set for ourselves. Through the accreditation process, SACSCOC has been instrumental in introducing and fostering a culture of learning outcomes assessment that emphasizes student learning and continuous improvement rather than institutional compliance. This emphasis is the driving force behind the college’s entire assessment process. As noted in a recent policy statement published by the National Institute on Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA, 2016<sup>2</sup>) if we focus on improvement, compliance will take care of itself.

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<sup>2</sup> National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (2016, May). *Higher education quality: Why documenting learning matters*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, Author.



### Purpose of Assessing Student Learning at the Program Level

Outcomes assessment has four primary purposes:

1. To improve – Results from assessment should provide both formative and summative feedback to help programs identify areas for growth and improvement.
2. To inform – Assessment results should be used to inform program/division chairs and other decision-makers of the contributions and impact that the program has had on the development and growth of its students.
3. To demonstrate – Assessment results capture and demonstrate to others what the program is accomplishing and what it is doing to continuously improve student learning.
4. To support – When done well, assessment results should support program-level, as well as campus-wide, decision-making activities such as curriculum and program reviews, strategic planning, and external accreditation.

### Benefits of Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

When faculty are directly engaged in assessment of student learning outcomes, a number of specific benefits can emerge.<sup>3</sup>

1. Because assessment can provide information about the knowledge and skills students have (or are likely to have) as they enter a course, faculty can design instruction to target the knowledge and skill levels students should have upon finishing a course and better determine the levels of thinking or reasoning appropriate for the course.
2. Because assessment can provide reliable/objective data on student learning, faculty can rely less on the comments that appear on student evaluations as indicators of their success in teaching.
3. Because assessment can make available richer data about the effects of the curriculum or teaching methods, faculty can engage in more productive conversations about the status of student learning/success and can make better decisions about how it might be improved.
4. Because assessment can yield more reliable data about instruction, faculty can make more reliable decisions about innovative pedagogies or projects and can share successes more easily.
5. Because assessment can provide evidence that faculty make a difference in student learning, faculty can enjoy greater satisfaction in their work as educators.
6. Because assessment can offer a larger view of student needs and accomplishments, faculty can better identify directions for future instructional development.

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<sup>3</sup> From the University of Nebraska, Lincoln Teaching and Learning Center, Teaching at UNL, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Oct, 1999).

## **SECTION 3: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Academic Programs**

Berea's outcomes assessment process is a comprehensive, three-year cycle of assessment that helps to ensure that programs adhere to the five principles of good assessment described above while also fulfilling our obligations to SACSCOC and other external accrediting agencies. At some point during each three-year assessment cycle, programs will need to assess each of their student learning outcomes at least once and have used the results of their assessments to improve some aspect(s) of their program/curriculum. This section describes the process for conducting outcomes-based assessment in our academic programs, including tips for making assessment more effective and meaningful. The process is broken down into two categories of requirements – standing (or long-term) requirements and annual reporting requirements. Each of these will be described in greater detail below.

Finally, to assist programs and those tasked with the administration of our assessment process, Berea has adopted the use of a cloud-based software package called Taskstream. This is the space in which all portions of your assessment work should be completed, including assessment plans, annual reports, fourth-year reflections, and the collection of all evidence used for assessment. More on Taskstream will be shared below.

### **Importance of Faculty Participation and a Designated Assessment Coordinator**

First, a critical component of any effective assessment process is collective ownership and engagement by the faculty. Assessment is most meaningful when faculty come together to explore and raise questions about student learning in their programs. When assessment becomes collaborative within (or even across) programs, the result is more likely to be felt as a normal part teaching and learning rather than simply being additional work demanded of an already overworked faculty. Indeed, sharing the assessment workload among colleagues in a program actually helps to ensure that the work is sustainable as well as meaningful to that program.

These benefits notwithstanding, programs are strongly encouraged to identify a “point person” who’s responsibility it is to make sure that the process runs smoothly and that the workloads are distributed equitably. This person also can serve as the point of contact between the program and administrators, ensuring that communication channels are open and clear.

### **Standing Requirements**

Standing requirements of the assessment process are those that are generally not expected to change or require much attention from year to year. These include 1) student learning outcomes, 2) a curriculum map, and 3) a three-year assessment plan. Any of these may see small changes as circumstances change and modifications become necessary, but by and large most programs will probably not need to modify these components during an assessment cycle. Each program is responsible for the following three standing requirements as part of their three-year assessment cycles:

*Student Learning Outcomes.* Each academic program is responsible for providing a set of clear and measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) that describe the specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes demonstrated by students who complete the curriculum offered by that program. In cases where multiple majors are offered within the same academic program, a separate set of learning outcomes should be offered for each major. Programs are responsible for deciding on the content and breadth of their SLOs, striving for a balance between the ideal and the practical

given the unique demands, resources, and constraints of each Program (e.g., staffing, expertise, external accreditors, etc.). Programs are also expected to publish their SLOs in the College Catalog and are strongly encouraged to also publish them on their Program's web page.

At the beginning of each academic year, Programs should plan to review their SLOs and, if necessary, make any revisions. When necessary, revisions to SLOs should be made through Taskstream followed by an email to the Registrar notifying the office that the Catalog will need to be updated to reflect the new SLOs. If published to the Program's web page, the Program's designated web manager should also be made aware of the changes that need to be made. If no revisions to the SLOs are necessary, the Program does nothing.

For resources on, or assistance with, writing good learning outcomes, please visit the Academic Program Assessment web page or contact the Director of Academic Assessment.

*Curriculum Map.* A curriculum map is simply a tool that allows a program to see how its curriculum serves (or aligns with) the desired learning outcomes identified by the program. As part of a comprehensive assessment process, curriculum maps help programs identify sources and opportunities for gathering student work that demonstrates the desired learning outcomes. A good curriculum map can also help one better understand how those opportunities are sequenced across the curriculum.

Hence, each program is asked to complete and maintaining a curriculum map that demonstrates the connections between that program's curriculum and SLOs. As a general rule, each SLO should be linked to at least one regularly offered course, though each SLO should ideally be addressed in more than one course. The curriculum map is to be completed in Taskstream and, once constructed, should be reviewed annually to ensure that the map accurately reflects a program's most current curriculum and SLOs.

*Three-Year Assessment Plan.* At the beginning of each three-year assessment cycle, programs are expected to complete a three-year assessment plan that identifies the following details for each SLO:

1. the year(s) in which the SLO will be assessed;
2. the source(s) from which evidence will be gathered for the SLO;
3. the method for how each piece of evidence will be evaluated for that SLO;
4. who is responsible for overseeing each part of the assessment for that SLO; and
5. any additional resources that will be needed to carry out the assessment for that SLO.

The template for the three-Year Assessment Plan is found as an attachment on your Taskstream Workspace under the Standing Requirements section. Simply open the attachment and save the document to your computer, changing the file name to "Three-Year Assessment Plan - \_\_\_\_\_ Program" (e.g., "Three-Year Assessment Plan – Psychology Program"). Once all columns have been completed for all SLOs, save the document and upload it back to the original workspace area. All completed plans will be reviewed in December/January with timely feedback provided to each respective program.

Occasional changes to a Program's Three-Year Plan are always possible, but it is the program's responsibility to make sure the plan is kept up to date, that rationales/explanations for any changes are fully documented, and that all SLOs are still assessed at least once during the three-

year assessment cycle. Lastly, any changes to the plan should always be reviewed with the Director of Academic Assessment before becoming final.

*These standing requirements should be reviewed and updated as needed by Programs at the start of each academic year.*

### **Annual Assessment Summary Reports**

Annual assessment summary reports are the method by which programs share about their assessment activities over the past year, highlighting what they have learned and how they used the results of their assessment to make programmatic improvements that will hopefully lead to improvements in student learning. Summary reports should follow the three-year assessment plan or provide a brief explanation for why the assessment activities have deviated from the original three-year assessment plan. In cases where the assessment activities have deviated from the plan, a new three-year assessment plan should also be submitted showing how the program will still assess all student learning outcomes by the end of the current assessment cycle.

The Annual Summary Reports are completed in two parts. Part one is completed in the fall term and lays out a detailed assessment plan for each learning outcome being assessed that year. Part two is completed by the end of the spring term and documents the results of all assessment activities for each learning outcome that was assessed, including how those results are being used to make incremental programmatic improvements that improve student learning. More details about each part of the Annual Summary Report are provided below.

*Part 1 – The Assessment Plan.* For each selected Student Learning Outcome slated to be assessed in a given year, programs lay out detailed plans for how they intend to assess each SLO. The plans should reflect what is in the Three-Year Assessment Plan, but with greater elaboration and details.

For example, while the three-year plan may have identified the type of evidence only as a “capstone assignment,” the assessment plan in the Annual Summary Report might elaborate on this by describing it more fully as “a randomly selected and representative set of 10- to 15-page senior capstone research papers requiring original research and integration of at least two current controversial topics in (discipline).” The point is to provide an outside reader with a complete and accurate understanding of the nature and appropriateness of this assignment/evidence to the SLO being assessed.

The plan also includes, for each SLO, a pre-determined target/benchmark that describes the minimum level at which the Program would like to see its students achieving the SLO in question. While targets/benchmarks should reflect a minimum ideal standard, it is up to each Program to determine what an appropriate target/benchmark is for each of its SLOs.

Lastly, the plan should give a complete description of how the assessment of each SLO will be (or was) carried out. This description should include how the evidence was analyzed/assessed (e.g., a common rubric was calibrated and used by three faculty to independently evaluate student work using a 3-point rating scale). Remember to always include (uploaded as attachments and/or links) any supporting materials (e.g., rubrics, assignments, etc.) that are being used for the assessment of each SLO.

*Part 2 – Findings/Results & Actions Taken.* For this part of the Annual Summary Report, Programs are asked to report on the results of their assessments described in the assessment plan (Part 1). Information in Part 2 includes a full description of the results of your Program’s assessment, including any supporting data/tables/graphs/illustrations/etc. If supporting material is uploaded as separate documents, programs should make sure that they are properly referenced in the narratives of the Summary Report. Part 2 of the Annual Summary Report also asks programs to describe how they used (or intend to use) the results of each assessment in ways that enhance or increase student learning of each respective outcome. Finally, if programs intend to make any changes in response to their results, they should describe how and when those changes will be reassessed to determine the impact those changes may or may not have had.

*The completed Annual Summary Report is submitted by Programs at the end of every academic year (no later than May 31<sup>st</sup>)*

#### **Fourth-Year Reflection**

After completing a three-year assessment cycle and assessing all learning outcomes at least once, programs will spend the next year engaged in a year-long reflection of their work in relation to other programmatic issues (e.g., curriculum, staffing, resources, etc.). In addition to the knowledge gained from the previous three years’ worth of assessment activities, programs are encouraged to make use of institutional data compiled by our Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, discussions among program faculty, and external reviews of similar programs at other institutions.

At the conclusion of the fourth year, programs will submit to the Office of the Academic Vice President a written summary of their comprehensive four-year reflection that includes the following:

- major accomplishments and areas of strength identified by its ongoing assessment activities;
- continued opportunities for improvements; and
- three or four priorities that the program will need to address in the next three to four years and how it plans to address each one (including what resources/support is likely to be needed).

As with the Annual Summary Reports, the fourth-year reflection is completed in Taskstream. The following year, programs resume with the next three-year assessment cycle and continue the process.

#### **What is Taskstream?**

Taskstream is a cloud-based software service that Berea College has purchased to aid in the workflow and management of all assessment activities. A unique “workspace” has been created for each academic program in which all components of the assessment process (i.e., student learning outcomes, curriculum maps, three-year assessment plans, annual assessment reports, and all evidence) are completed and maintained/submitted. All faculty within a program are enrolled in that program’s workspace and are encouraged to use this platform to contribute to the various assessment activities in which their program is engaged.

Specific details about Taskstream, including written and video tutorials for how to access and use the software to complete each component, are found on the [Academic Program Assessment](https://www.berea.edu/academic-assessment) web page (<https://www.berea.edu/academic-assessment>).

**Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1. (pp. 48-51)**

**3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (*Institutional effectiveness*)

**3.3.1.1.** educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

**3.3.1.2.** administrative support services

**3.3.1.3.** academic and student support services

**3.3.1.4.** research within its mission, if appropriate

**3.3.1.5.** community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

**Rationale and Notes**

This standard addresses the process of assessment that supports the institution's educational programs, its administrative support services, its academic and student support services, and, as appropriate, its research and community/public service; this process serves as the cornerstone of institutional effectiveness. Institutional effectiveness focuses on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning.

**Guiding statements designed to assist institutions in documenting compliance:**

1. Institutions should interpret "outcome" in a manner consistent with an academic program or a given service unit's mission and role in the institution. It is the institution's responsibility to explain how each unit's outcomes are related to its mission and role in the institution.
2. While it is clear from the standard that assessment is at the program level for academic programs, institutions should determine the organizational levels at which assessment is useful and efficient for administrative and for academic and student support units. It is incumbent on the institution to explain how this determination follows from its mission and organizational structure.
3. Institutions are not required or expected to use the same assessment procedures in each of the four areas; in particular, administrative support services, academic and student support services, research within the mission, and community/public service within the mission need not be assessed in the same way as educational programs. However, institutions are expected to use multiple assessments in each area. Consequently, grades alone for the assessment of educational programs or student learning outcomes are insufficient.
4. Institutions that engage in research or public service should carefully frame the scope of their discussion of CS 3.3.1.4 and CS 3.3.1.5 by identifying their research and their service missions, explaining the ways in which the institution has chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of each. This may include a connection with its educational programs and discussing its assessment of the impact of research and service on the institution and its programs, as appropriate.

5. There is a clear expectation that an institution be able to demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its diplomas, certificates, and undergraduate and graduate educational degree programs.
6. The expectation is that the institution will engage in on-going planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses student learning outcomes. Program and learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students are expected to attain in courses or in a program. Methods for assessing the extent to which students achieve these outcomes are appropriate to the nature of the discipline, and consistent over time to enable the institution to evaluate cohorts of students who complete courses or a program. Shared widely within and across programs, the results of this assessment can affirm the institution's success at achieving its mission and can be used to inform decisions about curricular and programmatic revisions. At appropriate intervals, program and learning outcomes and assessment methods are evaluated and revised.
7. An institution may provide a *sampling* of its programs as long as it is representative of its mission and includes a valid cross-section of programs from every school or division and at each degree level. Sampling should also include programs offered at off-campus instructional sites and course work offered through distance or correspondence education. It is the institution's responsibility to make a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs. This sampling, however, does not preclude the institution from having data/analysis available on the effectiveness of all programs in case evaluators request to review it. It is the evaluators' prerogative to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of its educational programs.
8. Institutional effectiveness can be achieved in a variety of ways and the mentality that "one size fits all" is inappropriate and diminishes the individual missions of institutions. The institution should develop and/or use methods and instruments that are uniquely suited to the goal statements and that are supported by faculty.
9. At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for producing mature data. Mature data can be defined as sufficient information used as a basis for sound decision making.
10. At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for providing *evidence* of improvement, based on the analysis of the assessment results, as opposed to a *plan* for improvement.

**Notes:** For consistency in rhetoric, the Commission uses "assessment" in place of evaluation, and "outcomes" instead of objectives/goals.

The institution should define "units" based on its organizational structure.

While institutions may organize functions differently, it is expected that all services, whether administrative or academic student support services, engage in the institutional effectiveness processes.

### **3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning**

*Note:* In this standard, the Commission expects the review of the effectiveness of educational programs and of student learning.

#### **Relevant Questions for Consideration**

- How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
- What is the evidence of assessment activities for each program?
- How are periodic reviews in which programmatic outcomes assessed, reviewed, and used for improvements?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve educational programs?
- If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution's programs?
- What assessment instruments were used and why were they selected? Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
- Have the programs assessed the extent to which they have been successful in achieving their learning outcomes?
- If called for, have program improvements been made as a result of assessment findings?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve educational programs?

#### **Documentation**

##### **Required Documentation, if applicable**

- Documentation of expected outcomes for educational programs and for student learning outcomes
- Documentation of the evaluation of those outcomes
- Evidence that the student support services and programs effectively meet the needs of students of all types
- Documentation of the use of the findings from assessment to improve the institution
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of programs, and a (3) case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs.



## Appendix B: Glossary of Common Terms and Language for Assessment (Glossary compiled by the [Advanced Practices Committee at IUPUI](#))

*Common Terminology & Definitions.* The terms and definitions that follow are offered to facilitate a common understanding and shared language by which to discuss assessment at Berea College. Bear in mind that this glossary provides only *broad and general* descriptions designed to define terms across academic disciplines. There may be instances where specific disciplines (e.g., Psychology, History) define terms in a slightly different manner.

**Assessment:** is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purposes of improving student learning and development (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The purpose of assessment is to provide information about the student learning and development that occurs as a result of a program. A “program” may be any activity, project, function, or policy that has an identifiable purpose or set of objectives.

**Benchmarking:** is a method used by organizations to compare their performance, processes, or practices with peer organizations or those in other sectors. This method can focus on performance, in which case one identifies the most important indicators of success and then compares one's own performance with that of other organizations. The focus can also be a particular process, such as billing or information technology (Mathison, 2005).

**Correlation:** is a measure of the degree or strength of relationship between two or more variables. It does not prove causation because we may not know which variable came first or whether alternative explanations for the presumed effect exist. (Munoz as cited in Mathison, 2005).

**Criterion Referenced Assessment:** an assessment where an individual's performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students. Criterion referenced assessment tells us how well students are performing on specific goals or standards rather than just telling how their performance compares to a norm group of students nationally or locally (CRESST, 2011).

**Curriculum Mapping:** The process of aligning courses with program/major level goals and objectives, often done systematically with faculty involvement. Curriculum mapping is a process for recording what content and skills are actually taught in a classroom, school, or program.

**Descriptive Rubric:** A rubric with brief descriptions of the performance that merits each possible rating. They help to make faculty expectations explicit and are useful when there is more than one evaluator.

**Direct Measures** Direct measures require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. They provide tangible, visible and self-explanatory evidence of what students have and have not learned as a result of a course, program, or activity (Suskie, 2004, 2009; Palomba and Banta, 1999).

### *Specific Types of Direct Measures Include...*

**Authentic:** based on examining genuine or real examples of students' work. Work that closely reflects goals and objectives for learning. Authentic assessment reveals something about the standards that are at the heart of a subject; asking students to use judgment and innovation as they “do” and explore the subject. (Palomba & Banta, 1999; Wiggins, 1989, 1990).

**Embedded:** program, general education, or institutional assessments that are embedded into course work. In other words, they are course assessments that do double duty, providing information not only on what students have learned in the course but also on their progress in achieving program or organizational goals. Because embedded assessment instruments are typically designed by faculty and staff, they match up well with local learning goals. They therefore yield information that faculty and staff value and are likely used to improve teaching and learning (Suskie, 2009).

**Portfolios Assessment:** a type of performance assessment in which students' work is systematically collected and reviewed for evidence of student learning. In addition to examples of their work, most portfolios include reflective statements prepared by students. Portfolios are assessed for evidence of student achievement with respect to established student learning outcomes and standards (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Glossary compiled by the IUPUI Advanced Practices Committee p. 4

**Indirect Measures:** Assessments that measure opinions or thoughts about students' or alumni's own knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, perception of services received or employers' opinions. While these types of measures are important and necessary they do not measure students' performance directly. They supplement direct measures of learning by providing information about how and why learning is occurring (Hansen, 2011).

*Specific Types of Indirect Measures Include...*

**Focus Groups:** a group selected for its relevance to an evaluation that is engaged by a trained facilitator in a series of discussions designed for sharing insights, ideas, and observations on a topic of concern to the evaluation (National Science Foundation, 2010).

**Interviews:** occur when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and records their answers (Creswell, 2008).

**Questionnaires:** are forms used in a survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researcher. Participants mark answers to questions and may supply basic, personal, or demographic information about themselves (Creswell, 2008).

**Surveys:** A survey is a method of collecting information from people about their characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, or perceptions. Surveys most often take the form of questionnaires or structured interviews (Palomba & Banta, 1999). General definition: an attempt to estimate the opinions, characteristics, or behaviors of a particular population by investigation of a representative sample.

**Institutional Research:** provides fundamental support for a campus, school, and program planning and evaluation activities by: developing for academic deans and other campus administrators a series of management reports and analyses that integrate information from a variety of institutional and external data sources. (Indiana University, 2011).

**Learning Goal:** A broad statement of desired outcomes – what we hope students will know and be able to do as a result of completing the program/course. They should highlight the primary focus and aim of

the program. They are not directly measurable; rather, they are evaluated directly or indirectly by measuring specific objectives related to the goal.

**Learning Objective:** Sometimes referred to as intended learning outcomes, student learning outcomes (SLOs) or outcomes statements. Learning objectives are clear, brief statements used to describe specific measurable actions or tasks that learners will be able to perform at the conclusion of instructional activities. Learning objectives focus on student performance. Action verbs that are specific, such as list, describe, report, compare, demonstrate, and analyze, should state the behaviors students will be expected to perform. Verbs that are general and open to many interpretations such as understand, comprehend, know, appreciate should be avoided.

**Learning Outcomes:** The learning results—the end results—the knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits of mind that students have or have not taken with them as a result of the students' experience in the course(s) or program.

**Norm Referenced Assessment:** An assessment where student performance is compared to a larger group. Usually the larger group or “norm group” is a national sample representing a wide diverse cross-section of students. Students, schools, districts, and even states are compared or rank-ordered in relation to the norm group (CREST, 2011).

**Performance Measurement:** The ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward pre-established goals. It is typically conducted by program or agency management. Performance measures may address the type or level of program activities conducted (process), the direct products and services delivered by a program (outputs), or the results of those products and services (outcomes). A “program” may be any activity, project, function, or policy that has an identifiable purpose or set of objectives (Government Accountability Office, 2011).

**Reliability:** As applied to an assessment tool, it refers to the extent to which the tool can be counted on to produce consistent results over time.

*Specific Types of Reliability Include...*

**Coefficient Alpha:** An internal consistency reliability estimate based on correlations among all items on a test.

**Inter-rater:** How well two or more raters agree when decisions are based on subjective judgments

**Internal Consistency:** A reliability estimate based on how highly parts of a test correlate with each other.

**Parallel forms:** A reliability estimate based on correlating scores collected using two versions of the procedure.

**Split-half:** An internal consistency reliability estimate based on correlating two scores, each calculated on half of a test.

**Test-retest:** A reliability estimate based on assessing a group of people twice and correlating the two scores.

**Research (Approaches):** are procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting research in either quantitative or qualitative formats (Creswell, 2008).

*Specific Approaches to Research Include...*

**Applied Research:** applied research is an original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective (OECD, 2011).

**Basic Research:** generally speaking, basic research is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view (OECD, 2011).

**Mixed Method Research Designs:** are procedures for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, and for analyzing and reporting this data based on a priority and sequence of the information (Creswell, 2008).

**Pre-Post Design:** is a method for assessing the impact of an intervention by comparing scores on variables before and after an intervention occurs. The simplest type of this design involves one group – for example, program participants in a summative evaluation. Validity of the design is enhanced by adding a control group whose members do not experience the intervention and by randomly assigning persons to treatment and control conditions. The more valid the design, the greater confidence of the evaluator in making decisions about the efficacy of an intervention (Petrosko as cited in Mathison, 2005).

**Qualitative Research:** is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. To learn about this phenomenon, the inquirer asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of the participants in the form of words or images, and analyzes the information for description and themes. From this the researcher interprets the meaning of the information drawing on personal reflections and past research. The final structure of the report is flexible, and it displays the researcher's biases and thoughts (Creswell, 2002).

**Quantitative Research:** is an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables found in the literature. To conduct this inquiry, the investigator specifies narrow questions, locates or develops instruments to gather data to answer the questions, and analyzes numbers from the instruments, using statistics. From the results of these analyses, the researcher interprets the data using prior predictions and research studies. The final report, presented in a standard format, displays researcher objectivity and lack of bias (Creswell, 2002).

**Rubric:** A set of categories that define and describe the important components of the work being completed, critiqued, and assessed. Each category contains a gradation of levels of completion or competence with a score assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria need to be met to attain the score at each level.

**Scholarship of Teaching and Learning:** is first and foremost a commitment to the improvement of student learning, made possible through individual and collective knowledge-building; is rigorous and thoughtful investigation of student learning, with the results made available for public review and use beyond a local setting (Cambridge, 1999).

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)** is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the Commission that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education.

**Statistical Significance:** is a mathematical procedure for determining whether a null hypothesis can be rejected at a given alpha level. Tests of statistical significance play a large role in quantitative research designs but are frequently misinterpreted. The most common misinterpretation of the test of significance is to confuse statistical significance with the practical significance of the research results. (Munoz as cited in Mathison, 2005).

**Student Learning Outcomes:** specify what students will know, be able to do, or be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in academic program(s) leading to certification or a degree. Outcomes are often expressed as knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, or values. A multiple methods approach is recommended to assess student learning outcomes indirectly and directly. Direct measures of student learning require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. They provide tangible, visible and self-explanatory evidence of what students have and have not learned as a result of a course, program, or activity (Suskie, 2009; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

**Triangulation:** is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) or descriptions and themes in qualitative research (Creswell, 2008).

**Validity:** As applied to an assessment tool, it refers to a judgment concerning the extent to which the assessment tool measures what it purports to measure. The validity of a tool can never be proved absolutely; it can only be supported by an accumulation of evidence from several categories

*Specific Types of Validity Include...*

**Construct:** Examined by testing predictions based on the theory ( or construct) underlying the procedure.

**Criterion-related:** How well the results predict a phenomenon of interest, and it is based on correlating assessment results with this criterion.

**Face:** Subjective evaluation of the measurement procedure. This evaluation may be made by test takers or by experts for improving what is being assessed.

**Formative:** How well an assessment procedure provides information that is useful for improving what is being assessed.

**Sampling:** How well the procedure's components, such as test items, reflect the full range of what is being assessed.

**Value Added:** the increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Can either focus on the individual student (how much better a student can write, for example, at the end than at the beginning) or on a cohort of students (whether senior papers demonstrate more sophisticated writing skills in the aggregate than freshmen papers). Requires a baseline measurement for comparison (Leskes, 2002).

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## Appendix C: Writing Effective Student Learning Outcomes for Assessment and Improvement

### Writing Student Learning Outcomes

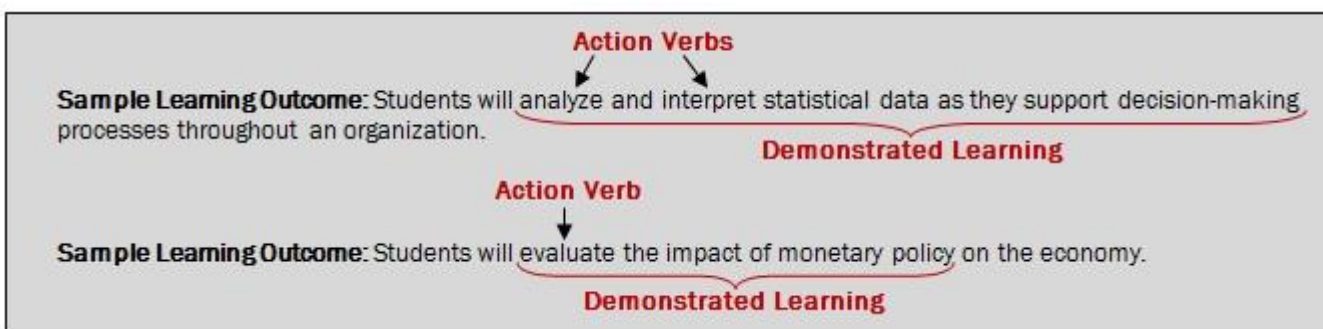
[from the Center for Teaching and Learning at IUPUI

<http://ctl.iupui.edu/Resources/Planning-the-Learning-Experience/Writing-Student-Learning-Outcomes>]

*By the end of a program of study, what do you want students to be able to do? How can your students demonstrate the knowledge the program intended them to learn? Student learning outcomes are statements developed by faculty that answer these questions, typically expressed as knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, or values.*

#### Characteristics of Student Learning Outcomes

- Describe what students should be able to demonstrate, represent or produce based on their learning histories (Maki, 2010)
- Rely on active verbs that identify what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce over time (Maki, 2010)



Student learning outcomes also:

- Should align with the institution's curriculum and co-curriculum outcomes (Maki, 2010)
- Should be collaboratively authored and collectively accepted (Maki, 2010)
- Should incorporate or adapt professional organizations outcome statements when they exist (Maki, 2010)
- Can be quantitatively and/or qualitatively assessed during a student's studies (Maki, 2010)

#### Examples of Student Learning Outcomes

The following examples of student learning outcomes are too general and would be very hard to measure: (T. Banta personal communication, October 20, 2010)

- will appreciate the benefits of exercise science.
- will understand the scientific method.
- will become familiar with correct grammar and literary devices.
- will develop problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

The following examples, while better are still general and again would be hard to measure. (T. Banta personal communication, October 20, 2010)

- will appreciate exercise as a stress reduction tool.
- will apply the scientific method in problem solving.
- will demonstrate the use of correct grammar and various literary devices.
- will demonstrate critical thinking skills, such as problem solving as it relates to social issues.

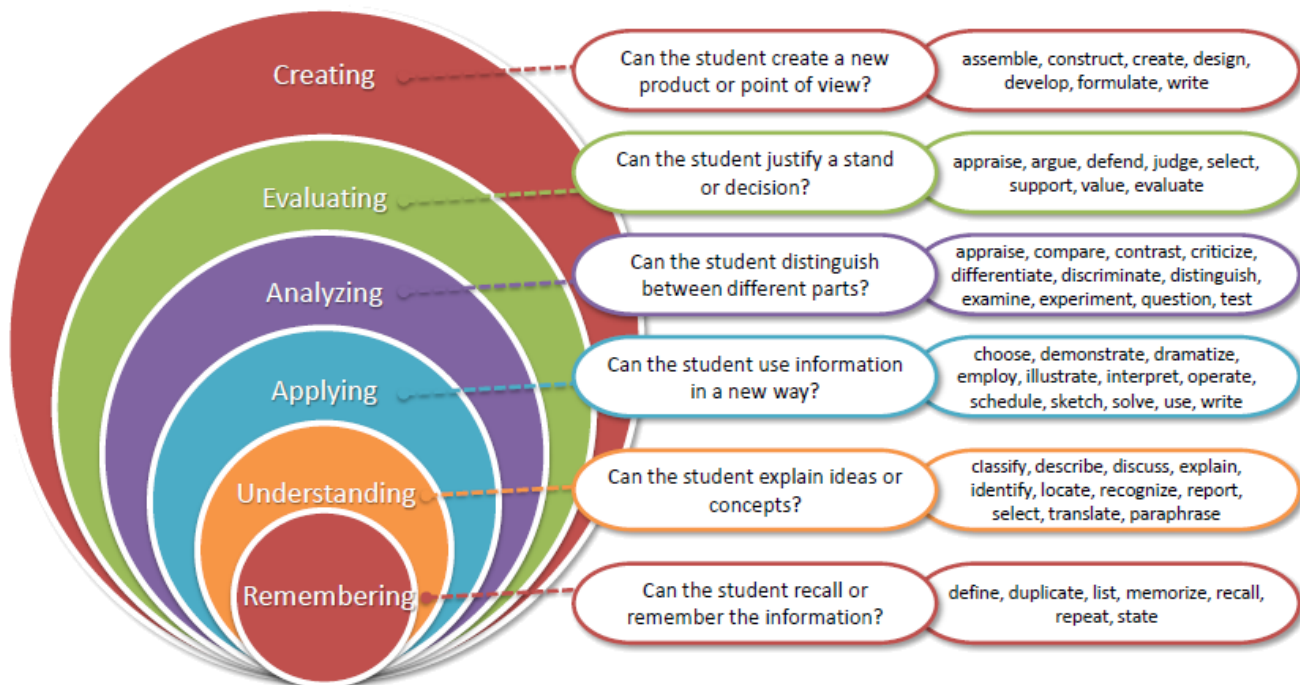
The following examples are specific examples and would be fairly easy to measure when using the correct assessment measure: (T. Banta personal communication, October 20, 2010)

- will explain how the science of exercise affects stress.
- will design a grounded research study using the scientific method.
- will demonstrate the use of correct grammar and various literary devices in creating an essay.
- will analyze and respond to arguments about racial discrimination.

### Importance of Action Verbs and Examples from Bloom's Taxonomy

- Action verbs result in overt behavior that can be observed and measured (see list below).
- Certain verbs are unclear or relate to covert, internal behaviors that cannot be observed or measured. These types of verbs should be avoided (e.g., appreciate, become aware of, become familiar with, know, learn, and understand).

## Bloom's Taxonomy (Revised)



## References

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- Authored by Mona Kheiry (March, 2011)  
Revised by Terri Tarr (February, 2014)

## Appendix D: Example Curriculum Map

### PSY Curriculum Map

Courses and Activities Mapped to Psychology Program Learning Goals Set

Courses and Learning Activities	Learning Goal 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.		Learning Goal 2: Research Methods in Psychology Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.		Learning Goal 3: Application of Psychology Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.		Learning Goal 4: Appreciation of Psychology as a Science Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a science.	
	Learning Outcome 1.1: Breadth and Depth of Psychology Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing an appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology.	Learning Outcome 1.2: Major Perspectives Explain major perspectives of psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, and socio-cultural).	Learning Outcome 2.1: Scientific Study Design and conduct basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods.	Learning Outcome 2.2: Generalize Research Conclusions Generalize research conclusions appropriately based on the parameters of particular research methods.	Learning Outcome 3.1: Explaining Social Issues and Informing Public Policy Articulate how psychological principles can be used to explain social issues and inform public policy.	Learning Outcome 3.2: Application to Everyday Life Apply psychological concepts theories and research findings as these relate to everyday life.	Learning Outcome 4.1: Demonstrate Reasonable Skepticism and Curiosity Demonstrate reasonable skepticism and intellectual curiosity by asking questions about causes of behavior.	Learning Outcome 4.2: Seek and Evaluate Evidence Seek and evaluate scientific evidence for psychological claims.
PSY 100 General Psychology	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
PSY 207 Principles of Learning w/Lab	I	I	I	I			I	I
PSY 208 Cognitive Psychology w/Lab	I	I	I	I			I	I
PSY 209 Social Psychology w/Lab	I	I	I	I	I		I	I
PSY 210 Ind/Org Psy w/ Lab	I		I	I			I	I
PSY 211 Abnormal Psychology	I	I			B	I	I	B
PSY 212 Behavioral Neuroscience w/ Lab	I	I	I	I			I	I
PSY 213 Child Psychopathology	I				B	I	I	B
PSY 214 Ethology with Lab	I		I	I			I	I
PSY 215 Health Psychology	I	I			A	A		
PSY 217 Cross-Cultural Psychology	I	I						
PSY 225 Stats & Rarch Meth-Behav Sci			B	B	B	B		
PSY 231 Social Gerontology (CPS)	I	I						
PSY 321 Personality Theory	I	I						
PSY 323 Clinical/Counseling Methods	A	A						
PSY 325 Stats & Rarch Meth-Behav Sc II			I	I	B	B	I	I
PSY 420 His & Systems of Psychology	A	A					A	
PSY 424 Senior Research	I	I	A	A	A	A	A	A

Legend: **B** Basic/Entry Level **I** Intermediate Level **A** Advanced Level

Show Student Learning Outcome Descriptions  Show Course/Activity Detail

## Appendix E: Example Three-Year Assessment Plan

### Three-Year Assessment Plan for Student Learning Outcomes

Learning Goals (LGs) <sup>1</sup> <i>(Verify that all learning goals for your program are correctly listed below. Please make any changes using the "track changes" feature in Word.)</i>	Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) <sup>1</sup> <i>(Verify that all learning outcomes for your program are correctly listed below. Please make any changes using the "track changes" feature in Word.)</i>	Academic year during which assessment will occur			Source(s) from which assessment artifact(s) will be collected <i>(e.g., course assignments/exams, student projects, student portfolios, surveys, etc.)</i>	Method(s) to be used for assessing artifact(s) <i>(e.g., rubrics, simple counts/percentages, formal discussions, etc.)</i>	Person(s) responsible for gathering and/or evaluating/analyzing this evidence?	What (if any) resources will be needed that will impact your Program's budget? <i>(Please be specific and provide sufficient detail to justify any request for increases to the budget.)</i>
		AY 2016-17	AY 2017-18	AY 2018-19				
LG 1: Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.	SLO 1a: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing an appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology.	X		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major Fields Test Results (graduating seniors only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Choice (% correct)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rob Smith (MFT coordinator)</li> </ul>	Annual subscription to MFT Psychology Test (including detailed and customizable score reports): Approx. \$800
	SLO 1b: Explain major perspectives of psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, and socio-cultural).			X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subset of exam questions from PSY 100</li> <li>Subset of exam questions from PSY 420</li> <li>Major Fields Test Results (graduating seniors only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Choice (% correct)</li> <li>Rubric for short answers/essays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 100 &amp; PSY 420</li> <li>Rob Smith (MFT coordinator)</li> </ul>
LG 2: Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.	SLO 2a: Design and conduct basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods.	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research project from PSY 225/325</li> <li>Capstone project from PSY 424</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 225, PSY 325, and PSY 424</li> </ul>	None
	SLO 2b: Generalize research conclusions appropriately based on the parameters of particular research methods.			X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research project from PSY 225/325</li> <li>Capstone project from PSY 424</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 225, PSY 325, and PSY 424</li> </ul>
LG 3: Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.	SLO 3a: Articulate how psychological principles can be used to explain social issues and inform public policy.	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common exam questions from PSY 207, PSY 209, PSY 211, &amp; PSY 212</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 207, PSY 209, PSY 211, &amp; PSY 212</li> </ul>	None
	SLO 3b: Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings as these relate to everyday life.				X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common exam questions from PSY 208, PSY 210, PSY 214, &amp; PSY 321</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 208, PSY 210, PSY 214, &amp; PSY 321</li> </ul>
LG 5: Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a science.	SLO 4a: Demonstrate reasonable skepticism and intellectual curiosity by asking questions about causes of behavior.			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research project from PSY 225/325</li> <li>Capstone project from PSY 424</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 225, PSY 325, and PSY 424</li> </ul>	None
	SLO 4b: Seek and evaluate scientific evidence for psychological claims.		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research project from PSY 225/325</li> <li>Capstone project from PSY 424</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors for PSY 225, PSY 325, and PSY 424</li> </ul>	None

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted on behalf of the Psychology Program by: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Additional Learning goals and SLOs may be added by simply adding rows where appropriate in order to accurately reflect the actual number of each for a given Program.

## Appendix F: Example Annual Assessment Summary Report

### 2016-2017 Assessment Summary Report

#### Psychology Program Learning Goals Set

##### Learning Goal 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology

Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

##### Learning Outcome 1.1: Breadth and Depth of Psychology

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing an appropriate breadth and depth in selected content areas of psychology.

##### Measure: Major Fields Test

**Describe the type and source of evidence being used for this measure of the learning outcome (e.g., a randomly selected representative subset of senior capstone papers from COL 101):** We will be using a standardized multiple choice national test (The Major Fields Test) that covers major theories, content areas, and applications of psychology.

**Identify a target (or benchmark) level at which the Program would like to see students achieve this outcome (e.g., at least 80% of students will receive an average rating of...):** We want at least 80% of our senior students to achieve an overall score at or greater than the 50th percentile.

**Describe how this assessment will be/was carried out, including how the measure will be/was analyzed/assessed:** Each semester, all graduating seniors are asked to take this assessment during one of several scheduled testing periods. The test is administered in a controlled environment to prevent cheating or compromising the test questions. Once completed, tests are automatically scored by Educational Testing Services (ETS) Individual score reports are provided to students immediately upon completion. A comprehensive report on all students (including their overall percentile using a national normative sample) is also provided to the program.

##### Supporting Attachments:

 Major Fields Test - Psychology Exam Description.pdf (Adobe Acrobat Document)

##### Findings for Major Fields Test

**Summary of Findings:** In all, 13 graduating senior psychology students completed the Major Fields Test for Psychology. 76% of these students scored at or above the 50th percentile. For the 24% who scored lower than the 50th percentile, there seemed to be a common weakness in the Developmental Psychology area relative to the rest of their performance.

**Results:** Target Achievement: Not Met

**Provide a summary of how the findings/results from this measure are being used by the program to improve student learning of this particular learning outcome:** Based on these findings, we have replaced some content in the History and Systems of Psychology capstone course to now include a stronger review of Developmental theory and applications. The content that was displaced appears to be receiving more than adequate coverage and reinforcement in at least two of our 200-level courses, so we expect no drop-off in learning to occur with respect to that content.

**Describe how and when the Program will reassess the(se) action(s) to know whether or not the action(s) had the desired impact:** This SLO is slated to be (re)assessed in the third academic year (2018-19) of this current assessment cycle.

##### Substantiating Evidence:

 MFT Score Report for May 2016 Graduating Seniors.xlsx (Excel Workbook (Open XML))

## Learning Goal 2: Research Methods in Psychology

Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

### Learning Outcome 2.1: Scientific Reasoning

Use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological phenomena.

#### - Measure: Independent Research Project

**Describe the type and source of evidence being used for this measure of the learning outcome (e.g., a randomly selected representative subset of senior capstone papers from COL 101):** Independent research projects from the Fall 2016 sections of PSY 225, PSY 325, and PSY 424 will be collected and assessed using a locally developed 4-point rubric (see attachments). Within each course, 40% of the projects collected will be randomly selected for this assessment.

**Identify a target (or benchmark) level at which the Program would like to see students achieve this outcome (e.g., at least 80% of students will receive an average rating of...):** For PSY 225 projects, we hope to see at least 50% of students achieve a rating of 2 (developing) or better. For PSY 325 projects, we hope to see at least 50% of students achieve a rating of 3 (competent) or better. For PSY 424 projects, we hope to see at least 80% of students achieve a rating of 3 (competent) or better.

**Describe how this assessment will be/was carried out, including how the measure will be/was analyzed/assessed:** At the end of the fall term, instructors for each class will provide copies of all their student's research projects to the Program Chair. The Chair will then randomly select 40% from each cohort to be used in the assessment. Program faculty will then meet in January to calibrate their use of the rubric. Once calibrated, two faculty will read each project and rate it according to the rubric criteria for this learning outcome. In cases where the two faculty differ in their ratings, a third rating by the Program Chair will be used to determine the final rating.

#### Supporting Attachments:

[Rubric - Independent Research Projects.docx \(Word Document \(Open XML\)\)](#)

#### Findings for Independent Research Project

**Summary of Findings:** For PSY 225 projects, 40% of students achieved a rating of 2 (developing) or better. For PSY 325 projects, 35% of students achieved a rating of 3 (competent) or better. For PSY 424 projects, 63% of students achieve a rating of 3 (competent) or better.

While all three of the cohorts assessed fell below the expected targets, the majority (82%) of those that did not achieve the target rating were still very close to meeting their respective targets.

**Results:** Target Achievement: Not Met

**Provide a summary of how the findings/results from this measure are being used by the program to improve student learning of this particular learning outcome:** In light of these findings, the program is taking a look at how the projects in PSY 225 and PSY 325 are currently sequenced. Originally, students were expected to complete an independent research project in one semester that used one or more of the major methodologies. Going forward, students in PSY 225 will only be expected to complete a research proposal, but not actually carry out the research being proposed. This will allow more time to be devoted to learning proper literature review strategies, research designs, and how to integrate previous research and theory into a coherent research question and set of hypotheses.

Likewise, students in PSY 325 will now be expected to begin with their proposal from PSY 225, allowing them to concentrate their efforts on the actual conduct of research, analysis of the data, and interpretation of the results. Sequencing these projects in this manner emphasizes quality over quantity in terms of learning the necessary research skills before entering the capstone course (PSY 424).

**Describe how and when the Program will reassess the(se) action(s) to know whether or not the action(s) had the desired impact:** This SLO is slated to be

(re)assessed in the third academic year (2018-19) of this current assessment cycle and will be assessed using the same plan described in this report.

**Substantiating Evidence:**

- 📎 Example Student Research Project - Competent.docx (Word Document (Open XML))
- 📎 Example Student Research Project - Needs Improvement.docx (Word Document (Open XML))

**Learning Goal 3: Application of Psychology**

Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.

**Learning Outcome 3.1:  
Apply Ethical  
Standards**

Apply ethical standards to evaluate psychological science and practice.

▼ **Measure: Common Exam Questions**

**Describe the type and source of evidence being used for this measure of the learning outcome (e.g., a randomly selected representative subset of senior capstone papers from COL 101):** Three common exam questions (short answers) will be incorporated into the final exams for PSY 207, PSY 211, and PSY 212. All responses will be gathered by the respective instructors of each course and from that pool, a randomly selected sample of 15 responses to each question will be assessed using a 3-point rubric (deficient, correct/average, and correct/advanced).

**Identify a target (or benchmark) level at which the Program would like to see students achieve this outcome (e.g., at least 80% of students will receive an average rating of...):** At least 80% of students will achieve ratings on each question of 1 ("correct/average") or better.

**Describe how this assessment will be/was carried out, including how the measure will be/was analyzed/assessed:** In early spring 2017, instructors from each course will compile all common questions from their final exams and provide them to the Program Chair who will randomly select 15 responses to each of the three questions to be assessed. Two faculty will rate each response according to the criteria in the rubric. In cases where the ratings differ, the Program Chair will offer a third rating to be used as a tie-breaker.

**Supporting Attachments:**

- 📎 Rubric - Ethics Applications.docx (Word Document (Open XML))

**Findings for Common Exam Questions**

**Summary of Findings:** Question 1: 82% of students received a rating of 1 or better.  
Question 2: 74% of students received a rating of 1 or better.  
Question 3: 86% of students received a rating of 1 or better.

Questions 1 and 3 pertained to the application of ethical standards to psychological research while question 2 pertained to the application of ethical standards to the practice of psychology. The results are not all that surprising given the emphasis placed on scientific research in the core curriculum (PSY 225, PSY 325, & PSY 424) and the relative lack of emphasis on the practice of psychology in an undergraduate curriculum.

**Results:** Target Achievement: Not Met

**Provide a summary of how the findings/results from this measure are being used by the program to improve student learning of this particular learning outcome:** The program plans to implement a short module on ethics in the practice of psychology that will be incorporated in PSY 100, PSY 211, PSY 323, and PSY 420. The module will include a short exercise using case studies where students will practice their application of ethical principles to the practice of psychology.

**Describe how and when the Program will reassess the(se) action(s) to know whether or not the action(s) had the desired impact:** This SLO is slated to be (re)assessed in the first academic year (2019-20) of the next assessment cycle. We



will make use of the same three questions administered in the same group of classes.

**Substantiating Evidence:**

- ① [Compilation of Faculty Ratings of Common Questions.docx \(Word Document \(Open XML\)\)](#)
- ② [Compilation of Student Answers to Common Questions.docx \(Word Document \(Open XML\)\)](#)

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