**Annual Departmental Assessment Report**

**Department or Program:** Psychology

**Academic Year of Report:** AY 2017-18

**Department Contact Person for Assessment:** Holly Arrow, Chair, Undergraduate Education Committee

**Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report**

*Our statement of objectives learning goals for our undergraduate majors is available on our department website,* [*http://psychology.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/academics/*](http://psychology.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/academics/)

*Upon completing their training, UO psychology majors should have a broad knowledge of psychology, including basic statistical techniques and ethical issues, and be skilled at reading, evaluating, and communicating about the primary scientific literature in psychology. More specifically, they should be able to:*

1. *Identify major theories, research findings, and methodological approaches in a variety of key content areas including, for example, cognition, neuroscience, development, social behavior, personality, and psychopathology and mental health; and apply research findings to human behavior in everyday life.*
2. *Find relevant articles in the primary psychological literature on a given topic, identify key research questions and hypotheses in scientific articles, and critically evaluate the research design and the quality of evidence presented.*
3. *Choose appropriate basic statistical analysis techniques for a specific research question and set of data, complete basic data analyses, and summarize the results in an APA-style report.*
4. *Communicate clearly and effectively about psychological topics, including methodological and ethical issues in psychology, based on an understanding of both the strengths and limitations of empirical evidence.*

**Section 2: Assessment Activities**

Historically, the department has encouraged graduating seniors to complete an “exit survey” when they register for graduation. Self-report questions measure student achievement of skills and knowledge that we would ideally like all our graduates to have acquired. They reported on their perceived knowledge of the areas identified in Goal 1, on the statistical and methodological components of Goals 2 & 3, and on their skill in communicating effectively about psychology (Goal 4). The survey is optional but strongly promoted in all communications with students preparing to graduate.

In the Spring of 2017, we replaced the self-assessment of Goals 2 & 3 skills with a Knowledge Test consisting of 15 content specific multiple-choice questions. This assessment was developed by two experienced career teaching faculty members who have taught our undergraduate methods and statistics classes, in consultation with other instructors. These questions directly test the following skills:

(Goal 2) identify key research questions and hypotheses in scientific articles, and critically evaluate the research design and the quality of evidence presented. Example questions:

*Please read the following research abstract (from McLoughlin & Over, 2017):   We investigated whether young children were more likely to spontaneously attribute mental states to members of their own social group than to members of an out-group. We asked 5- and 6-year-old children to describe the actions of interacting geometric shapes and manipulated whether the children believed these shapes represented their own group or another group. Children of both ages spontaneously used mental-state words more often in their description of in-group members compared with out-group members. Furthermore, 6-year-olds produced a greater diversity of mental-state terms when talking about their own social group. These effects held across two different social categories (based on gender and geographic location). This research has important implications for understanding a broad range of social phenomena, including dehumanization, intergroup bias, and theory of mind.*

1. *What is an independent variable in this study?*

*A. The children*

*B. Spontaneous attributions of mental state*

*C. Number of mental-state words produced*

*D. Group membership of the shapes (correct answer)*

1. *What is the research question?*

*A. Do young children attribute any mental states to geometric shapes?*

*B. Does group membership influence young children’s mental state attributions? (correct answer)*

*C. Do young children prefer geometric shapes that they believe represent their own group?*

*D. Does group membership predict young children’s attributions of geographic location?*

(Goal 3) Choose appropriate basic statistical analysis techniques for a specific research question and set of data… summarize the results in an APA-style report. Example questions:

1. *Pick the correct statistical test.  A researcher is interested in whether amount of time someone is kept waiting in line is related to aggression.*
   1. *one sample t test*
   2. *related samples t test*
   3. *independent samples t test*
   4. *correlation (correct answer)*
   5. *one-way ANOVA*
   6. *two-way ANOVA (Factorial)*
2. *Even if a treatment has an effect it is still possible to obtain a sample mean that is very similar to the general population mean of people who did not receive the treatment.  What outcome is likely if this happens?*
   1. *reject H0 and make a Type I error*
   2. *correctly reject H0*
   3. *fail to reject H0 and make a Type II error (correct answer)*
   4. *correctly fail to reject H0*

In addition to measuring students during the department exit survey, the 15-item methods and statistics Knowledge Test was administered at the end of the final course in our new 3-course methods sequence (PSY 303), in Spring 2017. See Figure 1 below for the average scores of the Spring 2017 (n = 93) and Spring 2018 (n = 105) exit surveys as well as the Spring 2017 PSY 303 survey (n = 75).

Students’ scores on the Knowledge Test during the exit surveys in 2017 and 2018 were significantly correlated with perceptions of their research evaluation and statistical abilities (Goals 2 and 3), *r(*195) = .26, *p* < .001. Additionally, the Knowledge Test scores correlated with the students self-assessed ability to articulate (*r*(195) = .23, *p* < .001), apply (*r*(195) = .28, *p* < .001), and communicate (*r*(195) = .21, *p* = .003), about psychological research (Goal 4).

The exit survey asks graduating seniors about their satisfaction with the structure of the major, with the introductory courses (PSY 201 and 202), the methods sequence (PSY 301 to 303), and upper division courses on a 4-level Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 – Very Dissatisfied to 4 – Very Satisfied. Overall students were satisfied with all aspects of the major, as shown in Figure 2. There were no significant differences on satisfaction across the two years (*p*s > .24)

**Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis**

**Continuing Outcomes Assessment.** Going forward, testing these skills at two time points (right after completing the methods sequence, and just before graduation) will also indicate how well these skills are retained over time using the two versions of the Knowledge Test. Assessment schedule:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Learning objective (LO) | AY 18-19 | AY 19-20 | AY 19-20 | AY 20-21 |
| LO 1 (content) | Exit survey | Exit survey | Exit survey | Exit survey |
| LO 2 (methods) | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 |
| LO 3 (stats) | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 | Exit + end 303 |
| LO 4 (comm) | Exit survey | Exit survey | Exit survey | Exit survey |

**Evaluation of Redesigned Methods Sequence.** As seen in Figure 2, students reported the lowest satisfaction with the Methods sequence courses. Members of the Undergraduate Education Committee (UEC) met with instructors AY17-18 with instructors to discuss possible improvements, with a specific focus on the new version of PSY 303. Instructors agreed that the new 301 course and the ongoing 302 course were working as planned, but student evaluations and feedback from instructors highlighted some problems with the implementation of the new 303. Related actions taken in the current AY (2018-2019) are detailed in Section 5.

**Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience**

Two broad areas of improvements for the student educational experience were advising and online courses.

**1. Advising.**

Advising efforts have been focused on **helping students succeed as majors** as well as **prepare for graduate school and careers** after graduation.

* 1. **Academic support:** 
     1. Piloted peer tutors for PSY 303 Research methods in spring of 2017.
     2. Program has been expanded since then. Went from 6 tutors to 10 over the year.
     3. This year we have been working to optimize the program and have gone from outreach combined with drop-in tutoring in F17, to collaborations with instructors who offered extra-credit for review of papers by peer tutors in W18, to integrating tutoring contributions to research paper editing in S18.
  2. **Co-curricular engagement:** Increased programming for research and undergraduate practicum.
     + 1. Held a practicum fair in spring 2017 alongside advising campaigns. Invited community partners to meet with students, talk to applicants and in some cases hold interviews on campus.
       2. Added 3 additional internship sites in 2017-2018, which will help increase student participation in addition to outreach.
       3. Enrollment up in both:
     1. Research: 159 enrolled in PSY401 in 2017-2018, up from 104 the previous year.
     2. Practicum: 109 registered in 2017-2018, compared to 66 the previous year.
  3. **Advising outreach**: Increased major advising campaigns over 2017-2018.
     1. Early intervention for majors at risk of not meeting the GPA requirement. Majors with 1.8-2.2 were reminded about the need to maintain both their overall and the Psych GPA above 2.0 to graduate with the major. In addition, one on one appointments were used to discuss academic support resources, workload management, and make strategic graduation plans with judicious selection of upper level courses, including summer coursework.
     2. One on one appointment campaigns for majors with D/W/F in PSY302 about cap for repeating the course. Shared resources for tutoring, and reminded students to work with instructors early in second attempt. Similar reminders sent through in-class announcements as well.
     3. In class announcements for 201/202 grade requirement for majors, so as to reach out to prospective majors.
     4. Outreach for missed success markers: Majors with no PSY409/401 as juniors and seniors sent outreach emails about benefits of experiential learning, specifically role of research experience in grad school prep and of internships in transition to careers.
  4. **Transfer students transition advising:** Set up collaborations with community college advisors to ensure updated curriculum information for transfer credits.
     1. Hosted half-day advising workshop for prospective transfer students to give them an overview of the major, encourage early engagement with research and internships, e.g. students were encouraged to apply for PSY401/409 positions before they get on campus.
     2. During orientation advising, we have started holding separate advising sessions for transfer students and freshman so both can be supported holistically based on their needs.

**2. Online Courses.**

Over the Spring and Summer 2018, two career teaching faculty developed two popular 300-level courses into online offerings. Cognition (PSY305) is a broad area survey course in cognitive psychology. It is one of two courses that all psychology majors are required to take. In addition, it is open to non-majors for whom it fulfills upper division general education credits in the science group. Historically, PSY 305 has been fully or nearly fully enrolled every term it is offered. Social Psychology (PSY 306) is a broad survey course in social psychology open to majors and non-majors and also is fully or nearly fully enrolled every term it is offered. The popularity of these two courses and the desire to support general education as well as to afford students flexibility made these two courses ideal for making available online.

**Section 5: Plans for Next Year**

As noted under Section 3, evaluation of the methods sequence indicated that some changes were needed to improve the last class in our 3-course methods sequence. Over the summer, the UEC Chair met with former instructors and some of the instructors scheduled to teach the course in the Fall to review the course design and make revisions. The UEC Chair is currently (Fall 2018) teaching one of the sections of the updated PSY 303 and supervising the graduate student GEs who teach the other sections. Continuing this approach, in the Winter and Spring terms a career teaching faculty member will teach two sections of the course and supervise the sections taught by graduate students.

**Budgetary implications:** For Fall 2018, the additional teaching supervision workload for 303 has been treated as a UEC service contribution. Going forward, teaching 2 sections of 303 and supervising the other GE-taught sections will be treated as a unit worth 2 undergraduate teaching credits for TTF or career teaching faculty. With adequate grading support by other GEs, our hope is that this will become an attractive assignment for our core faculty, and that we will be able to staff the course accordingly. Recent additions to our TTF make this likely. Closer supervision and support of the GE instructors is also a contribution to improving graduate training in teaching.