

## Department of Psychology Assessment Plan, February 2017

*Prepared by the Undergraduate Education Committee (Holly Arrow, Chair)*

### **Learning Goals and Objectives:**

Our statement of objectives learning goals for our undergraduate majors is available on our department website, <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.*

### **Assessment Methods:**

In 2014-2016, 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 report 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). Open-ended questions ask about notable strengths and weaknesses of the UO psychology program. The survey is optional but strongly promoted in all communications with students preparing to graduate.

In the Spring of 2017, we plan to replace the self-assessment of Goals 2 & 3 skills with questions that 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.

(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.

### Assessment processes:

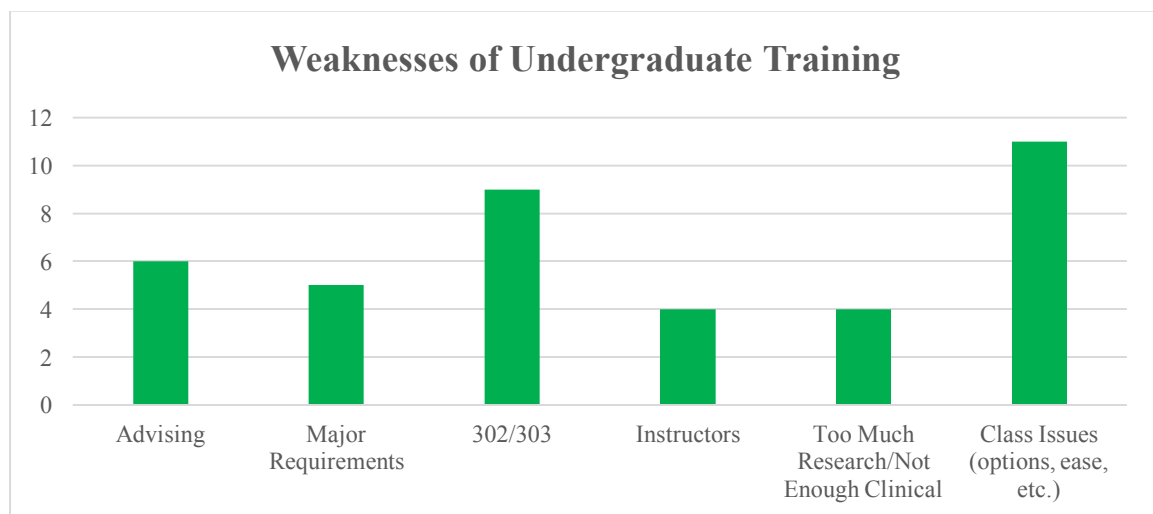
Timing for upgrade of exit survey: An experienced career NTTF who has taught our undergraduate methods and statistics classes will, in consultation with other instructors, develop the new stats/methods questions. The revised exit survey will be available at the beginning of Spring term for students registering to graduate in June.

An alternative version of these questions will also be administered at the end of the final course in our new 3-course methods sequence (PSY 303), which is being taught for the first time in Spring 2017. 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. Assessment schedule:

| Learning objective (LO) | AY 16-17       | AY 17-18       | AY 18-19       | AY 19-20       |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 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    |

### How Previous Assessment Results Have Informed Curricular Reform:

The expansion of our methods sequence from two courses to three was based in part on the feedback we received from the first years of the exit survey. Students expressed the lowest amount of confidence in their methods/stats related skills (Learning Goals 2 & 3), as compared to their subject knowledge (Learning Goal 1). In open-ended questions about strengths and weaknesses, dissatisfaction with our previous two course sequence (302/303) stood out, as shown below for the 2014 exit survey.



**Status, Outcomes and Results:**

The results of the Spring 2017 exit survey and the Spring 2017 administration of the targeted methods questions at the end of the 303 Research Methods class will be summarized in a report to be shared with faculty and with graduate students, who are very involved with our methods sequence as TAs for the first two methods courses and as instructors for the third methods course.

Outcomes for the new direct assessment questions will be examined to determine if we have a good range of difficulty based on student performance. Ideally, we want a test that is reasonably difficult to avoid ceiling effects (especially when tested at the end of PSY 303) but not so difficult that students are unable to complete most questions when they are on the verge of graduating (when we expect some degradation in their knowledge).

**Decisions, Plans and Recommendations:**

After a major push to reform the methods sequence and to introduce a new level of 300-level core courses for our major, we are in the process of reviewing our offerings at the 400-level. In particular, we are planning to add more prerequisites for 400-level courses, building on the new 300-level subject level survey courses. Some existing courses will be revised, some will be dropped, and new ones will be added.

Comments on the 2014-2016 exit surveys indicate some frustration with courses that are offered only rarely (which is typically due to scarcity of faculty available to teach them) and also their desire for a clearer focus in the major. After adjusting our 400-level offerings, we plan to define several “pathways” that students can follow to concentrate their training in specific areas (for example, developmental, or cognitive neuroscience).

As the curriculum continues to evolve, we plan to add or revise questions on the exit survey to gauge student satisfaction with aspects of the new curriculum such as the 300-level Core courses and the (to be developed) pathways.