

Annual Assessment Report

Department: Psychology

Academic Year: 2021-2022

Date of Submission: September 15, 2022

Department Chair: Carmel Saad

I. Response to the previous year PRC’s recommendations

Item 1: You may want to look at psychological knowledge again this year since you’ve already done a lot of the groundwork.	Response: We accepted this recommendation and elected to again examine our Psychological Knowledge Base PLO.
Item 2: Because of the relatively small sample size, the data was not conclusive.	Response: We acknowledged this fact in our previous report and addressed it in the current assessment by re-administering the same measure and adding the findings to last year’s data, thereby procuring a larger sample size.
Item 3: Consider requiring majors to complete this assessment, perhaps as a component of a senior seminar course.	Response: To avoid the ethical violation of coercion, we elected not to require our seniors to complete the measure, but we did re-administer it in PSY-111, one of our Senior Capstone courses.
Item 4: Include data comparison with similar small liberal arts colleges.	Response: For the current assessment, statistics that compare our findings with those from 221 other domestic institutions are provided.
Item 5: Include a copy of the assessment or a link to more information about the assessment.	Response: The link to the measure is provided in the current assessment report.
Item 6: Identify your benchmark standards for psychological knowledge.	Response: Although the department did not discuss benchmark standards <i>a priori</i> , the members deliberated our degree of comfort with the findings and the implications for our department curriculum and pedagogy.
Notes:	

II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

<p>Program Learning Outcome</p>	<p>Psychological Knowledge Base</p>
<p>Who is in Charge /Involved?</p>	<p>With Steve Rogers coordinating, all department members (Carmel Saad, Andrea Gurney, Gawnhi Park, Ronald See [sabbatical, S22], Lydia Grenko) were involved in discussing the decision to re-evaluate the Psychological Knowledge Base PLO, the data collection and administration methodology, the results, and how to “close the loop.”</p>
<p><u>Direct Assessment Methods</u></p>	<p>The Educational Testing Services (ETS)' Major Fields Test in Psychology (MFT; https://www.ets.org/s/mft/pdf/mft_testdesc_psych_4gmf.pdf) was the direct assessment method administered. This widely-used test is completed within a 120-minute time limit and consists of 140 multiple-choice questions aimed at assessing mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge among students who are graduating from undergraduate psychology programs. This test provides an overall total scaled score and is composed of four subscale content areas (Learning/Cognition/Memory, Sensory/Perception/Physiology, Clinical/Abnormal/Personality, and Developmental/Social areas), as well as six refined content areas (memory and cognition, perception/sensation/physiology, developmental, clinical/abnormal, social, and measurement and methodology) called assessment indicators. The comparative data used were from seniors at 221 domestic institutions who completed the MFT between 2019 and 2022.</p> <p>For this year’s administration, all senior psychology students were offered extra credit in their History and Systems (PSY-111) course if they were willing to complete the MFT. PSY-111 is a senior capstone course required of seniors in the psychology major. They were allowed to complete the exam any time between November 2021 and the end of the academic semester (12/17/21). Those students who volunteered watched a video describing the test-taker experience, scheduled their exam, and then completed the test using the online testing platform, ProctorU. This remote access was provided for the sake of uniformity with our last annual assessment’s administration methodology.</p> <p>In the combined cohort, 24/45 senior psychology students completed the MFT, 19 of whom were women. All reported being English-speaking, and 17 were in the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) track, two were in the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) General track, and five were in the B.S. Behavioral Neuroscience track.</p>

Major Findings

A. The mean total scaled score for our sample was 168 ($SD = 15$; range 120-200), which is at the 95th percentile relative to seniors at the other 221 institutions completing the MFT in the same time period.

B. Analyses of the subscale content areas showed:

<i>Subscale Content Areas</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Percentile^a</i>
Learning/Cognition/Memory	71 ($SD = 14$)	97
Sensory/Perception/Physiology	69 ($SD = 19$)	95
Clinical/Abnormal/Personality	69 ($SD = 16$)	97
Developmental/Social	60 ($SD = 14$)	76

^a. Percentile relative to 221 other institutions.

C. Analyses of the assessment indicators revealed:

<i>Assessment Indicator Title</i>	<i>Mean Percent Items Correct</i>	<i>Percentile^a</i>
Memory and Cognition	70	95
Perception/Sensation/Physiology	63	94
Developmental	61	79
Clinical/Abnormal	76	97
Social	68	74
Measurement and Methodology	57	86

^a. Percentile relative to 221 other institutions.

D. There were no significant differences in total scaled or subtest content scores between men and women, $p = n.s.$

E. There was a statistically significant difference between degree tracks on the sensory/perception/physiology subtest content score, $F(2, 21) = 6.34, p < .01$. Scheffe post-hoc analyses showed B.S. Behavioral Neuroscience students ($M = 91$) performing significantly better than B.A. students ($M = 63$) on this subtest. Otherwise, there were no statistically significant differences between degree tracks in students' performance on the total scaled or other subtest content scores.

Closing the Loop Activities

The results from this assessment are highly encouraging for our major and our graduating seniors. Relative to the comparative group of graduating psychology students at other institutions, our seniors performed in the superior range (95th percentile) in total mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge in the field of psychology.

When examining content areas in particular, our students achieved superior scores in clinical/abnormal/personality, sensory/perception/physiology, and learning/cognition/memory content areas, with a slightly lower, but still high average, performance in measurement, developmental, and social psychology content. More specifically, it appears our seniors score highest on questions related to clinical/abnormal psychology, followed closely by memory and cognition, and then perception/sensation/physiology, all of which were in the superior range relative to their peers at other institutions. High average scores were achieved, in descending order, on questions related to measurement/methodology, developmental, and social psychology.

These outcomes suggest that our students have not only gained an overall and subdisciplinary mastery of the concepts, principles, and knowledge in the field of psychology that far exceeds their peers at other institutions, but they also have achieved comparable instruction and mastery *within* the major across the content areas of psychology. The slightly lower performance on questions related to developmental and social psychology may be secondary to these being two areas of elective coursework within our major, with less overlap with other course material. In contrast, the remaining content areas (e.g., clinical, sensory/perception, learning/cognition) are frequently addressed in multiple courses, including capstone courses and labs that generally require greater time and coursework from our students. However, our department is highly pleased with our seniors' performance in all content areas. The fact that our students performed so well across content areas despite not being required to take courses in all of these content areas is particularly encouraging. Therefore, no immediate changes in curriculum or development of content knowledge are deemed necessary at this time.

It is also heartening to discover (a) no significant disparity in total MFT score between degree tracks, and (b) only one significant difference in content area scores between these tracks. The significantly better performance on the sensory/perception/physiology questions by B.S. Behavioral Neuroscience students relative to B.A. students was expected and verifies the intended accomplishment of this track in providing greater knowledge in this domain.

The department would like to consider semi-regular administration of the MFT to assess consistency of our program's effectiveness and any changes necessary to improve students' knowledge in specific content areas. Future assessment using this measure may want to consider a way to either test, or control for, the impact of students' achievement

motivation and degree of academic accomplishment on their willingness to volunteer for extra credit, which may subsequently influence the findings. Students interested in taking this test for extra credit, for example, may have stronger achievement motivation and academic accomplishment, which may unduly inflate the test results.

With future assessments, it may also help the department to consider alternative options for incentivizing student participation. Over half of our seniors elected to participate in the assessment, but stronger methods of reinforcement may encourage an even more robust level of student involvement.

Finally, given the strong performance of our students on the MFT, the department will consider including these findings in its advertising to current and incoming students, including on its website.

Collaboration and Communication

On April 16, 2021, the department included in its monthly meeting a discussion of plans for its 2021-2022 annual assessment. Given the small sample size of its previous assessment of the Psychological Knowledge Base PLO and the recommendations of the Program Review Committee, the department collectively decided to reassess its Psychological Knowledge Base PLO. Steve Rogers offered to coordinate this assessment.

On September 3, 2021, the department discussed methods for re-administering the Major Fields Test (MFT), including timing, administration options, and incentive possibilities. It was decided that the measure would be administered in November as an extra credit opportunity for all students in PSY-111. Remote access via the online testing platform, ProctorU, was selected as the administration format.

On November 28, 2021, Steve Rogers sent to Ron See, the instructor for PSY-111, an email reminder about having his students complete the MFT for extra credit in the course. Ron was provided a draft of an email he could send to his students and encouraged to briefly mention this opportunity in class. The content of the email Ron sent to students was as follows:

“Hello everyone,

If you are interested in gaining some extra credit for this class, or if you are open to aiding the psychology department in its assessment of its curriculum, I wanted to make you aware of an opportunity for both.

In the next day or two, you'll receive an email from the Educational Testing Services providing instructions on how to schedule something called the Major Fields Test. The test will not take more than two hours, and it can be completed on your computer and scheduled at a time convenient to you. For completing this, I'll provide you extra credit points.

Hopefully you'll take advantage of this opportunity, but let me know any questions you have.”

On November 29, Steve provided to Ron the text of the email they would receive from ETS, which Ron subsequently posted on PSY-111's Canvas assignments.

On December 17, Steve provided to Ron the list of students who completed the MFT, which Ron used to assign extra credit.

Throughout the summer of 2022, Steve Rogers analyzed the data, conducted statistics, generated ETS reports, and composed the draft of the annual assessment. At the end of August 2022, this draft was sent via email to department members for review and feedback. Members' feedback was then incorporated into the final report.

or/and

II B. Key Questions

Key Question	
Who is in Charge/Involved?	
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	
<u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u>	
Major Findings	
Recommendations	
Collaboration and Communication	

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III. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome or Key Question	
Who was involved in implementation?	
What was decided or addressed?	
How were the recommendations implemented?	
Collaboration and Communication	

IV. Other assessment or Key Questions related projects

Project	
Who is in Charge /Involved?	
Major Findings	
Action	

Collaboration and Communication

V. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing

VI. Appendices

- A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data
- B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data
- C. Relevant assessment-related documents (optional)