

Psychology M.A. Assessment Plan

I. Student Learning Outcomes

The Psychology Department's M.A. Program in research psychology provides advanced coursework and research training in core areas of psychology. Completion of the M.A. can facilitate application to doctoral programs and provide skills important to careers in education, research, the health professions and industry. Each Student Learning Outcome (SLO) is taught in multiple courses throughout the program. These SLOs are:

1. Critical Thinking & Application of Theoretical Frameworks
2. Employ Statistical Knowledge and Develop Conclusions
3. Writing at a Masters' Level

II. Assessment Instrument

The assessment instrument is utilized to evaluate the quality of the final empirical thesis produced by the student. During their final year in the M.A. program, all M.A. students have to complete an empirical thesis, which must contain mastered elements of the three program SLOs. Although technically the course is Psyc 598, it is the final thesis product which is evaluated. An empirical thesis consists of applied theory and/or theoretical frameworks(s), statistical analyses and interpretation, and the conveyance of findings in a scientific fashion, in written format, on-par with peer review publications within the field of Psychology.

After thesis defense, each M.A. student's written thesis is evaluated on the three learning outcomes by the student's three committee members (all CSU Fullerton Professors, two of which are tenured or tenure-track). All three individuals independently rate the final thesis on all three SLO's using the attached rating form which provides descriptive anchors for four levels of performance: excellent, good, acceptable and poor.

Rating scale: Ratings of the final empirical thesis product are on a 4-point scale (noted below for each SLO). In general, *Excellent* (3) represents strong mastery; *Good* (2) represents mastery but without the depth or breadth needed for a rating of excellent; *Acceptable* (1) represents a minimally acceptable level of competence at the masters' level but also a need for continued growth; and *Poor* (0) represents an unacceptable level of knowledge or performance.

III. Assessment Committee

The coordinator of the M.A. program compiles, analyzes and writes up a report regarding the data.

IV. Assessment Schedule

All M.A. student theses that have been defended are assessed on all three SLOs after thesis defense. All three SLOs are assessed annually across students who have defended their theses.

For the most up-to-date information, please contact the program.

ASSESSMENT OF MASTER'S THESIS

STUDENT:

FACULTY:

_____ SLO's: Critical Thinking & Application of Theoretical Frameworks

3. **Excellent:** Student thoroughly reviewed the relevant literature; applied knowledge from multiple theoretical frameworks; integrated aspects of the literature and drew insightful conclusions
2. **Good:** Student reviewed the relevant literature, but not as thoroughly as for #3; accurately applied knowledge from more than one theoretical framework; made some synthesis of the literature and understood some implications of existing research, but not at level #3
1. **Acceptable:** Student conducted a limited literature review that contained gaps; drew conclusions by applying a theoretical framework, but did not seem to understand the "big picture" of the literature; any conclusions drawn were cursory or did not reflect an entirely accurate understanding of the literature
0. **Poor:** Student failed to understand the literature, to apply theoretical frameworks accurately, and to draw reasonable conclusions

_____ SLO's: Employ Statistical Knowledge and Develop Conclusions

3. **Excellent:** Student employed appropriate statistical methods in a sophisticated way; showed a comprehensive understanding of these methods and their implications; made insightful interpretations and conclusions warranted by the statistical results
2. **Good:** Student employed appropriate statistical methods and displayed a general understanding of the implication of results; interpretations were accurate but not comprehensive
1. **Acceptable:** Student generally used appropriate statistical techniques but had marginal understanding of their meaning and implications; conclusions were shallow and limited
0. **Poor:** Student's statistical methods were not appropriate or were interpreted incorrectly; displayed only a vague understanding of the statistical methods used

_____ SLO: Writing at a Master's Level

3. **Excellent:** Student's writing was clear, concise and well-organized, with an absence of grammatical errors
2. **Good:** Student's writing was generally clear and organized; but there was an occasional lack of clarity or grammatical error
1. **Acceptable:** Some sections of the student's writing were unclear; organization was deficient or somewhat lacking; more widespread grammatical errors
0. **Poor:** Severe problems with clarity that impaired the reader's understanding; serious and numerous grammatical errors

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