2019-2020 Psychology Department Assessment Report

Part 1: Psychology Department Assessment of Hendrix College VSL goals I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, and I7

In the 19-20 Academic year, the Psychology department assessed the following VSL goals:
- I1 – investigating and researching underlying causes and connections
- I2 – synthesizing evidence from multiple sources
- I3 – designing ways to answer their questions
- I4 – acquiring the skills to evaluate arguments and evidence critically
- I5 – developing independent, nuanced, and thoughtful analyses
- I7 – communicating their findings effectively and persuasively through written, oral, experiential, visual, or other appropriate methods

Because the Psychology department has more than 35 majors, we took a random sample of 15 senior Psychology majors and assessed their work in our Cluster C capstone course called History and Systems (PSYC 425) on VSL goals I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, and I7, which is the capstone course taken by the vast majority of our majors.

The following pie charts reflect our consensus after a department-wide discussion about the performance of the 15 randomly selected students during our Spring 2020 assessment meeting.

For I1 and I2
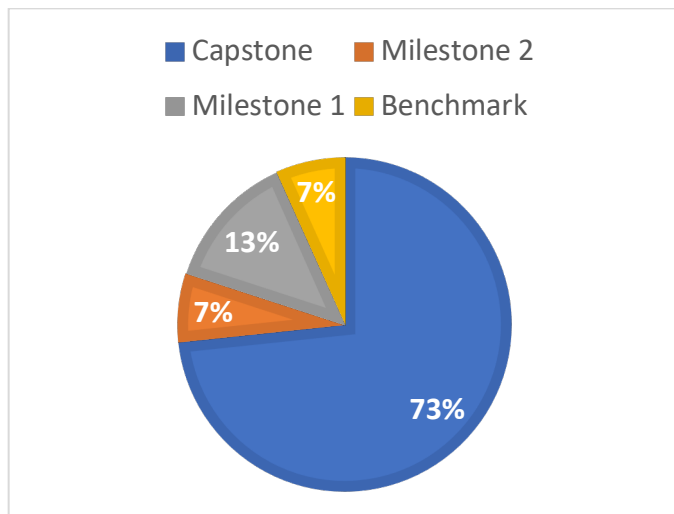
For I3, I4, I5, and I7
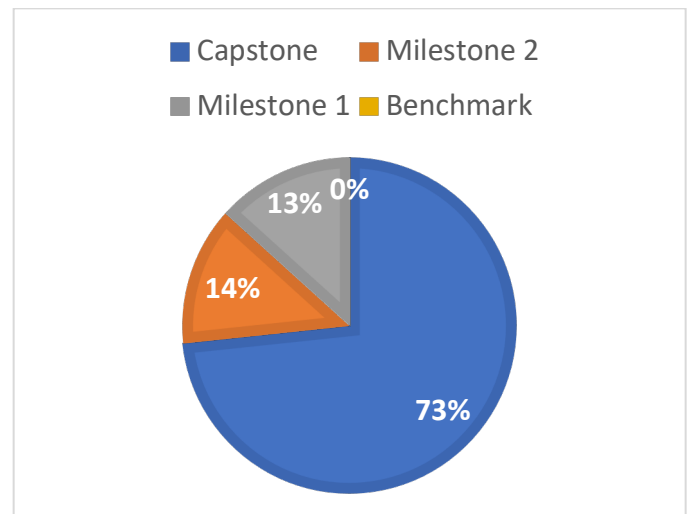
In looking at these results, we were pleased to see that the majority of our students are meeting the Capstone requirements for VSL goals I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, and I7. And, we did note that one of our majors was still at the most basic (Benchmark) level for investigating and researching underlying causes and connections (I1) and synthesizing evidence for multiple sources (I2). But, we did not think that this one student's performance was indicative of a need to rethink our major at this time. Overall, we are quite satisfied with the strong evidence of student learning in History and Systems and we believe that the combination of this course and requiring our students to prepare for and take a Psychology Major Field Test (MFT) is allowing us to meet VSL goals I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, and I7 as a department. We are also pleased to see this evidence of meeting these VSL goals in an

organic way, because we have not structured to course to intentionally teach toward the learning goals. We did not think that any changes to our curriculum would be warranted on the basis of this assessment.

That said, our other options for Cluster C capstone courses are qualitatively different than History and Systems. For example, our Advanced Research course (PSYC 480) involves a start-to-finish research projects that students do in collaborative groups and our Psychology Practicum course (PSYC 415) involves 100 hours of work in (and reflecting on) a community placement doing the kind of work that a counselor might undertake. Because these three options are so different, we should really assess all three. But, we have only been able to offer Advanced Research one time in the last 6 years and it is unclear whether we will continue to offer Psychology Practicum because identifying placement sites has become more challenging and the course has only been able to enroll 5 students for the past few years. So, if we are able to offer these other Cluster C courses, we should really assess those, as well, because the nature of these classes likely means that students are exposed to more synthesis and research activities.

Part 2: Psychology Department Assessment of our departmental learning goals

Going in to the 2019-2020 academic year, we had intended to create a rubric for our first departmental learning goal ("To help students develop the capacity to think scientifically about behavior" – see rubric in Appendix A) and our second departmental learning goal ("To produce in [students] an appreciation for human diversity" – see rubric in Appendix B) and to assess some of our departmental courses for 2019-2020 using these two rubrics to determine if our courses were meeting the goals we set out for ourselves. We did create both rubrics and then assess classes in Fall 2019 using these rubrics.

But, in November 2019, we were asked to undertake a large-scale revision of our student assessment plan based on feedback from the Assessment Committee and this revision became the biggest assessment task we undertook this year (you already have a copy of our updated SAP, which was submitted by Leslie Templeton on 2/28/2020). Based on feedback from the Assessment committee, our re-visioning of our student assessment plan asked us to consider matching our learning goals to updated learning goals from the American Psychological Association in 2013, which required a new curricular mapping because of switching from 6 to 5 learning goals. One of the consequences of this was that our previous second learning goal about "appreciation for human diversity" disappeared, although the idea is reflected in the other 5 learning goals. As a result, we were only able to assess the previous Learning Goal #1 (which is the updated Learning Goal #2). In addition, the rubrics reflect the goals we had at the beginning of the year and the ways we have broken down those goals doesn't map quite as well to the updated learning goals as I'd like. So, we are in a really challenging situation because we updated our SAP at the request of the Assessment Committee in the middle of this year, but the data we collected to discuss this year was based on the SAP we had when we started the year, meaning this data is helpful, but not as helpful as it could have been. So, I will only discuss our assessment of previous Learning Goal #1 ("To help students develop the capacity to think scientifically about behavior"), which has turned into our new Learning Goal #2 ("Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking").

In addition, Appendix C is our updated Psychology Department Cycle of Assessment, because we were only able to assess one learning goal this year, which changes the timing of Assessment moving forward.
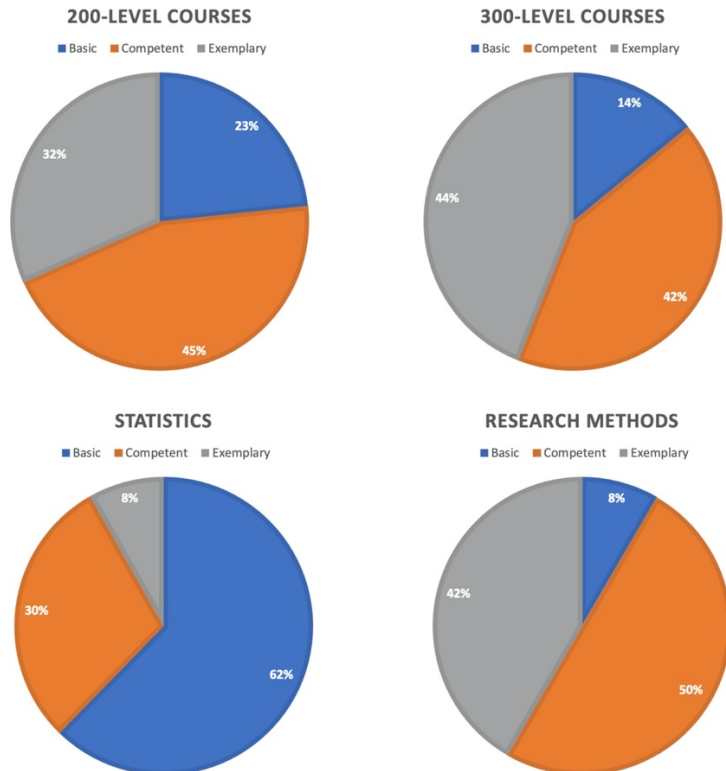
Assessing 2019-2020 Learning Goal #2 ("Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking")

In our current updated, SAP, we define several sub-components of this goal. Although because of their late addition to our assessment work, we did not do the specific tailoring that we likely will in future assessment cycles. Our second learning goal reads:
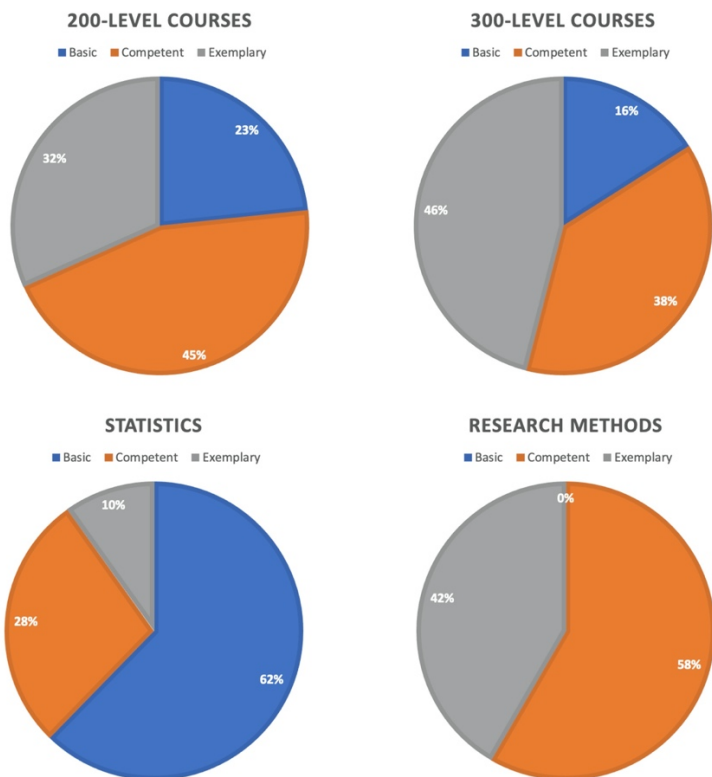
> **(2) Scientific inquiry and critical thinking. Students should be able to**
> **(2.1) use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological phenomena,**
> **(2.2) demonstrate psychology information literacy,**
> **(2.3) engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving,**
> **(2.4) interpret, design, and conduct basic psychological research, and**
> **(2.5) incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific inquiry.**

In our 2018-2019 SAP, we decided this general goal using a rubric, which is provided here as Appendix A. Even though we do not necessarily plan to use rubrics moving forward, I wanted to share the data that we collected in Fall 2019 to assess this learning goal. We split the rubric into three components: basic knowledge, application and extension, and critical thinking skills. Because we think this happens differently for our 200-level courses (targeting advanced first year students and sophomores) and our 300-level courses (targeting juniors and seniors), I have provided a pie chart that collapses across the 200-level (PSYC 230 and PSYC 240) and 300-level (PSYC 300, PSYC 330, and PSYC 385) courses being assessed.
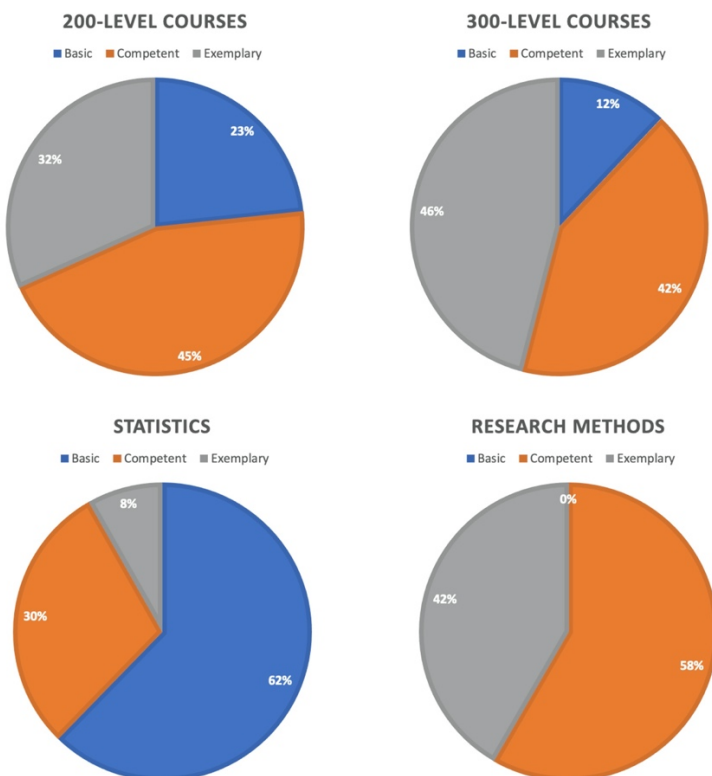
1. Basic Knowledge of scientific methodology (content, vocabulary, steps, research design)

2. Application and Extension based on scientific research

200-LEVEL COURSES
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 23%
- 45%
- 32%

300-LEVEL COURSES
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 16%
- 38%
- 46%

STATISTICS
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 62%
- 28%
- 10%

RESEARCH METHODS
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 58%
- 42%
- 0%

3. Critical thinking skills (particularly those related to bring an informed consumer of knowledge)

200-LEVEL COURSES
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 23%
- 45%
- 32%

300-LEVEL COURSES
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 12%
- 42%
- 46%

STATISTICS
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 62%
- 30%
- 8%

RESEARCH METHODS
■ Basic ■ Competent ■ Exemplary

- 58%
- 42%
- 0%

In our discussion about our use of the rubric we created for this learning goal, we realized that it didn't work very well. We wanted to actually try our using the rubric, but this led to the realization that we were trying to compare things that didn't make sense. For example, some 300-level courses come with a lab and some do not, meaning the type of application opportunities offered by classes differed in important ways. In addition, we realized that we needed to get better consensus across people evaluating the same course after noting that one Statistics professor thought all 30 of her students were at a Basic level of "Basic Knowledge", while the other Statistics professor thought that 8 students were at a Basic level, 18 were at a Competent level, and 5 were at an Exemplary level. So, our discussion of our use of this rubric made us realize that there wasn't a lot that was useful in our collection of this data and we realized that we needed extensive discussion about how we might use these rubrics more effectively in the future and whether or not we wanted to continue using rubrics to try to assess our departmental learning goals.

In our February 2020 updated departmental SAP, we identified four ways in which we would assess learning goal #2, which are discussed below.

A. The Major Field Test (MFT). On the Spring 2020 MFT, which is taken by our graduating seniors, 34 students received As, 8 students received Bs, and 2 students received Cs. This performance is very strong, and comparable to previous years, which is particularly impressive given that our seniors took the MFT *immediately* after finding out the stressful and disappointing information that they would be leaving campus due to COVID-19. The strong performance by our majors suggests that they are getting a well-rounded education that is teaching them to use scientific reasoning, develop psychology information literacy, and interpret psychological research, because all of these things are assessed on the MFT.

B. Professional Presentations by Students. This year, we had 13 students give professional presentations. Of that total, 5 students gave professional presentations in-person at a national Psychology conference, 4 students gave professional presentations at online conferences (after the in-person conferences in Spring 2020 were cancelled), 1 student gave an on-campus presentation, and 3 students gave presentations to their project supervisors over Microsoft Teams. It also seems important that I mention that we typically have a *large* number of students present at the Arkansas Symposium for Psychology Students at UCA. But, because that conference was held virtually in April 2020, after Hendrix students had all left campus, we only had 4 students take advantage of that opportunity.

C. Experiential Learning Projects by Students. This year we supervised experiential learning projects for 41 students, ranging from internships to research experiences to service work. The vast majority of these experiential learning projects were internships and research opportunities directly related to the study of Psychology.

D. Results of the Senior Survey. Our discussion of the Senior Survey is always the data from the previous year, so the data we discussed was collected in Spring 2019 and provided by the class of 2019. On the senior survey, we ask 8 Likert-style questions on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) that are designed to get at this learning goal and results are presented below:

KNOWLEDGE: My experience in psychology courses contributed toward the development of the following kinds of knowledge:	MEAN	Standard Deviation
Appreciating psychology as a scientific way of thinking about and understanding human behavior	1.11	0.32
Understanding the research methods used by psychologists to study behavior	1.20	0.40
Appreciating individual differences and diversity across human cultures, e.g., age, gender ethnicity, race, religion	1.43	0.84
Understanding how psychology is linked to fundamental issues in the larger world	1.40	0.60

SKILLS: My experience in psychology courses contributed to the development of the following kinds of skills:	MEAN	Standard Deviation
Thinking critically, e.g., evaluating evidence, seeing problems from multiple points of view, applying theory to real problems	1.29	0.61
Finding and using information necessary to answer questions from a scientific viewpoint	1.29	0.45
Using statistics as a tool of decision making	1.77	0.76
Designing scientific research approaches to important issues	1.51	0.65
Synthesizing and integrating what I know across different areas of study and learning	1.31	0.52

Our general conclusion after assessing Learning Goal #2

After looking at the assessment data above, the Psychology department feels that student performance (on the MFT), student engagement (in professional presentations and experiential learning projects), and student ratings (on the senior survey) all point to the fact that our major meets our second Learning Goal. In addition to the numerical information presented, many of the open-ended comments made by our seniors on the senior survey also point to their belief that the major has helped them develop scientific inquiry and critical thinking skills. And, evaluating all of the assessment data, we believe that we do not need to undertake any revisions in our approach to meeting this learning goal.

Finally, in this year's assessment meeting, we also discussed the student answers to the Spring 2020 senior survey questions about the extent to which the psychology department helped our majors navigate the transition to online education in Spring 2020. And, we were happy to read that our graduating seniors thought we helped them a good deal (with an average of 6.27/7.00 and 31 students responding) and students shared comments like this: "I can't think of anything the department could have done better. Professors who have been keeping conversations with us about how we are responding to the changes in assignments and workload provide the flexibility for students to address their limitations in this situation and maintain an ongoing flexible approach that makes everyone feel heard and accepted. I don't think there is any perfect way of handling this, so keep listening to students' concerns is the best way to approach this." We all agree that we have work to do, but we were glad to read that our efforts to help our students navigate the transition, and our flexibility, were seen as helpful for our majors.

Appendix A. Departmental Rubric for 2019-2020 Psychology Department Learning Goal #1 – To help students develop the capacity to think scientifically about behavior

Category	Basic	Competent	Exemplary
1. Basic Knowledge of Scientific Methodology (content, vocabulary, steps, research design)	- Can recognize the language of research - Beginning to comprehend the scientific method - With help, can identify and acquire appropriate sources	- Competent in the language of research - Comprehends the scientific method - Able to identify and acquire appropriate sources	- Understands and can apply the language of research independently and with ease -Strong comprehension of the scientific method -Able to identify and acquire the most relevant sources
2. Application and Extension based on scientific research	- Able to understand or make superficial connections across multiple sources of information and contexts when provided - Able to understand hypothesis testing and recognize its application - Is satisfied with understanding presented material, without further questioning	- Makes some connections between multiple sources of information or contexts - Able to devise, measure, and assess hypotheses - Questions learned material further, but in unsophisticated ways (e.g., let's not use college students in future research)	-Frequently able to make meaningful connections across multiple sources of information and contexts -Demonstrates ability to independently devise, measure, and assess novel hypotheses -Uses knowledge gained to generate sophisticated follow-up questions
3. Critical thinking skills (particularly those related to being an informed consumer of knowledge)	- Can recognize that not all sources are equally credible - Struggles to summarize and integrate sources of information - Often relies on intuition and personal experience to make decisions in research contexts	- Ability to effectively analyze source credibility - Able to summarize multiple sources of information, but struggles with integration - Empirical orientation and openness to considering diverse viewpoints based on conflicting theories and data	-Ability to effectively analyze source credibility and think critically about quality of source content -Able to summarize multiple sources of information and integrate them to develop new understanding -Makes decisions that are empirically supported and can see how diverse viewpoints can be reconciled

Appendix B. Departmental Rubric for 2019-2020 Psychology Department Learning Goal #2 – "To produce in [students] an appreciation for human diversity"

Category	Basic	Competent	Exemplary
1. Awareness of and appreciation for diversity across groups of people, including diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, and gender.	- **Shows awareness** of the ways in which groups of people differ from one another - **Shows awareness** of the psychological and societal factors that contribute to group differences -**Shows awareness** of the implications of group differences for the individual and society.	- **Understands** the ways in which groups of people differ from one another - **Understands** the psychological and societal factors that contribute to diversity and can articulate how those factors influence experiences and thoughts about social groups -**Understands** the implications of group differences for the individual and society.	- Shows a **sophisticated understanding *and* appreciation** of the ways in which groups of people differ from one another -**Able to integrate information from multiple sub-disciplines of psychology to explain** the psychological and societal factors that contribute to diversity and can articulate how those factors influence experiences and thoughts about social groups -**Able to integrate information from multiple sub-disciplines of psychology** to articulate the implications of group differences for individuals and society.
2. Awareness of and appreciation for individual differences, including diversity in behavior, cognition, perception, development, physiology, and well-being (or mental health).	- **Shows awareness** of the biological, psychological, and societal factors that contribute to individual differences in thought and behavior. -**Shows awareness** of the implications of individual differences for the individual and society.	- **Understands** the biological, psychological, and societal factors that contribute to individual differences and can articulate how those factors influence how people think about themselves and their environment. -**Understands** the implications of individual differences for the individual and society.	- **Shows a sophisticated understanding *and* appreciation of** the biological, psychological, and societal factors that contribute to individual differences in thought and behavior. -**Able to integrate information from multiple sub-disciplines of psychology to explain** the factors that contribute to diversity and to articulate how those factors influence how people think about themselves and their environment. -**Able to integrate information from multiple sub-disciplines of psychology to articulate** the implications of individual differences for the individual and society.
3. Capacity to apply an understanding of diversity to confront individual and societal problems related to diversity and inclusion.	- **Shows awareness of superficial connections** between their knowledge of diversity and real-world problems - **Does not demonstrate ability** to independently use knowledge about diversity to generate solutions to real-world problems	- **Makes some connections** between their knowledge of diversity and real-world problems - **Demonstrates superficial application** of knowledge about diversity to generate solutions to real-world problems	- **Frequently able to make meaningful connections** between their knowledge of diversity and real-world problems - **Demonstrates a sophisticated application** of knowledge about diversity to generate solutions to real-world problems
4. Capacity to apply an understanding of diversity to develop, support, and contribute valuably to a learning environment or community that values diversity and inclusion.	-**Shows awareness** that their attitudes and behaviors can contribute positively and/or negatively to a community of diverse individuals and groups. -**Does not demonstrate** ability to consider perspectives of others -**Does not use knowledge** about diversity to shape and improve their community.	-**Understands the connections** between their attitudes and behaviors and the way others experience a community of diverse individuals and people. -**Demonstrates some ability** to consider perspectives of others -**Uses knowledge** about diversity to consider ways to shape and improve their community.	-**Appreciates the connections** between their attitudes and behaviors and the way others experience a community of diverse individuals and people. -**Demonstrates sophisticated ability** to consider perspectives of others -**Uses knowledge about diversity to generate** and develop ways to shape and improve their community.

Appendix C. Psychology Department's Cycle of Assessment – Updated 5-28-20

Year	Knowledge Base	Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking	Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World	Communication	Professional Development
19-20		2019-20			
20-21	2020-21			2020-21	
21-22			2021-22		2021-22
22-23		2022-23		2022-23	
23-24	2023-24		2023-24		2023-24
24-25		2024-25		2024-25	
25-26	2025-26		2025-26		2025-26
26-27		2026-27		2026-27	
27-28	2027-28		2027-28		2027-28
28-29		2028-29		2028-29	
29-30	2029-30		2029-30		2029-30
Direct	Major Field Test (ETS) in Psychology	Major Field Test (ETS) in Psychology			
	Professional presentations by students	Professional presentations by students	Professional presentations by students	Professional presentations by students	Professional presentations by students
	In-class oral presentations by students			In-class oral presentations by students	In-class oral presentations by students
				Students earning Writing 2 credit in coursework	
	Internships and Practicum		Internships and Practicum	Internships and Practicum	Internships and Practicum
	Experiential Learning Projects	Experiential Learning Projects	Experiential Learning Projects	Experiential Learning Projects	Experiential Learning Projects
Indirect	Senior Survey	Senior Survey	Senior Survey	Senior Survey	Senior Survey