

Psychology MA

G - Foundational Competence

Goal Description:

Students develop broad-based knowledge and competence in the scientific, theoretical, and conceptual foundations of general psychology.

Providing Department: Psychology MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

LO - Foundational Competence

Learning Objective Description:

Students demonstrate competency in the areas of general psychology through synthesis and integration of scientific, methodological, and theoretical foundations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

ICF - Comprehensive Exams

Indicator Description:

Students demonstrate through a written comprehensive examination their knowledge of and ability to integrate the core areas of general psychology.

Criterion Description:

100% of students must pass comprehensive examination prior to graduation. Students are given a written exam of which they must complete 5 of 6 questions listed, all from foundational classes required. Criteria for passing are: the student must provide integrative responses that reveal an understanding of the information and experiences to which they have been exposed; they must provide complete references for all works cited using proper APA style; they must demonstrate their knowledge of the science in the field and support their answers, arguments, theories, logic, etc. with scientific research studies when applicable. Each question will be scored using a rubric for each question by two faculty members who have expertise in the particular area. An example of the [revised 2020] comprehensive examination rubric is attached.

Attached Files

 [Revised MA General Psyc Comps Rubric](#)

Findings Description:

During 2021-2022 AY, 75% (3 out of 4) passed the comprehensive exam. Two of four passed the full exam on the first attempt and one student achieved a partial pass on the first attempt. The latter was able to improve and pass the failed portions of the exam on her second attempt in summer 2022.

One student failed 4 of 5 parts of the comprehensive exam in spring 2022 and will retake the entire exam in fall 2022.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

A - Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

Given that 50% of students did not pass the comprehensive exam on first attempt this past spring, the MA committee will consider ways of improving the students' preparation for the exam. The Handbook has already been revised to include additional recommendations to students for studying and taking the exam. Other possible actions might include an annual workshop that will present tips for success on the comprehensive exam.

G - Research Competence

Goal Description:

Students develop increased competence in research methodology and statistical analyses.

Providing Department: Psychology MA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

LO - Research Competence

Learning Objective Description:

Students demonstrate knowledge and skills related to competency in research methodology and statistical analyses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

ICF - Research Competence

Indicator Description:

Students will participate in original research activities. As a research-oriented program, all students in the program will (a) take Psychology 5388, Advanced Experimental Design, and (b) either complete a research thesis or will have been actively engaged in a faculty member's program of original research.

Criterion Description:

Students will demonstrate research competency when they (a) have passed PSYC 5388, Experimental Design, with a grade of B or better, and (b) successfully completed a thesis research project and/or actively participated in research lab activities (e.g., data collection and management, IRB application, data analyses, poster/paper submissions/presentations, faculty mentor report).

In the 5388 course, one of the requirements is to write three papers in APA format. The first two are intended to train the student in the proper format and the third paper is written in APA format and submitted for evaluation by the instructor as well as an independent examiner using the attached rubric. The paper is scored with respect to particular sections with a minimum score of 80% being the threshold for the designation "Acceptable." A copy of the rubric for this assignment is attached.

Attached Files

 [Paper Grading Sheet](#)

Findings Description:

100% of students taking Experimental Design in 2021-2022 passed with a B or better.

66% (2/3) graduating students defended their thesis during the past AY, but one graduating student chose not to participate in research due to her employment. Similarly, 66% (4/6) first year students are currently working on a thesis and/or are involved in a faculty research lab.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

A - Research Competence

Action Description:

A number of students did not conduct a thesis, nor participate in research labs. With the name change to Experimental Psychology in 2023 and accompanying curricular changes that include the option of a pedagogy concentration, the committee will consider modifications to the Research Competence goal, LO, and ICF. Experimental faculty will create a capstone project rubric/rating form for pedagogy option.

A - Research Project

Action Description:

The thesis rating form was unsuccessful, and was determined to be unwieldy and unnecessary. As a result, this form will not be used going forward.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Closing Summary

Strategic planning with the MA Psych Programs Committee throughout the 2020-2021 AY resulted in the recommendation to (a) increase number of students admitted each year, and (b) begin phasing out the General Psychology MA Program and start a new Experimental Psychology Masters Program. This name aligns better with the program's aim to produce graduates with research skills and with the expertise of experimental faculty who mentor students entering this program. When the new program is implemented, because many graduates seek teaching positions (in community colleges, and doctoral TA positions), the committee agreed that a second aim of the program would be to prepare students as higher education teachers of psychology. As a result, the new program's curriculum will include a psychology pedagogy course and a requirement for a research/pedagogy capstone project for students who elect the non-thesis option of the degree. Other curriculum changes will also be made, e.g. adding courses in multivariate statistics and psychometrics, and requiring other previously optional courses like Learning, History & Systems, Graduate Seminar in Experimental Psychology.

Program director is currently working with SHSU Office of Planning and Assessment to develop the new program application; although we had hoped for a 2022 implementation date, that may not be feasible due to the 3-part application process, with each part requiring approximately 3+ months to gain approval.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

In 2021, the program admitted 7 students, an increase of 1 student over the 2020 cohort. The program continues to aim for 8 students per year. The name of the General Psychology MA program will change to the Experimental Psychology MA program in 2023. The Experimental faculty are finalizing proposed curriculum revisions; if they do so in time, the revisions will be included in catalog changes this fall. To that end, a course title change form and two Form B's are in process to add two new courses to the degree plan (i.e., Advanced Statistics II, Teaching of Psychology). Library approval has been obtained for the two new courses and the Chair is seeking input from other departmental Chairs.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary:

The General/Experimental Psychology MA program has several goals for improvement in the coming year. First, MA committee will consider ways of improving the students' preparation for the comprehensive exam, including revisions to the Handbook and offering an annual workshop that will present tips for success on the comprehensive exam.

Next, the MA committee will consider whether participation in research is still expected for every student, given that a number of MA General students did not conduct a thesis, nor participate in research labs. With upcoming curricular changes that include the option of a pedagogy concentration, the MA committee will re-evaluate the Research Competence goal, LO, and ICF to determine if modification is needed. Experimental faculty will create a capstone project rubric/rating form for pedagogy option.

Finally, once the name is officially changed, the program will begin exploring possible avenues for promoting the Experimental Psychology MA program and increasing the size of the applicant pool. In particular, the committee will examine ways to recruit a diverse pool of qualified applicants.