

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 the Statistics/Experimental Design question and 4 of 5 of the remaining questions, all from foundational classes required. Criteria for passing: 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 by two faculty members who have expertise in the particular area. An average score of 15 or higher is needed to pass each question attempted and students must pass all 5 questions. An example of the [revised 2020] comprehensive examination rubric is attached.

Attached Files

 [Revised MA General Psyc Comps Rubric](#)

Findings Description:

During 2022-2023 AY, 5 second-year students took the comprehensive exam for the first time in spring 2023. Four of five examinees, or 80%, passed the comprehensive exam in spring. One student achieved a fail/partial pass, but was able to improve and pass the failed portion of the exam on his next attempt in summer 2023 in order to graduate in August 2023. In addition, one third-year student, who failed the comprehensive exam in spring 2022, subsequently completed remediation and retook the exam but failed again, resulting in his dismissal from the program.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

A - Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

Although more students passed the comprehensive exam this spring than in previous years, many students continued to struggle and scored quite low on multiple exam questions. Committee discussed ideas for improvement in summer 2023 and identified possible steps to be taken in the coming year: (a) Time allotted for the exam will be increased from 24 hours to 72 hours, (b) The

instructor of the graduate seminar, which is taken in the first semester of the program, will cover expectations for the comprehensive exams and provide guidance on how to prepare for the exam throughout their time in the program, (c) faculty will create study sheets for each major domain/question to assist students in exam preparation, and (d) a new rubric will be developed for implementation in the coming year.

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) pass the Stats/Experimental Design question on the Comprehensive Exam.

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 passed the Statistics/Experimental Design comprehensive exam question with a score of 15 or higher.

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% (4/4) of MA General/Experimental Psychology students taking Experimental Design in 2022-2023 passed with a B or better.

50% (2/4) of graduating second-year students either defended a thesis or participated actively in faculty research labs during the past AY, and a fifth student in this cohort decided to delay graduation by one year in order to complete a thesis. 50% (2/4) graduating second-year students chose not to participate in research due to their employment responsibilities.

Among first-year students, 75% (3/4) are either involved in a faculty research lab or working on a thesis, while the 4th student in the cohort is not involved in research due to family and work commitments.

A - Research Competence

Action Description:

The criterion for this LO has been inconsistently met for several years in a row. With data indicating that over 70% of MA psychology students work at least part-time and some have family responsibilities, the MA committee will change the criterion to remove research involvement in a faculty lab. To ensure research competence for all students, the MA committee identified two additional changes to be implemented (a) beginning 2023-24 AY, all students will be required to answer the previously optional Statistics/Experimental Design question as one of the five (out of six possibilities) questions they must answer for the Comprehensive exam, and (b) a second advanced Statistics course will be added to the required curriculum in the 2024-2025 catalog.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

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

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.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

To enhance student preparation for the comprehensive exams, the MA Psychology Handbook was revised last year to include more detail about the comprehensive exam. In addition, two Experimental faculty offered a Comps preparation workshop for students in January of 2023.

With data indicating that over 70% of MA psychology students work at least part-time and some have families, both of which limit research involvement, the MA committee voted to revise the research criterion to remove research involvement in a faculty lab and identified alternative means of assessment for the future (see Action for Research Competence). After a great deal of consideration, the MA Psychology committee also determined that the pedagogy concentration is not currently viable from a practical standpoint (e.g., class numbers, faculty burden for capstone/project). Although faculty interest remains, the decision was made to not pursue a pedagogy concentration for the time being.

When the program name changed to Experimental Psychology in January 2023, the program was advertised to SHSU undergraduates via Psi Chi, the Psychology Club and the CHSS social media pages. In addition, brochures were revised and printed, then distributed at a SWPA convention and also made available in the department office.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary:

In 2023-2024 AY, The MA Experimental Psychology program will focus on improvement to the comprehensive exam process. To that end, several revisions will be made to the process: (a) Time allotted for the exam will be increased from 24 hours to 72 hours, (b) The instructor of the graduate seminar, which is taken in the first semester of the program, will cover expectations for the comprehensive exams and provide guidance on how to prepare for the exam throughout their time in the program, (c) Faculty will create study sheets for each major domain/question to assist students in exam preparation, and (d) a new rubric will be developed for implementation in the coming year.

Although the program is removing research involvement in faculty labs as a criterion for research competence, the MA committee will initiate two additional changes to ensure research competence for all students: (a) students will be required to answer the previously optional Statistics/Experimental Design Comprehensive exam question as one of the five (out of six possibilities) questions they must answer, and (b) a second advanced Statistics course will be added to the required curriculum in the 2024-2025 catalog.