

# Psychology MA

## Foundation Competence

Goal Description:

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

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS-----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Foundational Competency

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

Comprehensive Exams

Indicator Description:

Students demonstrate through a written comprehensive examination their ability to integrate the 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 7 questions listed. 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 comprehensive examination and the question rubric is attached.

Attached Files

 [ComprehensiveExample1.doc](#)

Findings Description:

During the past academic year, zero MA-General students took comprehensive examinations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Actions-Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

During the current academic year, new and second-year students will meet regularly with the coordinator of the MA program to discuss expectations of the program faculty. The students also will be encouraged to speak with individual faculty as to what they may expect on the comprehensive examination. Also, we will encourage students who have taken the exam to advise new students with respect to efficient and effective study techniques for the exam and for their classes in general.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

With the lack of students in the MA-General program, we had none take the comprehensive exams during this cycle. That will change in the next academic year.

## Research Competence

Goal Description:

Students develop increased competence in research methodology and statistical analyses.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS-----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Research Competency

Learning Objective Description:

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

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Research Project

Indicator Description:

Students' production of original research. This program is considered to be a research-oriented program. Therefore, all students in the program will either complete a research thesis or will have been engaged in a faculty member's program of original research along with having taken Psychology 5388, Advanced Experimental Design.

**Criterion Description:**

Students will demonstrate research competency when they either have completed a thesis or have enrolled in PSY 5388, Graduate Experimental Design. A common rubric will be used to rate the thesis; students will be required to reach a score of at least 80/100 to be considered thesis-complete. 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 written comments are supplied to the students to this end. The third paper is written in APA format and submitted for evaluation by the instructor and by 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:**

During the past academic year, nine students were enrolled in Psychology 5388 and all met the specified criteria for that course. Seven were doctoral and 2 were MA students. Again, all met criterion.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Research Project**

**Action Description:**

Although none of the MA-General Program students were in the PSYC 5388 class this past semester, all of the Ph.D. and MA students mastered APA style with little or no problem. This speaks highly of our attempts to raise student use of, and importance of, APA style.

Two second-year MA-General students worked on research projects with Dr. Anastasi. One recently successfully completed and defended her MA thesis.

During the upcoming academic year, students will be advised to become more highly involved in all aspects of research projects undertaken by faculty members in the department. This should include: design; hypothesis testing; data collection and analysis; and interpreting the meaning and importance of the results within the scientific community.

## Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

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

Incoming and second-year students will meet with the chair of the department at the beginning of the academic year. At that time, the chair will attempt to impress upon them:

1. the importance of successfully preparing for the comprehensive exams;
2. the importance of mastering APA style;
3. the importance of becoming involved in research;
4. With respect to numbers, we will continue to host graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program and attempt to make them more aware of our program and will mention to our MA Clinical students who may be wait-listed for that program that the General program is available.

Also, the chair will sit down with the new coordinator of the MA programs and the new coordinator of the School program and discuss ideas to make our programs more attractive.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

Incoming and second-year students will meet with the chair of the department at the beginning of the academic year. At that time, the chair will attempt to impress upon them:

1. the importance of successfully preparing for the comprehensive exams--This seems to have had an effect given that the numbers of MA Clinical students passing comprehensive examinations on the first try was exceptional.

2. the importance of mastering APA style--This also appears to have been effective with students in the Graduate Research Methods classes having little trouble with APA style.

3. the importance of becoming involved in research--All of the General students have been involved in publishable research; one is preparing to defend her thesis early next month.

4. With respect to numbers, we will continue to host graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program and attempt to make them more aware of our program and will mention to our MA Clinical students who may be wait-listed for that program that the General program is available--We didn't have very many students enter the program in the fall semester of 2015. For the fall 2016 semester, we are expecting a cohort of five students.

Also, the chair will sit down with the new coordinator of the MA programs and the new coordinator of the School program and discuss ideas to make our programs more attractive.--Coordinators for the MA programs and the School Psychology program are going to make an especial effort at contacting schools throughout Texas to make our programs better known. Also, coordinators are planning visits to universities and colleges in the Houston area in an attempt to attract qualified students. We did have much better success in attracting students for the upcoming academic year and we will attempt to build on that success in the future.

## **Plan for Continuous Improvement**

### **Closing Summary:**

1. Graduate students taking comprehensive examinations will be given instruction on what to expect and various strategies in handling the questions. This should enable them to better focus on, and better handle, the way they approach the exam. We also will hone our questions to make the wording relatively unambiguous. As always, we will continue to guide our students to ensure success.

2. During the course of the semester in which Psychology 5388, APA style and vigilance will be stressed on the research portion of the papers. The instructor in the 5388 class employed started the students off well and then provided constant feedback. With this approach, all students did well and we will continue this process in the upcoming academic years.

3. There is a concern about the numbers of students applying and being accepted into this program; this year only one female student was admitted and is doing quite well. The Hispanic male that had been admitted the year before, during the fall 2015 semester, failed the Advanced Physiological Psychology course and was dropped from the program. The issue was that he chose not to attend class and then did horribly on each examination. In the future, when this happens, the student will be referred to the chair of the department and then to the Dean of the Graduate School.

To increase our numbers, Dr. Crosby, when he speaks of the School Psychology program at Prairie View A&M University and Lamar University, will put in a pitch for our other MA programs as well—this year, we have five students choosing to enroll in our MA General program. This is better but the numbers are still too low for us to be happy. We will continue to host graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program and attempt to make them more aware of our program and will mention to our MA Clinical students who may be wait-listed for that program that the General program is available. Also, the chair will sit down with the new coordinator of the MA programs and the new coordinator of the School program and discuss ideas to make our programs more attractive.