# University of Alaska Anchorage

# BA/BS in Psychology

# Educational Effectiveness

# Assessment Plan

**Version**

**Adopted by**

**The Psychology Department Undergraduate Studies Committee faculty on**

**April 26, 2017**

Reviewed with curriculum by the college committee: 9/5/24

Reviewed with curriculum by the dean: 9/5/24

Reviewed with curriculum by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 11/15/24

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 12/6/24

Reviewed with curriculum changes by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 10/7/22

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 10/7/22

Reviewed with curriculum changes by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 1/21/22

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 2/4/22

Reviewed with curriculum changes by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 12/6/19

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 3/6/20

Reviewed with curriculum changes by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 4/20/18

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 5/4/18

Reviewed by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 5/5/17

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 5/5/17

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## Mission Statement

## Program Introduction

This document defines the expected educational outcomes for the Psychology Department’s Baccalaureate (BA/BS) degree program, and outlines a plan for assessing the achievement of the stated outcomes during 2016-17.

The Psychology Department’s Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) consists of all full-time faculty (tenure-track and term) teaching undergraduate courses in the department (list of faculty appears below). The USC meets every Wednesday from 11:30am-12:30pm during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Faculty serving on the Psychology Department Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) in 2016-2017 include:

Dr. Gwen Lupfer

Dr. Robert Boeckmann

Dr. Veronica Howard

Prof. Phil Jordan

Dr. Maria Ippolito

Dr. Anayansi Lombardero

Dr. Mychal Machado (*USC Coordinator*)

Dr. Eric Murphy (Psychology Department Director)

Dr. Yasuhiro Ozuru (*Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for BA/BS*)

Dr. Karen Ward

## Assessment Process Introduction

The program outcomes for the BA/BS in Psychology were originally developed by the USC in 2000, and have been reviewed and updated every Fall (most recently in April 2017). Dr. Yasuhiro Ozuru, Associate Professor of Psychology, has been serving as the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator for the baccalaureate degree in Psychology since 2000.

This document defines the expected student learning outcomes for the BA/BS in Psychology program and outlines a plan for assessing the achievement of the stated outcomes.

The student learning outcomes were recently revised during the Undergraduate Study Committee meeting on DATE (will get this). The revision centered on: (1) having student learning outcomes that were measurable in an objective manner, and (2) having outcomes that clearly reflected what students are expected to achieve by completing the training in the program. As such, the meeting proceeded to reframe the outcome by specifically focusing on the performance and ability level that students are expected to acquire when completing the BA/BS degree in Psychology.

The faculty met and accepted the outcomes and assessment processes in the Undergraduate Studies Committee weekly meeting on April 26, 2017.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) has determined a set of desired learning outcomes for students receiving a baccalaureate degree (BA or BS) in Psychology at UAA. These outcomes state that students completing a BA or BS in Psychology will:

1. Possess a broad knowledge of contemporary psychology.
2. Have experience conducting psychological research.
3. Be able to demonstrate skills in research design and data analysis.
4. Be prepared for advanced study in psychology and related disciplines.

### Table 1: Association of Assessment Measures to Program Outcomes

|  | PACAT Exit Exam | Independent study, Research Assistantship | Graduate School Acceptance | Theses, Presentations Publications |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Possess a broad knowledge of contemporary Psychology. | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Be able to demonstrate skills in research design and data analysis | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Have experience conducting psychological research | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Be prepared for advanced study in psychology and related disciplines. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

0 = Tool is not used to measure the associated objective.

1 = Tool is used to measure the associated objective.

### Assessment Measures

A description of the measures used in the assessment of the student learning outcomes and their implementation are summarized in Table 2. The measures and their relationships to the learning outcomes are listed in Table 1, above. There is a separate appendix for each measure that shows the measure itself and describes its use and the factors that affect the results.

### Table 2: Program Outcomes Assessment Measures and Administration

| **Tool** | **Description** | **Frequency/ Start Date** | **Collection Method** | **Administered by** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PACAT Exit Exam | Project in Area Concentration Achievement Testing (PACAT) in Psychology, a standardized exam that measures knowledge of psychology in 10 areas. National norms available for comparison. | Administered year round at University Center in the Testing Center. | Standardized multiple choice exam (see Appendix A, below) | UAA Testing Center. |
| # of student conducting independent studies in research and research assistantship | This will be a measure of students research experience | Administered during Exit Exams | Survey of faculty mentors | Outcomes Assessment Coordinator |
| Graduate School Acceptance Rate, University and Departmental Honors Graduates, and Undergraduate Research Grants | This is a measure of how well our students are prepared for advanced graduate training in the field of psychology. | Spring semesters | Survey of faculty mentors; Exit Survey (see above); Review of Records from Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship | Outcomes Assessment Coordinator |
| Number of students completing senior theses, conference presentations and publications | Conducting research is a critical component of an undergraduate education in psychology. This will be a measure of our students’ successes in this area. | Spring semesters | Survey of faculty mentors; enrollments in PSY 499; 397; 497; conference programs; | Outcomes Assessment Coordinator |

### Assessment Implementation & Analysis for Program Improvement

General Implementation Strategy

Overall, our assessment plan relies on information from the following sources: 1) scores on the nationally standardized PACAT exit exam; 2) records of senior thesis completion, graduate school acceptances, student publications, presentations, and grants, and enrollment and participation in independent research and research assistantships; and 3) self-reports provided by the students on the Exit Survey.

Method of Data Analysis and Formulation of Recommendations for Program Improvement

The program faculty will meet at least once a year to review the data collected using the assessment measures. This meeting should result in recommendations for program changes that are designed to enhance students meeting/exceeding the expected learning outcomes. The results of the data collection, an interpretation of the results, and the recommended programmatic changes will be forwarded to the College of Arts and Sciences Assessment Coordinators Committee by June 15th each year, and it will be submitted to Office of Academic Affairs every 5 years. A plan for implementing the recommended changes, including advertising the changes to all of the program’s stakeholders, will also be completed at this meeting.

The proposed programmatic changes may be any action or change in policy that the faculty deems as being necessary to improve performance relative to program outcomes. Recommended changes should also consider workload (faculty, staff, and students), budgetary, facilities, and other relevant constraints. A few examples of changes made by programs at UAA include:

* changes in course content, scheduling, sequencing, prerequisites, delivery methods, etc.
* changes in faculty/staff assignments
* changes in advising methods and requirements
* addition and/or replacement of equipment
* changes to facilities

Modification of the Assessment Plan

The faculty, after reviewing the collected data and the processes used to collect it, may decide to alter the assessment plan. Changes may be made to any component of the plan, including the outcomes, assessment measures, or any other aspect of the plan. The changes will be approved by the faculty of the program. The modified assessment plan will be forwarded to the dean/director’s office and the Office of Academic Affairs.

## Appendix A: PACAT Exit Exam

Measure Description:

Each semester, the Psychology Department administers an exit exam to graduating seniors. All students are required to take this exam prior to graduation. The exam is used only as an assessment tool; students do not need to attain a certain score on the exam to graduate, nor do scores appear on transcripts. Since 1991, this exit exam has been supplied and scored by the Project in Area Concentration Achievement Testing or PACAT. The exam measures knowledge of psychology in eight major areas; our curriculum requires coursework in all of these areas. The reports we receive allow us to examine how our students compare with other undergraduates nationwide.

Factors that affect the collected data:

Because students need to merely take the exam, and not achieve a certain score, the exam is not always taken seriously by students. All advisors and faculty are encouraged to speak with their advisees and students about the importance of the exit exam to the assessment of the program.

How to interpret the data:

This exam is used by the USC to assess outcome #1 (that our graduates should possess a broad knowledge of contemporary psychology), outcome #3 (that our graduates should be able to demonstrate skills in research design and data analysis), and outcome #4 (that graduates should be prepared for advanced study in psychology and related disciplines). We examine standard scores and percentile ranks for our students in each of the eight areas where we have required coursework, and overall. The table below shows recent scores and trend data on the exit exam.

| **Percentiles on ACAT Exit Exam 2013-2017** | **2013-2014** | **2014-2015** | **2015-2016** | **2016-2017** | **Weighted Average past 3 years 2014-2017** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Abnormal % | 63 | 61 | 60 | 57 | **59.40** |
| Developmental % | 48 | 56 | 57 | 54 | **55.77** |
| Exper. Design % | 67 | 59 | 66 | 57 | **61.02** |
| Learn./Cog. % | 64 | 71 | 69 | 55 | **65.37** |
| Personality % | 51 | 54 | 54 | 56 | **54.61** |
| Physiological % | 52 | 50 | 53 | 43 | **49.00** |
| Social % | 54 | 58 | 64 | 55 | **59.34** |
| Statistics % | 45 | 60 | 59 | 63 | **60.54** |
| Overall % | 59 | 64 | 67 | 59 | **63.60** |
| ***Number of Examinees*** | 68 | 67 | 79 | 64 | 210 |