**Oakland University Assessment Committee**

**Assessment Plan Template**

**Step 1: Basic Information**

Program Name: Psychology Department

School or College your program resides in: College of Arts and Sciences

Program Level (check all that apply):

Undergrad X

Master’s ☐

Doctoral ☐

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Current Assessment Contact Representative (& E-mail): Keith Williams ([william9@oakland.edu](mailto:william9@oakland.edu)), Mary Lewis ([eberly@oakland.edu](mailto:eberly@oakland.edu))

Current Department or Program Chair (& E-mail): Todd Shackelford ([shackelf@oakland.edu](mailto:shackelf@oakland.edu))

Current Dean (& E-mail): Kevin Corcoran ([corcoran@oakland.edu](mailto:corcoran@oakland.edu))

**Step 2: Type of Assessment Plan**

**Option A.** Programs that have an external accrediting agency other than the Higher Learning Commission may be eligible to use their accreditor’s response in lieu of following the UAC’s standard process. These programs use the UAC’s ‘external accreditation mapping’ form instead of this form. For more information, please contact the UAC/OIRA liaison Reuben Ternes ([ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu)). Programs without external accreditation should proceed to option B.

**Option B**. If you are not accredited by an external body (or your accreditor’s standards do not meet the standards set by the Higher Learning Commission), then proceed to Steps 3-5 to create your assessment plan. Members of the UAC are always willing to work with individuals from any department to develop or revise their assessment plans. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) has some very helpful tools for faculty and departments listed on their website ([www.oakland.edu/OIRA](http://www.oakland.edu/OIRA)). If at any time you have any questions, need any assistance, or would like to schedule a meeting with any UAC representatives, please contact the UAC and OIRA liaison, Reuben Ternes ([ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu)).

**Step 3: Aligning the OU Mission, Program Goals, Student Learning Outcomes, and Assessment Measures**

Please begin your program assessment plan by completing the table below. Use the “Table” menu in Word to add rows, merge cells, etc. as needed. [A completed table is presented as a sample on our website: XXXX.]

* In column 1, record what aspects of the OU Mission your program addresses.
* In column 2, record your program goals as they relate to the OU Mission.
* In column 3, record your program’s planned student learning outcomes related to each program goal.
* In column 4, record the assessment measure(s) that evaluate each student learning outcome (note: each learning outcome should have an associated assessment measure).
* Add rows to the table as necessary.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(1) OU Mission** | **(2) Program Goals** | **(3) Student Learning Outcomes** | **(4) Assessment Measures** |
| Successful Living  Career Preparation  Graduate School Preparation | Develop knowledge base in psychology | Explain behavior and mental processes using psychological concepts, principles, and overarching themes | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Career Preparation  Graduate School Preparation |  | Identify characteristics of major content domains (e.g., cognition and learning, developmental, biological, sociocultural, and clinical/counseling) and apply these domain perspectives to explain complex behavior | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Skills: Critical Thinking  Graduate School Preparation | Develop approach of scientific inquiry and critical thinking | Summarize ideas and conclusions from psychological sources accurately | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Skills: Critical Thinking  Graduate School Preparation |  | Distinguish characteristics and value of information sources (e.g., primary vs. secondary, peer-reviewed vs. non-reviewed, empirical vs. non-empirical articles) | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Skills: Critical Thinking  Graduate School Preparation |  | Describe and evaluate effectiveness of particular research methods for addressing specific research questions and state potential interpretation or application of findings | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Successful Living  Career Preparation  Graduate School Preparation | Develop communication skills | Construct clearly written arguments using evidence-based psychological concepts and theories in a professional writing style | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |
| Successful Living  Career Preparation  Graduate School Preparation |  | Demonstrate effective oral presentation skills and/or interact effectively with others during class discussion | Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey# |

**#Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey** includes a “knowledge” section with multiple-choice exam-style questions (direct measure) and an “experience” section with Likert scale questions and open-ended questions about the students’ experience as a Psychology Major at OU (indirect measure)

**Step 4: Participation in Assessment Process**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Who Will Participate in Carrying Out the Assessment Plan** | **What Will Be Their Specific Role/s** |
| Keith Williams (Director of Undergraduate Studies) | Coordinate the entire process and prepare the report for UAC |
| Mary Lewis (Chief Advisor) | Assist in preparing the report and fitting assessment measures into the curriculum |
| Psychology Undergraduate Programs Committee (comprised of various members of the department) | Assist with assessment plan implementation, analysis of data and reviewing results for program improvement |

**Step 5: Plan for Analyzing and Using Assessment Results to Improve Program**

A. How will you analyze your assessment data?

The assessment plan will be implemented by Keith Williams and Mary Lewis with the help of faculty members on the Undergraduate Programs Committee. The primary metric used in the assessment plan is the Senior Knowledge and Experience Survey (SKES). A link to this survey will be provided to students just after they apply for graduation (i.e., October for the fall semester, February for the winter semester). We will acquire the list graduating seniors via the banner system. This early timing should also improve response rates since we will have a couple months to send email reminders to the students before commencement. The SKES includes a “knowledge” survey and an “experience” survey. The knowledge survey is a direct measure of student learning via 30 multiple-choice exam-style questions. The questions were designed to sample knowledge from a variety of subdomains within the field of psychology (e.g., biopsychology, cognitive, developmental, research methods/statistics, social/personality area). The questions were designed to measure knowledge that should be acquired across the curriculum even though students have the ability to customize their curriculum with the 300-level classes. A few sample questions are provided:

**[Biopsychology]** Which neural center in the limbic system plays a central role in strong emotions such as rage and fear?

a) thalamus

b) medulla

c) cerebellum

d) amygdala

**[Developmental]** Which of the following gives the BEST description of what life-span psychologists mean by “development”?

a) growth and decay in skills and processes

b) how the fetus grows and develops in the womb

c) growth and improvement in skills and processes

d) growth in muscles that leads to improvement in skills

**[Research Methods]** A(n) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ measure produces similar results when the same individuals are measured under identical conditions.

a) Valid

b) Accurate

c) Good

d) Reliable

The data from the knowledge survey will be analyzed using item analysis enabling question quality evaluation. We will also compare averages across subdomains to determine which subdomains should receive more emphasis in the future.

The experience survey of the SKES was designed to indirectly assess knowledge and to gather constructive comments to improve our curriculum. For example, students will answer Likert-scale questions (1-absolutely disagree…6- Absolutely agree) such as:

My education enhanced my understanding of how research is conducted by psychological scientists (i.e., research design, data analysis, and the interpretation of empirical outcomes).

My education provided opportunities to think critically about issues relevant to psychology.

My education enhanced my insight into psychological processes and prepared me to apply psychological principles to personally relevant issues (i.e., social, personal, and organizational issues).

My education enhanced my ability to communicate effectively across a variety of communication scenarios (e.g., in groups or with individuals, in brief or comprehensive reports).

The experience survey will also contain open-ended questions such as:

Please use the space below to describe the MOST BENEFICIAL aspects of your education in Psychology at Oakland University.

Please use the space below to provide suggestions for IMPROVING the undergraduate education in Psychology at Oakland University.

The data from the Likert-scale questions will be analyzed using a mean comparison approach to determine student perception of the impact of our program. The open-ended questions will generate qualitative information that will be summarized and given to the faculty to drive ideas for program improvement.

B. How will you use results to improve your program?

The results gathered by the assessment measures will be used to improve the program in multiple ways.

1. The knowledge survey can be used to determine areas of our program that need more emphasis or standardization. For example, our department has committed to some standardized content across all PSY100 classes. Currently, students are required to take one class in each of four groups: Basic Processes, Developmental, Social, and Personality/Individual differences. Students may take different 300-level classes within each group to satisfy this requirement. Assessment processes may identify content areas in need of evaluation.
2. The Likert-scale questions of the experience survey can be used to drive pedagogical approach across many classes. For example, the question about effective communication across a variety of scenarios may indicate a need to examine the different approaches that our faculty use in their classes (e.g., group activities, written reports).
3. The open-ended questions of the experience survey may generate ideas for shaping our curriculum via course content or making workshops available. For example, our current graduate exit survey generated comments indicating that students were not well-informed about how to progress thru the curriculum and timelines regarding applying to graduate school. Our department responded by organizing a “Starting Off Right” workshop every fall that provides students with the opportunity to learn about navigating the curriculum across their time as a Psychology major.

**Step 6: Submit Assessment Plan**

Send completed form electronically to [ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu).