



*Forensic Psychology Department*

## **Assessment Plan**

Revised November 2015

Department tentative vote: December 4, 2015

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
Department of Psychology**

**Forensic Psychology Major Assessment Plan**

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## **Forensic Psychology Major**

### **I. *Mission Statement & Learning Goals***

The mission of the Forensic Psychology major is to enhance understanding of behavior, in terms of its biological, cognitive, social, emotional and contextual components and their interaction, and to develop an appreciation for its implications in forensic settings. Students will learn to employ a scientific approach to understand behavior.

The Psychology Department has developed a series of learning objectives/goals (adapted from those of the American Psychological Association (APA) *Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major: Version 2.0*) that reflect “optimal expectations for performance by undergraduates who are engaged in the study of psychology” (APA, 2013 p. 3). In this document, the APA revised its guidelines and reduced its learning goals from 10 specific domains to 5 broader domains. These changes are reflected in this document. The framework for the learning goals we adopted includes four skills-based goals and one content-focused goal, which are as follows:

Goal 1: Knowledge Base in Psychology

Goal 2: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking

Goal 3: Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World

Goal 4: Communication

Goal 5: Professional Development

### **II. *Assessment Philosophy***

#### *Context*

The departmental self-study conducted by the Psychology Department in 2000 highlighted the serious need for revisions to the existing Forensic Psychology major. During the past several years, the major was revised and a new major put in place, which began in the 2011-2012 academic year.

Along with this redesigned curriculum came a new culture of assessment in the department and College as a whole. In the 2010-2011 academic year, we began to assess our core courses (i.e., Psy 101, 200, 242 and capstone 476). Very quickly, we found the plan we had developed was too cumbersome to be effective; a conclusion that APA appeared to agree with considering the changes to their guidelines. Therefore, the plan outlined in this document is more streamlined with a variety of options for professors to integrate into their course assessment.

#### *Philosophy*

The Psychology Department values a culture of assessment. The goal of outcomes assessment is to continuously improve both the teaching and learning experiences in our major.

The goal of our assessment strategy is to address all five learning goals through direct and indirect means. Each of these learning goals will be addressed in (at least) one of our core courses.

Our assessment plan is designed to provide appropriate data to allow us to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in our major and the degree to which we are meeting our objectives. Results from our assessments will be used to refine our major, our learning objectives (particularly for individual courses), our requirements at different points in the curriculum, our standards and our teaching.

American Psychological Association. (2013). *APA guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major. Version 2.0* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [www.apa.org/ed/resources.html](http://www.apa.org/ed/resources.html)

**Forensic Psychology Major**  
**5 Main Learning Goals/Objectives (adapted from APA)**

Below we list the 5 Main Learning Goals/Objectives of the Forensic Psychology Major. Below each objective are the specific objectives we will use to assess the Main Learning Goal.

**#1. Learning Objective: Knowledge Base in Psychology:** Students will demonstrate fundamental knowledge and comprehension of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical trends, and empirical findings to discuss how psychological principles apply to behavioral problems.

<b>Specific Learning Objectives<sup>1</sup></b>
1.1: Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology
1.2: Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains
1.3: Describe/recognize applications of psychology

<sup>1</sup> We have used content exams at the 200-level for these objectives.

**#2. Learning Objective: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking:** Students will demonstrate scientific reasoning and problem solving skills including effective research methods.

<b>Specific Learning Objectives</b>
2.1: Identify and navigate psychology databases and other legitimate sources of psychology information (e.g., Psycinfo).
2.2: Develop plausible behavioral explanations that rely on scientific reasoning and evidence rather than anecdotes or pseudoscience.
2.3: Read and summarize complex ideas accurately, including future directions, from psychological sources and research.
2.4: Describe problems operationally to study them empirically (e.g., identify research questions).
2.5: Evaluate the effectiveness of quantitative/qualitative research methods in addressing a research question.

**#3. Learning Objective: Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World:** Students will demonstrate ethically and socially responsible behaviors for professional and personal settings in a landscape that involves increased diversity.

Specific Learning Objectives
3.1: Evaluate psychological research from the standpoint of adherence to the APA Ethics Code in psychological research involving human or non-human research participants
3.2: Evaluate critically or complete an IRB application that adheres to ethical standards.
3.3: Identify aspects of individual and cultural diversity and the interpersonal challenges that often result from diversity and context.

**#4. Learning Objective: Communication:** Students will demonstrate competence in writing and in oral and interpersonal communication skills.

Specific Learning Objectives
4.1: Construct arguments clearly and concisely using evidence-based psychological concepts and theories.
4.2: Use grammar appropriate to professional standards and conventions.
4.3: Use APA style effectively.
4.4: Interpret quantitative data displayed in statistics, graphs and tables, including statistical symbols in research reports.

**#5. Learning Objective: Professional Development:** Students will be able to apply psychology-specific content and skills to more general problem solving and exhibit career preparation.

Specific Learning Objectives
5.1: Evaluate the characteristics of potential work settings or graduate school programs to optimize career direction and

satisfaction.

5.2: Formulate career plan contingencies based on accurate self-assessment of abilities, achievement, motivation and work habits.

5.3: Recognize the value and application of research and problem-solving skills in providing evidence beyond personal opinion to support proposed solutions.

### Curriculum Map - Learning Objectives Worksheet

Learning Objective	Psy 200	Psy 242	Psy 221	Psy 231	Psy 370	Psy 311	Capstone Classes	Other: Additional Advising
1. Knowledge Base of Psychology								
• 1.1	<input type="checkbox"/>							
• 1.2	<input type="checkbox"/>							
• 1.3	<input type="checkbox"/>							
2. Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking								
• 2.1	<input type="checkbox"/>							
• 2.2						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 2.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 2.4						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 2.5						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World								
• 3.1						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 3.2						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 3.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Communication								
• 4.1							<input type="checkbox"/>	
• 4.2	<input type="checkbox"/>							
• 4.3	<input type="checkbox"/>							
• 4.4	<input type="checkbox"/>							
5. Professional Development								
• 5.1								<input type="checkbox"/>
• 5.2								<input type="checkbox"/>
• 5.3	<input type="checkbox"/>							

NB: While Psy 101 is a requirement of the major it will not be assessed. Sta 250 is not administered by Psychology so will also not be assessed.

## **Forensic Psychology Major – Assessment Schedule**

**Revised November 2015**

The Forensic Psychology major will be assessed according a five-year cycle (as described below). Annual assessment reports will provide data to assist the Department in refining learning outcomes for the curriculum, for individual classes, and for our majors.

### **(1) 2015-2016 Academic Year**

- Fall 2015: Assess Learning Objectives 3.1, 3.2
- Spring 2016: Assess Capstone Papers; Learning Objectives 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5
- Write annual assessment brief on assessment outcomes and activities for 2015 – 2016 academic year and present findings to the department for discussion.

### **(2) 2016-2017 Academic Year**

- Fall 2016: Examine institutional, indirect assessments of student satisfaction during the prior 4 years (2012-2016), compared to 4 years before new major (2006-2010). Choose appropriate comparison questions and pilot comparison. This work will be in service of the departmental self-study, which will be drafted this academic year.
- Spring 2017: Assess 5.1, 5.2 (via survey integrated with advising push for seniors heading to graduate school).
- Write annual assessment brief on assessment outcomes and activities for 2016 – 2017 academic year and present findings to the department for discussion.

### **(3) 2017-2018 Academic Year**

- Fall 2017: Assess 1.2, and 1.3 (common tests)
- Spring 2018: Assess 1.1
- Complete departmental self-study: Fall-self-study through governance; Spring-site visit.
- Write annual assessment brief on assessment outcomes and activities for 2017 – 2018 academic year and present findings to the department for discussion.

### **(4) 2018-2019 Academic Year**

- Fall 2018: Assess 5.3
- Spring 2019: 2.1 (e.g., psycinfo training)
- Write annual assessment brief on assessment outcomes and activities for 2018 – 2019 academic year and present findings to the department for discussion.

### **(5) 2019-2020 Academic Year**

- Fall 2019: Assess 3.3
- Spring 2020: Assess 4.4
- Write annual assessment brief on assessment outcomes and activities for 2019 – 2020 academic year and present findings to the department for discussion.

**APPENDIX A: Exit Survey**

**As a soon-to-be graduate of the psychology department, we want to learn about how you perceive your experiences with us. This survey is anonymous. Please answer as accurately and honestly as you can.**

1. Think back on the psychology courses you have taken. Which of the following do you remember your professors addressing? (check all that apply)

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- The ways that ethical principals are applied to psychological research
- How moral reasoning is used in our everyday lives
- Diversity as it is related to race, gender, class, religion, and/or sexual orientation.
- Future careers in the field of psychology that you might pursue your degree.
- The steps you would need to take in order to pursue a graduate degree in psychology (e.g. GREs, strong GPA, letters of recommendation)

2. Now that you have nearly gone through the entire psychology curriculum, how strongly do you agree or disagree that your psychology classes helped you to:

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. Identify the values and assumptions made in statements (e.g. in the media, among colleagues, in research).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Respect the varying points of view held by others.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Tolerate diversity.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Respond constructively to criticism of your work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Self reflect upon your experiences in order to learn from them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. Manage multiple tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. Become familiar with what career options available for you in the field of psychology.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
h. Apply the knowledge you learned in psychology to your everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

3. Overall, how effectively do you believe the psychology department has trained you to enter a career and/or attend graduate school in a field related to psychology.

<b>Very Ineffectively</b>	<b>Ineffectively</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Effectively</b>	<b>Very Effectively</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. We are trying to gain an understanding of your experiences in the psychology department. We want to make sure you were adequately taught the areas we feel most important for psychology students to learn. Please use the space below to offer us feedback that we could use moving forward with the next generation of students.

## APPENDIX B. Psy 200 Writing Assignment Grading Rubric

Students, please note that this writing assignment is designed to help you as you develop academically and begin to meet two of the learning objectives of the Forensic Psychology Major. Those objectives are below. I highlighted the specific objectives addressed in this assignment in purple font (and on the rubric on the following page).

**#2. Learning Objective: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking:** Students will demonstrate scientific reasoning and problem solving skills including effective research methods.

Specific Learning Objectives
Identify and navigate psychology databases and other legitimate sources of psychology information (e.g., PsycInfo).
Develop plausible behavioral explanations that rely on scientific reasoning and evidence rather than anecdotes or pseudoscience.
Read and summarize complex ideas accurately, including future directions, from psychological sources and research.
Describe problems operationally to study them empirically (e.g., identify research questions).
Evaluate the effectiveness of quantitative and/or qualitative research methods in addressing a research question.

**#4. Learning Objective: Communication:** Students will demonstrate competence in writing and in oral and interpersonal communication skills.

Specific Learning Objectives
Construct arguments clearly and concisely using evidence-based psychological concepts and theories.
Use grammar appropriate to professional standards and conventions.
Use APA style effectively.
Interpret quantitative data displayed in statistics, graphs and tables, including statistical symbols in research reports.

On the next page, you will see that I have included some of these specific learning objectives (in a different font and in purple) within this grading rubric. Other learning objectives will appear as you move on to more advanced classes in the major.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grading Category	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	Score <i>(possible points)</i>
<b><i>Critical Components of the Article Critique</i></b>					
<b>Research Question &amp; Rationale</b>  Describe problems operationally to study them empirically (e.g., identify research questions).	Does not adequately convey research topic. Little or no rationale for study is presented.	Conveys topic but not key research question(s). Most rationale for study is presented.	Conveys topic and key research question(s) and terms. Rationale for study is provided.	Clearly introduces key research question(s). Demonstrates good understanding of question(s) and topic. Rationale for study is provided.	<b>(12)</b>
<b>Methods</b>	Methods are not clearly described and are missing many key components.	Methods may not be organized in coherent form, but most key components are described.	Methods are mostly organized in coherent form and all key components are described.	Methods are coherently organized and all key components are described and related to research question(s).	<b>(16)</b>
<b>Results</b>  Interpret quantitative data displayed in statistics, graphs and tables, including statistical symbols in research reports.	Few or no results for the study are presented and interpreted correctly. Results are missing key points.	Some results presented and interpreted correctly, including the key point(s) related to primary research question(s).	Most results presented and interpreted correctly, including key points related to majority of experimental manipulations.	All results are presented and interpreted correctly which includes the key points related to the experimental manipulations.	<b>(16)</b>
<b>Implications</b>	Few or no implications are presented. Missing the author's key points. Implications do not relate to research question(s).	Some implications and key points are presented. What is written relates to research question(s).	Most key implications are presented and are related to research question(s).	The author's key implications are clearly discussed and related to research question(s).	<b>(12)</b>

<b>Critique</b>	Does not discuss appropriateness of methodology. Does not address own thoughts about the study validity.	Some discussion of appropriateness of methodology and/or personal thoughts about the study validity are included.	Discusses appropriateness of methodology and includes some personal thoughts about validity.	Discusses appropriateness of methodology, addressing key manipulations and how they relate to results. Includes thoughts on validity. Shows good understanding.	<b>(16)</b>
<b>Identify and navigate psychology databases and other legitimate sources of psychology information (e.g., PsycInfo).</b>	No attempt made to find (and report on) an appropriate article using PsycInfo.	An attempt was made to find an article using PsycInfo but the article is not relevant.	An appropriate article was found using PsycInfo but the article's relevance is not clearly articulated.	An appropriate article was found using PsycInfo and the article's relevance is clearly articulated.	<b>(8)</b>
<b>Grammar, mechanics and APA</b>					
<b>Use grammar appropriate to professional standards and conventions.</b>	Grammatical errors, spelling and/or punctuation errors are common and detract significantly from the paper. Word choice is informal in tone.	Grammatical, spelling, and/or punctuations errors are present and interfere somewhat with reading the paper.  Word choice occasionally informal in tone.	A few grammatical, spelling, and/or punctuation errors are present but they do not interfere with reading the paper.  Mostly scholarly writing style.	Grammatical, spelling and/or punctuation errors are very rare and do not detract from the paper.  Scholarly writing.	<b>(8)</b>
<b>Use APA style effectively.</b>	Errors in APA style (in text) detract substantially from the paper.	Errors in APA style (in text) are noticeable.	Some minor errors in APA style (in text) but they do not detract from the paper.	Very rare errors in APA style (in text).	<b>(8)</b>
<b>Reference Page</b>	References are missing key elements	All key elements are included but the order is incorrect	All key elements are included in the correct order; some formatting errors	Reference page is correctly written	<b>(2)</b>
<b>Specific Assignment requirements</b>	Page length requirement not followed (significantly too short or too long).	Page length requirement not followed but only minor fluctuation.	Page length requirement followed.	Page length requirement followed.	<b>(2)</b>
<b>Total</b>					