

Psychology BA

Program Mission Statement

Program Mission Statement (Full Description):

The mission of the undergraduate program in the Department of Psychology at Southern Methodist University is to provide our majors with excellent education on the measurement techniques, research designs, and analytical procedures that are used in conducting scientific investigations in psychology. The department offers two undergraduate degrees in psychology: Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.). For both degrees, our majors acquire fundamental knowledge about a number of different core areas within the field of psychology, including biological, clinical, cognitive, developmental, family, health, and social psychology. We also actively encourage our majors to obtain research and practicum experiences, in order to help them develop a more comprehensive understanding of the possible applications of psychological principles and methods. The B.S. track includes additional coursework to prepare students for graduate school in the psychological or biomedical sciences.

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?: Yes

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?:

Yes

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?: Prior to AY2021-2022

Progress: Complete

1 PLO 1: Critical Analysis

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to critically evaluate the quality of a research study on a social or psychological issue. A critical evaluation includes

being able to: (A) Evaluate the methods and whether the conclusions are justified; and (B) Identify study limitations and implications

Step 2A: Measure :

#1: Research methods paper evaluation

Each semester, all papers submitted by students in PSYC 3301 Research Methods will be evaluated by the course instructors.

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

#1: Our goal is to have 80% of students achieve an A or B on the research report assignment. This goal was decided by Department leadership in conjunction with faculty input several years ago.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Due to the instructor no longer being affiliated with SMU, data are not available for Fall 2022.

In Spring 2023, 54 out of 79 students (68%) earned an A or B on the Research Report assignment. This is a slight improvement from last year's rate of 66%.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

Although most (68%) of students show mastery of this PLO, we did not meet our goal of having 80% of students reach mastery of this PLO.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

As different instructors teach 3301 across different semesters, we will continue to monitor progress on the research report. Instructors will be encouraged to add more scaffolding into the research report assignment (e.g., in labs) that help students build skills to earn an A or B on the final research report.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Additional emphasis or time on content
Additional activities or assignments

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment discussed during 7/12/2023 faculty meeting.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

We are maintaining our goal from the 2021-2022 academic year of having 80% of students earn an A or B on the research report. We've added additional action items such as suggesting that faculty incorporate more scaffolding for the final research report.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): In progress

Progress: Complete

2 PLO 2: Design Research Study / Propose Methods

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to propose a rigorous and scientifically valid method for evaluating a research question on a social or psychological issue. This involves the ability to:

(A) Generate testable hypotheses based on existing research and theory;

(B) Identify the pros and cons of different research designs; and

(C) Identify and evaluate measures to assess key variables.

Step 2A: Measure :

#1. 3301 Research Methods paper evaluation

#2. Completion of an independent research study

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Capstone project
Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

#1. Our goal is to have 80% of students achieve an A or B on the research paper. This goal was decided by Department leadership, in conjunction with faculty input, several years ago.

#2. Have 10% of students work on an independent research project

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

For measure #1 (the 3301 research report), 54 of 79 students (68%) earned an A or B on the research methods research report.

For measure #2, a total of 11 students completed independent research projects with faculty in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

For measure #1, we partially met our goal. Sixty-eight percent of students earned an A or B on the research report, whereas we aim to have 80% of students display mastery of this PLO.

The 2022-2023 goals for measure #2 need to be clarified (e.g., which group of students we are comparing the 10% benchmark to). Thus, we've clarified our goal for the 2023-2024 cycle as noted below.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

For measure #1, we will continue to monitor mastery of the PLO on the research report. Instructors teaching the 3301 course will be encouraged to increase scaffolding on the assignment to improve student mastery.

For measure #2, we are revising to a more concrete measure: We aim to have 1 student per faculty member engaged in independent research projects.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Additional emphasis or time on content
Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment discussed during 7/12/2023 faculty meeting.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

For measure #1, we will continue to monitor progress on the 3301 research reports.

For measure #2, we have updated our goals to be more concrete and measurable.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): In progress

Progress: Complete

3 PLO 3: Interpret and Apply Theory

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to interpret and apply psychological theory to contemporary problems in society.

Step 2A: Measure :

#1. Student participation in independent research posters/talks

#2. Discussion and presentation of empirical research studies

#3. 4345/2332 Fact Sheet

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Capstone project
Presentation
Written paper/project
Other

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct
Indirect

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

#1. Have at least 10% of students complete and present an independent research project

#2. Have at least 80% of students working in a research lab

#3. Have at least 80% of students achieve an A or B on the Fact Sheet. This goal was set by Department leadership in conjunction with faculty input several years ago.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

With respect to Measure #1, a total of 11 students completed independent research projects. All 11 of them also presented their research in some capacity.

With respect to Measure #2, a total of 85 students were involved in faculty research labs.

With respect to Measure #3, no participating courses were offered in the 2022-2023 academic year. Thus, no data are available for this measure.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

The 22-23 goals articulated for this PLO were not measurable (e.g., 10% of which body of students? 80% of which body of students?). Thus, we have revised the goals as noted below.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

For academic year 23-24, we have revised our goals with respect to this PLO to have clearer benchmarks.

Our first goal is to have at least 1 undergraduate per faculty member conduct an independent research project and present their results.

Our second goal is to have at least 6 undergraduates per faculty member involved in research labs

Our final goal remains the same: to have 80% of students earn an A or B on the fact sheet assignment. We hope to offer courses containing this assignment in future semesters.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Redesign of activities or assignments

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment issues were discussed in the 7/12/2023 faculty meeting.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No action plans were made in the previous academic year.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress: Complete

4 PLO 4: Diversity and the Psychological Process

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to identify how diversity in an individual's background can affect one or more psychological processes

Step 2A: Measure :

#1. Film Report in PSY4345

Students in PSYC4345 (Psychology of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race) completed a report based on one of five films. In these reports, students summarized themes illustrating issues relating to cultural influences on human psychology, ethnic identity and/or socialization, intergroup contact and tension, and/or discrimination. They also commented on how the content in the film related to theory discussed in class (e.g., how might research on social ecological model help explain people's behaviors in the story).

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

Our goal is for at least 80% of students to demonstrate an A or B on this project, demonstrating understanding of the role of diversity in psychological processes. This goal was set by Department leadership, in conjunction with faculty input, several years ago.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Not Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

The relevant course was not offered in the 2022-2023 academic year. Thus, no data are available.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

The relevant course was not offered in the 2022-2023 academic year. Thus, no data are available.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

Data will be reassessed when the relevant course is offered. If the course will not be offered in the 2023-2024 academic year, we will discuss other ways/assignments to assess this PLO.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Additional activities or assignments
Course redesign

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment issues were discussed in the 7/12/23 faculty meeting.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No actions were identified for this PLO in the previous cycle.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress: Complete

1 PO: Outside Classroom Experience

Step 1C: PO Statement (Full Description):

Increase the number of students who are involved in research, engaged learning, or a practicum.

Step 2A: Measure :

#1. Independent Research Participation

Number of undergraduate students participating in faculty-supervised research.

Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

Independent research participants

Our goal is to increase the number of students working with research active faculty to approximately 8-10 students per research-active faculty member.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

A total of 11 faculty members provided information this academic year (some faculty members who departed SMU did not provide data). Among these faculty members, a total of 85 students were involved in research, for an average of 8.5 students per faculty member. Thus, we met our goal of 8-10 students working with each research-active faculty member.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

A total of 11 faculty members provided information this academic year (some faculty members who departed SMU did not provide data). Among these faculty members, a total of 85 students were involved in research, for an average of 8.5 students per faculty member. Thus, we met our goal of 8-10 students working with each research-active faculty member.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Faculty

Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment issues were discussed at the 7/12/23 faculty meeting.

Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No action plans were made in the previous cycle for this PO.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): Fully implemented

Progress: Complete