



Psychology [BS] [BS-PSYC]

Cycles included in this report:

Jun 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025

Program Name: Psychology [BS] [BS-PSYC]

Reporting Cycle: Jun 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025

1 Is this program offered via Distance Learning?

100% Distance and Traditional

2 Is this program offered at an off-site location?

No

2.1 If yes to previous, provide addresses for each location where 50% or more of program credits may be earned.

No, this program is not being offered at an off-site location. There are two programs (Traditional and Online). Online courses can be completed anywhere, but there is no specific off-site location where courses are being completed.

3 Example of Program Improvement

2020-2021:

Data for this cycle are complete, and the picture of the program does not differ too much from prior evaluations. This similarity is surprising because the two semesters included in the assessment were ones of chaos and trauma. The data indicate that students had trouble completing courses, and students struggled more in some types of classes than others. Classes that rely strongly on hands-on activities and research seemed to have higher drop/incomplete rates than other classes. However, only a few assessments failed to meet our benchmarks, which is due to effort on the part of both faculty and students. The situation makes us hesitant to rely on the current data to make major changes, although we will discuss doing so.

2021-2022:

For the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters, the Department of Psychology has been able to offer more F2F classes and still maintain the online offerings that are necessary for many students in the online program and attractive to some students in the traditional program. We try to keep instruction and course content equivalent for online and F2F course offerings. In the past, performance was far from equal; as a result, faculty meetings included discussions about how to improve consistency across sections. It appears those efforts have paid off, because discrepancies decreased for the current year.

Another area of improvement comes from the attention we have devoted to changes in the PSYC 427-428-495 research sequence. The motivation for that research sequence was our belief that students who receive a degree in psychology should have the experience of collecting and analyzing data, and McNeese classes are small enough to allow them to do so. Few other universities have programs that require undergraduate students to conduct research, much less present that research in a formal presentation. That privilege is typically restricted to graduate students and some honors undergraduates. Thus, we consider our program very special. However, building the course sequence and implementing the plan has proven difficult for instructors and students. Over the past year, we have had a series of meetings for faculty members who teach in this sequence to bring about more consistent instruction, and we have seen a high rate of success for the benchmarks that we collect from PSYC 495, senior thesis. We plan to implement additional training for instructors and make more changes to the initial course in that sequence (PSYC 427) based on students' feedback during the 2022-2023 academic year.

2022-2023:

Several program and curriculum improvements were made in 2022-2023, some of which were based on Assessment Reports compiled and discussed by faculty members in May 2022 and some of which resulted from discussions during faculty meetings and informal discussions with senior level students.

- First, our increased focus on career goals in FFND 101 and PSYC 404 (with embedded assessments for the QEP Navigate Your Future initiative) resulted in senior psychology majors who prepared resumes and letters of intent/cover letters that were better in Spring, 2023 than in previous semesters.
- Second, the instructor for PSYC 427 began to add more extensive content and assessment focused on Statistics in an effort to bolster students' ability to use this knowledge in PSYC 428 and PSYC 495 (improving transition across the 3-semester research sequence).
- Third, the review of assessment data in May 2022 was handled differently, with the Department Head and Program Coordinators handling this process with subgroups of the faculty who teach in the specific programs (rather than one large faculty meeting that included faculty members unfamiliar with and uninvolved with some programs).
- Fourth, the senior thesis (PSYC 428-->495) transition was updated and streamlined, with written instructions for IRB application procedures, formal training for all instructors, and a return (in Fall 2022) to in-person poster presentations by all students at the end of the Thesis semester.
- Fifth, the Department began reviewing each course and each Assessment/Benchmark (>20) to consider their relevance, review >5 years of trends, and discuss possible changes. This led to some discoveries of inconsistencies in how a few of them were being assessed across sections, so changes were implemented at the course level in Spring 2023 and will be monitored in 2023-2024 to ensure more consistent assessments.

2023-2024:

Several changes and improvements were implemented for 2023-2024 and also scheduled for the upcoming academic year. Those include:

- We revised/updated assessments and rubrics for all four of our Gen Ed courses.
- The DH formed a Bachelor of Science in Psychology Committee, and they met at least once per semester (more after the Spring semester) to review course offerings, curricular changes, training needs for new instructors, Gen Ed course assessments/rubrics, and the three-semester research sequence.
- We provided additional training for all instructors of the three-semester research sequence (427/428/495), with focus on making additional improvements in the first course (PSYC 427) that would benefit the two subsequent courses.
- We developed (and are continuing to develop) rubrics for some courses that are assessed, as these have not used rubrics in previous years. Our hope is to make scoring more consistent across sections once these are finalized and all instructors are trained to use them.
- We offered a different format for FFND sections in Fall 2023 due to large new enrollment (>70) entering the department as freshmen last year. We had two online sections and one F2F section, which was recorded and shared with the online sections within 24 hours. All sections then experienced the same lectures, interactions, activities, etc., and all sections submitted the same assignments on the same time frame. We had some bumps in this new process, which we are working on now. Some changes will be made prior to the Fall 2024 semester.
- We ensured that more engaging, knowledgeable, and full-time instructors managed introductory level courses. With the addition of two full-time instructors during the 2022-2023 academic year, we were able to put them in F2F sections of PSYC 101 and 260, as well as online sections of PSYC 101 and 233. This increased the visibility of full-time faculty in lower-level courses.
- Instructional changes were made in late Spring 2024 and new instructors have been hired (and more will soon be hired) that we believe will be more engaged and involved with our undergraduate students. This means fewer graduate faculty members teaching undergraduate courses (especially 100/200 level courses) and students having faculty members who were 100% dedicated to their education.

2024-2025:

Several changes and improvements were discussed and implemented for 2024-2025. Those include:

- To underscore the importance of continuous improvement and better inform systematic changes using quantifiable evidence, we have created a process for evaluating and updating benchmarks. Our goal for all benchmarks will be "90% of students will do 80% or better..." If the percentage of students is less than 90%, we will increase that percentage by 10% if the benchmark is met for 2 years. We will increase the percentage by more if previous years' data suggest that 90% of students are already meeting the benchmark. If the percentage of scores is less than 80%, we will increase that percentage by 10% if the benchmark is met for 2 years. We will increase the percentage by more if previous years' data suggest that 90% of students will do 80% or better. Based on our observations using this process, we will then work to enhance the rigor of the coursework (if the benchmark is being met) or offer more support and alter pedagogy (if the benchmark is not being met). This process is intended to be dynamic and responsive, with the possibility for future revisions and exceptions where justified, which will be informed by findings from successive reporting cycles, faculty feedback, and quantifiable evidence.
- We will use a departmental syllabus template for all lower-level courses (starting in Fall, 2025) and higher-level courses (starting in Spring, 2026).
- We created new recorded lectures, rubrics, course materials, and assignments for four courses (PSYC 321, 404, 427, and 447). These changes increased the difficulty of these courses to hold students to a higher standards.
- We plan to introduce pre- and post-testing across a few of our lower-level courses. This will help us assess what students know at the beginning--and by the end--of the course to improve our teaching practices.
- We plan to pilot a new research ethics course through PSYC 475 (Topics in Psychology). This will help improve upon the research sequence, as the course will not only include important content related to the ethics of doing psychological research, but teach students about the departmental IRB submission process.
- One of our faculty members secured a new IRB platform for the university. This will help streamline student proposals during PSYC 495.

4 Program Highlights from the Reporting Year

2020-2021:

The Fall semester was filled with disasters and the Spring semester had more. Students and faculty experienced a transition to online instruction and a relaxation of rules and deadlines that affected student performance. The issues that we had with our indicators in the Progress Report became secondary to getting through the Fall 2020 semester. The Spring 2021 semester was also chaotic, with few F2F classes and students who became accustomed to no deadlines. Surprisingly, our data indicate that students performance on our indicators remains high.

2021-2022:

The highlights from this reporting year include: getting back toward normal (not exactly to normal, but toward normal). The disasters that we endured have abated (although the remnants remain). One sign of getting back toward normal is that the Department of Psychology has offered more F2F classes, which has allowed more students who prefer that format to enroll in classes in which they can do well. (We saw the problems with all online classes over the past two years and how some students simply do not do well in online classes.) For this reporting year, students have had more choices.

Another highlight of this reporting cycle is how well our students did in achieving the benchmarks. A total of 65.9% of the benchmarks showed achievement of greater than 90%, which represents scores that exceed the benchmarks for most indicators. That statistics shows that many students are succeeding in our program, and that's the point of offering a program.

2022-2023:

Several program highlights are worth mentioning this year, as our 2nd year of 'returning to normal' after 2020-2021 saw more on-campus presence, continued high enrollment in our BS degree program, and maintenance of course offerings and enrollments despite losing two of our three most long-standing and respecting professors to retirement in Summer of 2022. Highlights from this past year include:

- The hiring of two full-time instructors who have consistently achieved high SEI ratings from undergraduate students in previous years.
- Our students met most of the benchmarks in 2022-2023, including 17 of 19 for the traditional (F2F) students and 15 of 19 for the online students. (Note: Because the majority of our classes are taught online for both groups, the difference in outcomes (on two assessments) cannot be attributed to format of instruction in our Department.)
- One highlight observed throughout 2022-2023 was increased concern and focus by all full-time faculty members on the importance of regular assessment meetings and discussions, and the use of those discussions to improve specific courses. There were prior years where some faculty did not engage or demonstrate "buy-in" but that seemed to change after everyone returned to campus (at least administratively) in Fall 2021 and into 2022. This past year, every single faculty member attended or participated in several of these meetings and contributed in thoughtful ways, and real changes are being made in key courses such as our 3-semester research sequence and our capstone course. This summer (2023) additional changes were suggested and agreed up, so we look forward to next year's assessment review meetings to see if our students' continue to meet our benchmarks even though some of them were increased in this assessment cycle.

2023-2024:

- 100% of full-time faculty and all but one part-time instructor submitted assessment data in a timely manner (one section had missing data), and all of those faculty members also participated in meetings to review those data at the end of the 23/24 academic year. It was the first year we have really experienced 100% faculty buy-in for assessment work. (Note: The one part-time instructor with missing data had left employment mid-year so Fall 2023 data for one assessment in one section of PSYC 495 could not be obtained).
- Some assessments were revised, particularly relating to added instructional support and altered assignment instructions. This is a work in progress (changes are made every year) but the changes were more significant this past year. Training on some of those assessments was also increased, including virtual meetings with instructors and sharing scored sample rubrics (especially for Gen Ed courses).
- We had two very successful sessions of Senior Research Symposium (SRS) in late-November and late-April, and both students and faculty remarked on how the projects, the SRS planning and event, and other aspects of the Senior Thesis course (PSYC 495) ran more smoothly and had improved compared to previous years.
- Students in our Capstone course were more engaged and involved (15 attending F2F class meetings regularly, compared to 4 the previous year), likely due to notifications to students about the importance of class attendance and the fact that students in our F2F sections are better prepared for the final exam and for the Major Field Test (this is true based on several years of data). We hope to work hard to improve outcome measures for the online students next year.
- We finally met our goal of increasing F2F course offerings, which were drastically reduced during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent storms and have never increased. Though we are still well below the F2F offerings we had 5+ years ago, we added a crucial course for Psychology majors to the F2F course listings (PSYC 471) and hope to add another one next year. (Note: F2F students have consistently mentioned that they want to take courses on campus, but we have not had the faculty resources to cover those courses.)
- Upon review of data for our 23 assessments for BS Degree this past year, we can report that we met all 23 benchmarks for the F2F students and we met 22 of 23 benchmarks for the online students. This is a significant improvement over previous years.

2024-2025:

- Across all of our benchmarks, only two were not met. On the one hand, this represents our department's teaching success. On the other hand, this may indicate that the current benchmarks are too low. Moving forward, we will be adjusting benchmarks based on a formalized plan (see the Plans for Improvement section).
- During this year, we brought a great deal of standardization to courses of this degree plan. We have planned to have more consistent syllabi, course sections, and Canvas pages for each course as we transition to that platform from Moodle.
- Many of the courses have shifted into focusing on fluency to bolster student success and generativity, as competency of skills leads to faster growth in related skills.
- We had two very successful sessions of Senior Research Symposium (SRS) in late-November and late-April.
- We hired four new full-time, tenure track faculty. This will help increase the number of undergraduate sections that can be taught.
- One of our undergraduate faculty members launched an experimental research lab. This will provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to participate in research, as well as to re-incorporate credit for students participating in research as an elective.

5 Program Mission

The purpose of the Department of Psychology in offering the Bachelor of Science degree is fivefold:

- 1) To teach basic content in the field of psychology, including a wide base of course material;
- 2) To familiarize undergraduate students with the process of critical thinking used in the scientific method as applied to psychology;
- 3) To prepare students to access and convey psychology-related information obtained from a variety of sources and media;
- 4) To teach undergraduate students the skills to conduct research in psychology; and,
- 5) To familiarize undergraduate students with the profession of psychology and the requirements for entry into professional training.

6 Institutional Mission Reference

The purpose of the Department of Psychology follows the mission of McNeese State University, which is to provide baccalaureate and carefully selected graduate curricula, distinguished by academic excellence. The undergraduate program in psychology supports goals common to many bachelor's degree programs, but tailors those goals to psychology. In addition, the department has goals specific to its purpose of furnishing graduates with the skills to be successful employees in the local economy and beyond and to pursue professional training in psychology and related fields in programs at McNeese and nationally.

7 Assessment and Benchmark FFND 101 Career Path Essay

Assessment: FFND 101 Career Path Essay.

Benchmark: 70% of students will earn 70% or higher on the Career Path Essay that psychology majors write as part of the FFND 101 requirements.

Prior to 2016, the benchmark was 50% of students will earn 70% or higher on the Career Path Essay.

7.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	39/46	85%	Yes
2021-2022	37/43	86%	Yes
2022-2023	39/39	100%	Yes
2023-2024	32/46	70%	Yes
2024-2025	48/50	96%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	3/3	100%	Yes
2021-2022	4/6	67%	No
2022-2023	7/7	100%	Yes
2023-2024	13/14	93%	Yes
2024-2025	28/33	88%	Yes

7.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

Collecting data from all students who completed the Career Path Essay during the course has given us a more representative picture of our FFND classes. The number of students who scored above the benchmark is lower but still meets the standard.

2021-2022:

The students in the Traditional program scored higher than the students in the Online program. The instructor taught the course F2F, recorded each class meeting via Zoom, and then posted the Zoom recordings in Moodle for students who could not attend (or chose not to do so). We noted that students enrolled in the online program scored lower on the assessment. The instructor noted that those students typically chose not to join the class "live" and they sometimes did not view the recorded classes later, including one critical class meeting in which this essay was discussed in detail. It was our instructor's observation that the students who did not attend or join class struggled during the 2nd half of the semester and became less engaged, despite numerous attempts at communication and incentives for participation.

As a department, we will discuss the barriers to online students succeeding in this class and explore ways to help these students do better on this assessment.

2022-2023:

For the first time since 2018, all students (in both online and F2F cohorts) met the benchmark for this essay assignment. Based on last year's discrepancy (100% of F2F students vs 67% of online students meeting the benchmark) we decided to increase instruction specific to this assignment, focusing a bit more on careers in psychology during class meetings and posting similar information in Moodle (web links & uploaded documents). It is possible students better understand the information because of these measures.

Another change that was made involved providing more specific feedback on the rough draft for students' essays. We have always required students to submit a rough draft but the point value has been small (10 out of 60 points for the essay), and some students chose not to submit it (or submitted it too late to receive helpful feedback). This time, additional reminders were provided and the importance of the rough draft and receipt of feedback were emphasized. Additionally, the instructor and a graduate instructor marked printed copies of rough drafts for all students and returned them (in person or electronically) so that students received more detailed feedback and could submit higher-quality final drafts. This appears to have paid off. We discussed this as a faculty and decided to provide these reminders and this higher level of feedback again in the 2023-2024 academic year before deciding whether or not we should consider revising benchmarks. We are hopeful this improvement among both cohorts will become the norm for our program.

2023-2024:

The benchmarks were met for both F2F and online cohorts on the Career Path Essay. The Online students outperformed the F2F students, but this comparison is invalid because many F2F students were enrolled in the online sections -- in fact, almost 80% of our students were enrolled in the online class. Thus, some of our F2F students who are not accustomed to taking online courses may have done poorly in the class overall.

We drastically revised FFND 101 in the Fall 2023 semester, including (1) two co-instructors taught the courses; (2) we recorded each F2F class session on Friday morning and then uploaded the video to the Moodle pages for the two online sections that night; (3) the online sections were instructed to view uploaded class videos within 72 hours and complete assignments on the same schedule as the F2F class the following week; (4) the two co-instructors shared lecturing and grading responsibilities. We also recorded detailed instructions for the Career Path essay to be shared with all sections, and then also posted the same instructions in all three Moodle sections. Both instructors read and assessed *all* students' essays to increase consistency of rubric scoring and grading. We believe these changes contributed to the improved class average on this assessment in Fall 2023.

One problem we experienced was a high number of participants in the online sections (including many F2F students) becoming disengaged toward the end of the semester, despite regular communications and interactions with both instructors. As a result, 60 out of 85 students enrolled in FFND 101 *did not even submit* the Career Path Essay. Thus, only about 70% of students are represented by this assessment. We will continue to implement the changes described above with the Fall 2024 cohort, and we will add more interactive communication and reminders about this assignment and deadlines in the hopes of increasing the number of students who complete the assessment.

2024-2025:

The benchmark for the Career Path Essay in FFND 101 was met for both Traditional and Online programs, but students who were enrolled in the Traditional Program met the benchmark at a higher rate than students enrolled in the Online Program. This difference may be attributed to lower engagement in the online section, as there were more missing assignments in the online section than the in-person. As such, those who submitted fewer assignments on average may not have been exposed to the material which was necessary to do well on this assignment.

The faculty who teaches FFND is exploring alternative options for increasing engagement with the course content in the Online Program. This includes added emphasis for watching weekly videos, and following instructions for the weekly assignments for which some of the content is pertinent to this assignment. Moving forward, we will continue to work toward evaluating the utility of this assessment to determine how best to meet our students' current and future needs as psychology majors.

8 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 305 Major Content Area Assessment

Assessment: PSYC 305 exam on learning theories.

Benchmark: 80% of students will answer 70% of items correctly on an exam on learning theories in PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 70% of students will answer 70% of items correctly on an exam on learning theories in PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

Prior to 2016, the benchmark was that 60% of students will answer 70% of items correctly on an exam on learning theories in PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

8.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	26/26	100%	Yes
2021-2022	34/34	100%	Yes
2022-2023	28/28	100%	Yes
2023-2024	34/36	94%	Yes
2024-2025	26/26	100%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	7/9	78%	Yes
2021-2022	13/13	100%	Yes
2022-2023	26/26	100%	Yes
2023-2024	23/25	92%	Yes
2024-2025	24/28	86%	Yes

8.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The change for reporting data produced some changes in the number that met the benchmark, but that difference was not as dramatic as the one between students in the Traditional and Online programs. Those in the Traditional program scored very high, whereas those in the Online program met the benchmark, but their scores were not high. This situation makes us reluctant to change the criterion and await another years' data.

2021-2022:

The differences between scores for the online program and the traditional program do not appear in this year's data; both groups did well. This could be because all sections of this course are now taught fully online, due to the lack of an animal laboratory since the hurricanes in 2020. Additionally, some of the improvements may be due to the transition from one instructor to another. The current instructor requires good work for good grades, which means that the good grades are earned. Students are also provided a lot of instructional support for learning this content. Because this new instructor will maintain oversight of this course for the foreseeable future, we decided to wait an additional year before discussing changes to the assessment or benchmark.

2022-2023:

Students continue to perform well on this assessment, with 100% of both online and traditional F2F students meeting the 70% benchmark score. As it appears this high level of performance has been consistent for a few years, the faculty met and decided to adjust the benchmark. Beginning with the 2023-2024 assessment cycle, our new benchmark for this assessment should state: "80% of students will answer 70% of items correctly on an exam on learning theories in PSYC 305."

2023-2024:

Though slightly fewer students met the benchmark for this assignment in 23/24 (94% and 92% compared to 100% for both groups in the previous year), overall performance and class averages did not decline and the new benchmark of 80% meeting the criterion was still easily met. Performance continues to be impressive for this assessment. We would like to monitor this for an additional year before considering whether to alter the benchmark or the actual assessment. As these classes are taught 100% online for all students, the professor increased instructional support for this assessment in 2021-2022. She reported plans to continue and even increase instructional support for this assessment in 2024-2025 and then we will discuss possible changes for the following year.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in both the Traditional and Online Programs (100% and 86%, respectively). Despite a decrease in the percentage of students who have met the benchmark for the Online Program, the average number of students who met the benchmark for both programs combined has remained consistent (93% for 2023-2024, and 93% for 2024-2025).

The faculty who teaches this course will be changing in the 2025-2026 assessment year, but they will receive consistent support and supervision from the course coordinator. We will continue to monitor the data to make informed decisions about future changes to the current assessment. The current assessment, which is a single point indicator for students' understanding of learning theories, may not be a valid measure for comprehension.

To increase the validity of the data we report on students' comprehension, we will replace the Major Content Area Assessment with a new assessment in the coming reporting cycle. Data for this assessment will be drawn from students' scores on a set of five virtual experiments which are completed throughout the semester using Sniffy the Virtual Rat (an Affordable Education Resource). This will also provide more evidence of changes in students' understanding of basic learning principles.

9 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 305 Final Exam Research Paper

Assessment: PSYC 305 final exam research paper.

Benchmark: 70% of students will score 70% or higher on a final exam research paper in PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 80% or higher on a laboratory report of a research demonstration that they complete as part of PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

Prior to 2022-2023, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 70% or higher on a laboratory report of a research demonstration that they complete as part of PSYC 305 - Psychology of Learning.

Prior to 2015, the benchmark was 60% of students will score 70% or higher.

9.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	22/26	84.6%	Yes
2021-2022	19/21	90%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2022-2023	17/28	61%	No

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	32/34	94%	Yes
2024-2025	24/25	96%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	9/9	100%	Yes
2021-2022	12/12	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2022-2023	13/26	50%	No

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	24/25	96%	Yes
2024-2025	26/26	100%	Yes

9.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The scores on this assessment remain high. We should definitely consider raising the criterion to 80%.

2021-2022:

The scores on this assessment remain consistently high. We will raise the criterion to 80% beginning with 2022-2023.

2022-2023:

In 2019-2020 a new instructor began to be involved with this course and worked closely with the instructor who had taught the course for more than 25 years. In 2020-2021 that new instructor took over the course just as it transitioned to a fully online course for the first time in its history, due to the loss of our building and animal laboratory in Fall 2020. In Fall of 2021, students continued to perform fairly well on this assessment as all faculty were more lenient and allowed students unlimited time to complete assignments and in some cases, allowed students multiple attempts to improve their work. In 2022-2023, there was some expectation that coursework rigor and standards return to pre-2020 levels, and students were expected to meet rubric standards for all assessments in this course and to do so according to a timeline specified in the syllabus.

Our students in both the online and F2F groups performed poorly on this assessment and we believe the reasons described above explain why they struggled. The current instructor is more demanding and has high standards for performance, but these standards are clearly explained and students are given high-quality instructional support to meet those standards. For this reason, the faculty agreed that this assessment should remain the same, but we should lower the benchmark back to where it was before last year. The instructor is planning additional instructional support for next year as well.

The faculty agreed to make two changes for this assessment: (1) The "title" of the assessment should be changed from "PSYC 305 Laboratory Report of a research demonstration" to "PSYC 305 Final Exam Research Paper," which more accurately describes the assessment that has always been used AND differentiates it from the other laboratory assessment used in our annual assessment plan. (2) Our new benchmark for 2023-2024 should state that 70% of students will score 70% or higher on this assessment.

2023-2024:

Students in both groups easily met the new benchmark (70% earning 70%+), with 94% of F2F and 96% of online students earning 70% or higher. In general, students performed better this year than in the previous year. We believe this is because the professor added more instructional support in 23/24. This will continue in 24/25 and now that we will focus on only two assessments in this course, even more instructional support will be added for the final research paper. We will monitor this for another year as the benchmark was just changed last year. After 24/25, we will re-evaluate and determine whether the assignment or the benchmark needs to be adjusted.

2024-2025:

The number of students from the Traditional and Online Programs who met the benchmark has increased (94% to 96% and 96% to 100% respectively), which appears to indicate a pattern of improvement that began in 2023-2024.

The faculty who teaches this course will be changing in the 2025-2026 assessment year, but they will receive consistent support and supervision from the course coordinator. For this reason, we will maintain the assessment and benchmark for the upcoming assessment cycle and implement a change for the following year based on our observations.

10 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 404 Comprehensive Content Exam

Assessment: PSYC 404 Comprehensive Content Exam.

Benchmark: 80% of students will score 80% or higher on an assessment of major concepts in PSYC 404 - History and Theories in Psychology.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 80% of students will score 70% or higher on an assessment of major concepts in PSYC 404 - History and Theories in Psychology.

Prior to 2022-2023, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 70% or higher on an assessment of major concepts in PSYC 404 - History and Theories in Psychology.

Prior to 2016, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 60% or higher on an assessment of major concepts in PSYC 404 - History and Theories in Psychology.

10.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	45/45	100%	Yes
2021-2022	36/36	100%	Yes
2022-2023	39/39	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	32/35	91%	Yes
2024-2025	23/28	82%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	30/30	100%	Yes
2021-2022	41/41	100%	Yes
2022-2023	46/46	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	24/26	92%	Yes
2024-2025	12/17	71%	No

10.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The revised data collection yielded data similar to the prior plan: Most students exceeded the benchmark. We will discuss raising the benchmark for the assessment after the next assessment cycle.

2021-2022:

It is time to change this benchmark; the scores indicate high-level performance for both traditional and online students. Faculty approved this change, and we request that the benchmark be changed to "80% of students will score 70% or higher" for this assessment.

2022-2023:

Students continue to perform very well on this assessment, with 100% of both the online and F2F cohorts meeting the 70% criterion for the comprehensive final exam. It should be noted that since Spring of 2020 all sections of this course have taken an online final exam, so the assessment has been identical. The instructors of PSYC 404 and faculty believe a general knowledge of course content is sufficient and memorization of facts and theories is not essential; thus, students are given generous time limits to complete the final exam and it is not proctored.

However, a thorough review of exam scores this year revealed that 13 students in one instructor's course earned 100% on the comprehensive final exam, compared to only 1 student in the other instructor's course. Discussions with these two instructors (both adjuncts) revealed that the course assessments and final exam are not consistent, and the faculty believe that the final exam may not have been a truly valid measure of content knowledge in at least one section. At this time, two changes are being made: (1) Both adjunct instructors teaching this course will meet with the Department Head to discuss making the course content delivery and especially the final exam a more consistent and valid measure of course content (the final exams should be very similar across sections). (2) We are increasing the benchmark for this assessment -- it should now read: "80% of students will earn 80% or higher on this assessment of major concepts in PSYC 404 - History & Theories in Psychology."

2023-2024:

Both F2F and online students again easily met the benchmark for the comprehensive final exam even though we increased it last year to "80% will earn 80% of higher." Based on the issue of inconsistency across sections (described above), we had one instructor teach all sections of PSYC 404 in 23/24. As a result, scores were consistent across sections and across the two cohorts; 91% of F2F students and 92% of online students met the benchmark. Again, all sections are taught 100% online so their performance should be similar.

We will not alter the benchmark or the assessment at this time, and given that it is a final exam in Moodle (self-scoring) the use of a rubric does not make sense. However, we are planning to add a F2F section of PSYC 404 in Spring 2025 and this will be taught by a different instructor. We have not offered PSYC 404 in person since 2018 or 2019, so we will observe the data next year and then compare the performance of F2F and online classes to evaluate consistency.

2024-2025:

The number of students who met the benchmark in both the Traditional and Online Programs has declined (91% to 82% and 92 to 71% respectively); the benchmark for this assessment was met for the Traditional Program, but not in the Online Program. This change is consistent with the offering of one section of this course face-to-face again, as well as timing of faculty changes. This new faculty member is full-time (the previous one was not), and maintains higher expectations of students' performance, but the faculty member clearly communicates such expectations to students, who are provided with consistent and high quality instructional support.

Both the online and in-person sections of this course will have the same full-time faculty member in the next assessment year, which will help to increase overall consistency between course sections. We will continue to monitor the data for this assignment to make informed decisions about changes to the assignment and/or benchmark.

To target fluency (answering with accuracy and speed) instead of just comprehension (answering with accuracy), the style of the quizzes, exams, and final exams will change for the 2025-2026 cycle. Students will have a limited amount of time to complete quizzes and exams (7 minutes or less). Both will involve less than 60 multiple-choice questions. Some of these questions will be extra credit questions that students can earn if accuracy for all questions is 80% or higher. Students will have to answer questions in a randomized order without being able to go back. Quizzes will pertain to weekly course content. Exams will pertain to unit course content. Quizzes later on in the semester will incorporate questions from earlier weeks to help students prepare for exams. The final exams will involve 120 questions that students have two hours to complete. The last 20 questions will be extra credit, in the same style as the quizzes and exams. Final exams will be taken in person or online, depending on the section. They will consist of questions used from the quiz and exam banks.

11 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 404 Major Term Paper

Assessment: PSYC 404 Major Term Paper.

Benchmark: 80% will score 75% or higher on a term paper in PSYC 404 - History and Theories of Psychology.

Prior to 2024-2025, 80% of students will score 70% or higher on a term paper in PSYC 404 - History and Theories of Psychology.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 90% of students will score 70% or higher on a term paper in PSYC 404 - History and Theories of Psychology.

11.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	37/42	88%	No
2021-2022	33/34	97%	Yes
2022-2023	38/38	100%	Yes
2023-2024	34/34	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 75% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2024-2025	23/26	88%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	23/27	85%	No
2021-2022	41/41	100%	Yes
2022-2023	36/41	88%	No
2023-2024	25/25	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 75% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2024-2025	17/20	85%	Yes

11.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

This assessment's benchmark changed from 70% of students scoring 70% or higher to 90% of students scoring 70% or higher, and I have no recollection of agreeing to this benchmark. However, the scores for this assignment meet the benchmark, but I remain puzzled about the change in benchmark (and, quite frankly, surprised that such a high benchmark was attained.

2021-2022:

After some years of scores that needed improvement, we see good scores for this assessment for both the online and traditional programs. Everyone who finished the course did acceptable work on this challenging assignment. We plan to monitor the assessment for at least another year before looking at changes; we are satisfied with the current assignment and students' performance.

2022-2023:

100% of our F2F students and 88% of our online students meet the criterion of 70% or higher on this assessment, and this level of performance pleases us. Based on the comment above for 2020-2021 and the facts that (1) the benchmark was increased significantly from 70% to 90% of students earning 70% or higher, and (2) we are not consistently meeting that higher benchmark despite excellent performance overall, we decided to lower our benchmark for next year to an intermediate level -- it should now read 80% of students will score 70% or higher. We are also increasing instructional support for APA formatting, which seems to be where students lose most of the points on this assignment. This is a consistent problem throughout our program, but the faculty continue to believe that APA formatting is an important component of undergraduate students' training.

2023-2024:

Students continue to perform well on the term papers, with 100% of both online and F2F students meeting the criterion of 70% or higher. In previous years, we have altered the benchmark of how many students would meet the criterion (from 70% to 90% to 80%), but the criterion of a score of 70% or higher has never been adjusted. As many students earn As on this paper, it is reasonable to assume that a higher criterion might be utilized.

Because we will make a major adjustment in 24/25 by adding a F2F section for the first time in about 6 years, we will be focused on comparing F2F and online students next year and seeing that the two groups perform somewhat consistently. Thus, the only change we wish to make is to slightly adjust the criterion upward. For 2024/2025, the new benchmark should read "80% will score 75% or higher on a term paper in PSYC 404 - History and Theories of Psychology. We will also ensure that both sections utilize the same assignment instructions and rubrics for this assessment.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for both the Traditional and Online Programs (88% and 85%, respectively).

Given this is only the second assessment year with the new benchmark, we will continue to monitor the data for this assessment to best inform future changes to the assessment itself, or to the benchmark.

Due to a new faculty member running the course, the focus of the final paper changed in the Spring semester. The paper now focuses on students developing and describing their own philosophy of psychology and how it can be used to address problems that matter to them. The paper has several parts, including sections that target (a) philosophical assumptions, (b) how to evaluate the effectiveness of one's philosophy, (c) what the "mind" is, (d) how their philosophical approach is similar and different from other approaches, (e) limitations of their approach, and (f) implications of their approach. Students will get ample time to work on their papers during class. This paper will be required in the 2025-2026 cycle. Because of the change in this assignment, the benchmark will not be changed.

12 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 427 Final Exam Questions

Assessment: PSYC 427 questions on the final exam concerning basic statistical analyses and research designs.

Prior to 2024-2025, the assessment was PSYC 427 exam questions concerning problems and solutions to issues of research design.

Benchmark: 70% of students will correctly answer 70% of final exam questions assessing knowledge of basic statistical analyses and research designs.

Prior to 2024-2025, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 70% or higher on questions assessing problems and solutions to issues of research design in PSYC 427 - Research Methodology in Psychology.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 60% of Psychology graduates will answer 70% of questions correctly on the topic of solving research and design problems in PSYC 427 - Research Methodology in Psychology.

12.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	34/34	100%	Yes
2021-2022	17/18	94%	Yes
2022-2023	34/34	100%	Yes
2023-2024	26/30	87%	Yes
2024-2025*	32/33	97%	Yes

* Note the change in assessment for 2024-2025 in the Assessment and Benchmark field above.

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	20/21	95%	Yes
2021-2022	25/30	83%	Yes
2022-2023	21/23	91%	Yes
2023-2024	26/32	81%	Yes
2024-2025*	24/24	100%	Yes

* Note the change in assessment for 2024-2025 in the Assessment and Benchmark field above.

12.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

All students who completed this assessment met the benchmark. However, these data do not reflect students' performance completely; about 1/4 of the students in the Online program and 50% of those in the Traditional program did not complete the assignment (and many did not complete the course). Therefore, the high scores are not representative of the struggle that occurred in this class. Improved access to campus resources should improve our ability to deliver multiple sources of assistance for students.

2021-2022:

The scores on this assessment remain high, and the problems with students failing to finish the course have improved. This course has a higher drop rate than some courses, but it is not the extreme rate that appeared previously. We will maintain the current benchmark to determine if it is stable enough to warrant raising.

2022-2023:

Students continue to achieve high scores on this assessment; it is clear that the long-standing benchmark of 60% achieving 70% or higher should now be increased. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the this assessment is not a very stringent one and some level of grade inflation is possible. All sections are taught 100% online by the same instructor, so the distinction between online and F2F students is not a meaningful one. Additionally, faculty discussion revealed that exams are no longer being administered in this course; thus, we are uncertain how this indicator is being assessed.

A meeting has been scheduled with the DH and the undergraduate research team (August 2023) to determine how this indicator should be assessed (e.g., adding the testing component back into the course or adjusting the description of the indicator to reflect new instructional policies). We will also discuss possibly altering this indicator completely, as the needs of this course have changed in recent years in light of feedback from both students and the instructors teaching the next two courses in the research sequence. For now, we have agreed to increase the benchmark for this assessment—it should now read: "70% of students will score 70% or higher on questions assessing problems and solutions to issues of research design." (NOTE the change in wording as well as the increased percentage.)

2023-2024:

Students in both the F2F and online cohorts met the new increased benchmark for this assignment, with 87% of F2F students and 81% of online students achieving the criterion of 70% or higher on the final exam questions. We decided to implement a comprehensive final exam for all sections of this course in 2022-2023 and to focus that exam on issues pertaining to this assessment -- research design. However, the exam ended up including some questions about statistical analyses and research ethics, so the scores reported for 2023-2024 were not based only on research design.

After discussion with faculty teaching this course and others teaching in the three-semester research sequence, statistical analysis *should be* a focus in this course. It is part of the course description (catalog) and it relates to about 40 of the course content historically. Based on both student AND faculty feedback we have decided to increase this to 50% or more of the course content; thus, we need to rename this assessment completely, and then use the new final exam format to assess it.

Please rename this assessment for 2024-2025 to read, "PSYC 427 questions on the final exam concerning basic statistical analyses and research designs." Then rename the benchmark to read, "70% of students will correctly answer 70% of final exam questions assessing knowledge of basic statistical analyses and research designs."

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional and Online Programs (97% and 100%, respectively). The percentage of students who met the benchmark for the Traditional Program has increased from the 2023-2024 academic year, which is closer to the previous 4 years' average benchmark of 96%, and the percentage of students who met the benchmark for the Online Program has increased from the 2023-2024 academic year.

Across sections, we will work to increase consistency, which will be bolstered by having one full-time faculty member who teaches each section. We will continue to monitor the data to make informed decisions about changes to the assignment and benchmark for the upcoming academic year.

In the next reporting cycle, we will change this benchmark so that it includes all questions from the final exam. All questions are pertinent to student success. Accordingly, the benchmark will be, "70% of students will correctly answer 70% of final exam questions."

13 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 428 Research Proposal

Assessment: PSYC 428 Research Proposal.

Benchmark: 70% of students will receive a score of 70% or higher on a research proposal that they prepare as part of PSYC 428 - Procedures in Psychology Research.

Prior to 2016, the benchmark was 70% of students will receive a grade of C or higher.

13.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	25/27	92.5%	Yes
2021-2022	20/23	87%	Yes
2022-2023	20/27	74%	Yes
2023-2024	28/31	90%	Yes
2024-2025	22/22	100%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	15/18	83%	Yes
2021-2022	18/19	95%	Yes
2022-2023	17/23	74%	Yes
2023-2024	17/18	94%	Yes
2024-2025	24/25	96%	Yes

13.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

Although students in both program met the benchmark, students in both classes struggled with this assignment, which is the final assignment for the class. Similar to PSYC 427, which is a prerequisite for this one, the non-completion rate for this course was higher than in the past. We believe this situation was especially problematic for students who registered for a F2F section that immediately transitioned to an online course due to the hurricanes. If this analysis is correct, then campus improvements should help the situation. If not, then we must explore how to provide assistance using technology for those who are struggling.

2021-2022:

Over the past year, the research faculty in the department have met to develop solutions for the difficulties we have experienced with this class (and the entire three-semester research sequence). This course & assessment is particularly important -- it is the middle class in our three-semester research sequence, and the goal is to write an acceptable research proposal (the only assessment for this course). The assignment is challenging and requires a variety of skill-building work for students. The drop rate for the course is higher than for some but did improve over the rate observed in previous semesters. The combination of a lower drop /incomplete rate and the acceptable scores for both traditional and online programs indicates that we are moving in the right direction for this class. We agreed to continue to monitor this assessment for another year before discussing any changes, other than to improve instructional support for the written proposal and to provide more detailed feedback on early drafts.

2022-2023:

Students in both the F2F and online programs met the benchmark for this assessment and performed equally well (74% for both groups met the criterion). However, this percentage is considerably lower than we have observed in the past five years. The undergraduate faculty met and decided to refer this issue to the undergraduate research committee, who met later. An orientation session is scheduled for August 2023, during which everyone teaching in the research sequence will receive (a) information from this assessment report, (b) ideas about increasing instructional support for the research proposal, (c) a new revised syllabus and calendar (consistent across sections) that provides structure to multiple steps of the proposal writing process, with scheduled feedback provided for each step before students can proceed to subsequent steps. This process will be piloted with the summer sections of PSYC 428 and then revised further for full implementation in the Fall 2023 semester. For now, no changes to the benchmark/criteria will be made.

2023-2024:

Scores improved for 2023/2024, with 90+% of both F2F and online groups meeting the benchmark for the first time since 2018. We attribute this to the revisions made to PSYC 428, including a revised Syllabus with deadlines for each step in the research proposal process and more detailed instruction. We hope to continue this trend in 2024/2025 and made additional changes to PSYC 428 effective with the Summer 2024 semester. These changes for the upcoming year include (1) a new textbook for the entire research sequence (PSYC 427 /428/495), (2) additional training for instructors of PSYC 428, (3) a revised course calendar to help students progress toward completion of the research proposal, and (4) additional training in statistical analyses and research design added to the prerequisite course (PSYC 427) so PSYC 428 instructors can spend less time reviewing that content and more time focused on preparation of the proposal. We will monitor student progress on the proposal to see if the gains made this past year continue, and then discuss in May 2025 whether additional changes need to be made.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional and Online Programs (100% and 96%, respectively). The increase in the number of students who met the benchmark during the 2024-2025 assessment year is indicative of the improvements that have been made to standardize all sections of PSYC 428.

In 2025-2026, we will implement weekly meetings with 428 faculty to 1.) provide direct support, 2.) increase structure and consistency, and 3.) assess areas of strength as well as areas for improvement to the course content. This will help to ensure all future changes to the course are well-informed and systematic, which will directly benefit PSYC 428, and extend outward to the other courses in the research sequence. Based on these changes, we will increase the benchmark to "80% of students will score 70% or higher on the Finalized Proposal" for the upcoming assessment cycle.

14 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 471 Major Content Area Assessment

Assessment: PSYC 471 Major Content Area Assessment.

Benchmark: 60% of students will score 70% or higher on an exam covering basic concepts in physiology that pertains to psychology in PSYC 471 - Physiological Psychology.

14.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	42/47	89%	Yes
2021-2022	27/41	61%	Yes
2022-2023	42/43	98%	Yes
2023-2024	39/48	81%	Yes
2024-2025	47/48	98%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	16/20	80%	Yes
2021-2022	40/42	95%	Yes
2022-2023	54/56	96%	Yes
2023-2024	19/21	90%	Yes
2024-2025	23/25	92%	Yes

14.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

Scores on the assessment for this benchmark have decreased somewhat over the years. This year, the sample itself may be part of the reason. Our faculty members discussed considerations for the low scores, including the chaotic semesters that were included in the current assessment period and the timing of the assessments themselves, which occur relatively early in the semester. The timing may influence the scores because several of the students with low scores did not finish the class successfully or even dropped the class, yet their data are included in this report. As all sections are reaching the benchmarks, we decided to monitor students' performance for another year without changing that benchmark.

2021-2022:

The decline in scores for the traditional program not only continued but increased; students in that program *barely* met the benchmark (61%), the lowest we have seen, which both puzzles and concerns us. In our meeting, we discussed possible factors related to the students, the instructors, or some combination of both. The majority of students in the traditional F2F program take this class as an in-person lecture class with proctored exams (no notes or books can be used), whereas most of the students in the online program take it online with exams that are not proctored. The format of the two assessments also differ; anecdotally, students consider the online course exams to be easier. As such, faculty members will meet again in the Fall 2022 semester to discuss how to better help students meet the standards we have set for them. Additionally, our instructor for the in-person section of this course is retiring this summer, which means ALL sections will be taught online next year. No changes will be made to this assessment or the benchmark until we have at least a year of consistent online instruction (with multiple online sections & instructors) to assess their performance on this assessment.

2022-2023:

In our first year of offering this class only online (two sections per semester with different instructors), all sections for both the traditional and online student cohorts easily met the benchmark. Specifically, 98% of students in our traditional F2F program and 96% of students in our online program met the criterion of 70% or higher on a major content area assessment (e.g., exam). We are somewhat concerned that the lack of proctoring for these online courses could be inflating students' scores. Additionally, the two instructors used different types of assessments this past year (only one gave a comprehensive final exam). Thus, we will discuss assessments for this course with both instructors during faculty meetings in August 2023 and make the assessments more consistent (e.g., comprehensive final exam with similar length, types of questions, time limit, etc.). We plan to review data again next year and then, if performance levels remain high, we will adjust the benchmark for this assessment.

2023-2024:

Both the F2F and online cohorts easily met the benchmark for this assessment, though the online students (90%) performed slightly better (81%) and neither group performed quite as well as the previous year (98% and 96%, respectively). We continue to have issues with consistency for this assessment because we began to offer a F2F section of this course again in Spring 2024. The online section had an un-proctored content exam (first five chapters) while the F2F section had a proctored exam (no notes/books could be used). Thus, far more students failed the in-person exam than the online exam. NOTE: Students in both programs (F2F and online) were in BOTH sections (F2F and online), so the difference in performance did not show up in the benchmark measures reported above (both groups met the benchmark).

As discussed this in our meeting this summer and decided to meet in August 2024 to decide on the best specific exam for both F2F and online sections to complete for this assessment (e.g., possibly a mini-exam, mid-term exam, or comprehensive final exam that requires application of course content), and the time limit and ability to reference books and notes would be consistent for both course formats. This decision will produce a consistent exam with consistent format -- they could both be given online, for example. We will implement this change in the 2024-2025 academic year and monitor students' progress next year.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional and Online Programs (98% and 92%, respectively). The percentage of students who met the benchmark has increased for both programs between this year and last, with the greater improvement reflected in the Online Program.

Last year's goal to increase consistency in the assessment for PSYC 471 is evident in the improvements that are observed between both Traditional and Online Programs between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 assessment years. Due to this, we will increase the benchmark for the upcoming assessment year to "80% of students will score 70% or higher on a comprehensive knowledge assessment of basic concepts in Physiological Psychology."

15 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 495 Senior Thesis

Assessment: PSYC 495 Senior Thesis.

Benchmark: 70% of students will score 80% or higher on their final senior thesis paper in PSYC 495 - Senior Thesis.

Prior to 2023-2024, the benchmark was 70% of students will score 70% or higher on their senior thesis paper in PSYC 495 - Senior Thesis.

15.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	35/35	100%	Yes
2021-2022	19/19	100%	Yes
2022-2023	27/27	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	32/34	94%	Yes
2024-2025	25/28	89%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	13/13	100%	Yes
2021-2022	18/18	100%	Yes
2022-2023	26/26	100%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2023-2024	22/27	82%	Yes
2024-2025	22/23	96%	Yes

15.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

Changed data collection procedures did not affect this assessment; student scores remain very high. This score represents the final assessment for the capstone class, so high grades are expected; students who did not do well would not have grades for this assessment. However, raising the benchmark seems like a reasonable step, which I will discuss with the faculty.

2021-2022:

The distribution of traditional and online students has come close to equal over the past several years, and the achievement of each of these groups of students has also become more equal. This year, students in both programs did well in the assessment of their senior thesis papers.

We discussed these high scores and the possibility of changing the benchmark, but we also discussed the situation that results in such high scores. That situation is that the final paper in PSYC 495 has gone through multiple edits, beginning with a formal, written proposal in PSYC 428 and continuing into PSYC 495. Using the final paper as an assessment *should* result in good grades; students would not be in the senior thesis course without the guidance and ability to produce a good final paper. The faculty discussed the possibility of using an earlier draft for this assessment to have more variation in grades. The faculty also discussed the option of adopting a rubric that standardizes grading of the senior thesis paper to ensure that instructors attend to the many details of the paper that qualify it as well written, accurate, and correct in the many details of APA format. We will observe students' performance on the final paper for one more year before deciding whether to alter the assessment or to increase the benchmark (or both).

2022-2023:

Students again performed well on their final papers in PSYC 495, with 100% of students in both traditional and online programs meeting the 70% criterion. The last year fewer than 100% of students reached 70% or higher was 2017; thus, it is time to make a change. Faculty members met in May 2023 to decide on these changes, and all instructors will attend an orientation session in August 2023 so these changes can be implemented across sections. These changes will include: (1) a standardized syllabus for all sections of PSYC 428 (the prerequisite for this course), with specific expectations for the research proposal and IRB application; (2) a standardized syllabus for all sections of PSYC 495, including detailed instructions for the final research paper and a rubric for scoring that paper at the end of the course; this will include a specific timeline for each section of the paper, point deductions for late or incomplete submissions, and more stringent grading based on rubric components that instructors will use consistently. We are also changing the benchmark for next year -- it should now read: "70% of students will score 80% or higher on their final senior thesis paper in PSYC 495."

2023-2024:

Both groups again met the benchmark for this assessment, though performance declined from the previous year... 94% of F2F students and 82% of online students met the new higher benchmark (80% score rather than 70% score), compared to 100% of both groups the previous year. Given that we increased the criterion score this makes sense.

A standardized syllabus was developed for all sections with similar assessments and expectations for performance on the final thesis paper. However, some inconsistencies were noted due to instructor changes. Specifically, two new instructors taught the course in Fall 2023, and a third new instructor taught it in Spring 2024. A rubric was developed for the final thesis paper, but we discovered that some instructors used the rubric to score the posters but NOT the final papers. Additionally, one new instructor offered students extra credit at the end of the semester and added those points to the final paper score, rather than an extra credit column in Moodle or another assessment. All of these inconsistencies will be addressed in 2024/2025. Specifically, (1) no new instructors will teach the course, (2) information about these inconsistencies and a reminder to use the rubric when scoring the final paper will be distributed to all instructors, and (3) instructors will meet (virtually or in-person) to establish expectations and scoring consistency. We will monitor this assessment for another year and see if previous inconsistencies can be resolved before reviewing the benchmarks for possible changes after the 2024/2025 academic year.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional and Online Programs (89% and 96%, respectively). Despite this being the second year of our increased benchmark (from a score of 70% or higher to a score of 80% or higher), students did not seem to have difficulty meeting the benchmark. This is likely to be indicative of the newly implemented efforts to increase consistency through the standardization of the rubric, as well as course content, across sections of PSYC 495.

In 2025-2026, we will implement weekly meetings with 428 faculty to 1.) provide direct support, 2.) increase structure and consistency, and 3.) assess areas of strength as well as areas for improvement within the course itself. This will not only help to inform systematic changes within PSYC 495, but also the other courses in the research sequence. Based on what has been observed in this cycle, we will increase the benchmark to "80% of students will score 80% or higher on their final senior thesis paper in PSYC 495 - Senior Thesis."

16 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 495 Format Score on Senior Thesis

Assessment: PSYC 495 Format Score of Senior Thesis paper, indicating acceptable performance in writing that adheres to American Psychological Association format in terms of organization and referencing.

Benchmark: 70% of students will score 70% or higher on the format scores of their senior thesis paper in PSYC 495 - Senior Thesis.

16.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	33/35	94%	Yes
2021-2022	19/19	100%	Yes
2022-2023	21/27	78%	Yes
2023-2024	30/31	97%	Yes
2024-2025	18/18	100%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 70% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	12/13	92%	Yes
2021-2022	18/18	100%	Yes
2022-2023	22/26	85%	Yes
2023-2024	24/25	96%	Yes
2024-2025	18/18	100%	Yes

16.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The high scores on this assessment represent a combination of students' and instructors' diligence in working on this section of the senior thesis projects. We believe that students' good work will continue, so raising the criterion may be a reasonable step in the future.

2021-2022:

The performance for both traditional and online was excellent, but we have misgivings about the validity of these students' grades. This assessment focuses on how well students follow the (many) rules of formatting a research report per American Psychological Association (APA) formatting regulations. This requirement is challenging, and we were surprised that so many students received high grades on the formatting component of their final papers. This was especially true after we attended the first in-person poster session we have had in a couple of years. Faculty members attending these sessions quickly noticed that multiple students' posters contained formatting and referencing errors that should have been corrected prior to their presentations. Given that posters are taken directly from their final papers, this suggests their papers also contained such errors. However, instructors reported almost all As on the final papers for this assessment. Thus, we decided not to alter the assessment or the benchmark but to instead add a rubric for scoring the formatting component of this final paper to ensure more accurate assessment and perhaps avoid grade inflation on final papers next year.

2022-2023:

Students' scores did decline overall this year; while this wasn't our goal exactly, it does appear that adding a rubric for scoring the APA formatting of the final thesis paper did result in more stringent grading (or less grade inflation). One problem we see now is a lack of consistency across sections. Specifically, a couple of instructors still submitted reports that 100% of their students earned As and Bs on their final papers (easily meeting the criterion of 70% or higher), while one instructor reported that fewer than half of all students met the 70% or higher criterion. Upon discussing this, we learned this wasn't the result of how the rubric was applied, but likely due to instructional methods. Some instructors spend a great deal of time teaching students about APA formatting, and conducting multiple reviews of drafts with quality feedback (which naturally improves grades for students who put forth effort and respond to feedback). Other instructors were less engaged and provided very little feedback, and one continued to give good grades for average performance.

To resolve these issues, additional orientation sessions are being held this summer and again in August 2023 before the Fall semester. All instructors will be trained again on the use of the rubric, they will have a standardized syllabus (across sections), and one faculty member will be responsible for assisting other instructors with course management.

Additionally, the Department Head is preparing a list of faculty expectations to be distributed to these instructors during August faculty meetings, and these will include information about appropriate online instruction, timely responses to students' submission, quality feedback and grading policies, and compliance with use of the new rubric. No change to the benchmark or assessment is needed at this time, as students met the benchmark but they no longer are achieving it at such a high rate (100%). We want another year to see how these instructional training sessions will help us improve how this assessment is scored.

2023-2024:

Both groups again easily met the benchmark, with 97% of F2F students and 96% of online students achieving 70%+ on the format score of the senior thesis paper. However, during faculty discussion about this assessment, we discovered a new inconsistency across instructors. Some instructors used scores on APA formatting for the final thesis paper (as intended), but several instructors used the APA formatting score from the rubrics used to score the poster instead. (Students submit final papers but also present at formal poster sessions, and APA formatting is supposed to be assessed for both.)

Now that a rubric for the paper will be used more consistently (see previous assessment in this reporting cycle relating to final paper grade), we would like to (1) ensure that APA formatting is scored on that rubric, (2) ask all instructors to use that rubric component for this assessment in the 2024/2025 academic year, and (3) monitor students' performance for another year before discussing any changes to the benchmark or assessment for the following year.

2024-2025:

For the first time since the 2021-2022 assessment year, 100% of students met the benchmark for the Format Score on the Senior Thesis. This is likely to be indicative of the newly implemented efforts to increase consistency through the standardization of the rubric, as well as course content, across sections of PSYC 495.

In 2025-2026, we will implement weekly meetings with 495 faculty to 1.) provide direct support, 2.) increase structure and consistency, and 3.) assess areas of strength as well as areas for improvement within the course itself, which will help to inform systematic changes throughout the research sequence. Given APA format is already covered in the overall paper score (two separate rubrics that factor into the same grade), reporting on formatting scores in this manner may not be useful. We are discussing alternative assessments to replace this one, and are considering the utility of reporting students' scores on the final presentation at the semesterly Student Research Symposium.

17 Assessment and Benchmark PSYC 499 Classic/Influential Research

Assessment: PSYC 499 Classic/Influential Research.

Benchmark: 80% of students will demonstrate their knowledge of classic studies in psychology by scoring 80% or higher on an oral presentation of at least one such study in PSYC 499 - Advanced General Psychology.

Prior to 2022-2023, the benchmark was 75% of students will demonstrate their knowledge of Classic Studies in Psychology by scoring 75% or higher on an oral presentation of at least one such study in PSYC 499 - Advanced General Psychology.

Prior to 2016, the benchmark was 75% of students will score 70% or higher.

17.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students with 75% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	42/43	98%	Yes
2021-2022	21/23	91%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2022-2023	31/35	89%	Yes
2023-2024	28/28	100%	Yes
2024-2025	37/39	95%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students with 75% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	17/17	100%	Yes
2021-2022	23/25	92%	Yes

Academic Year	Students with 80% or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2022-2023	25/29	86%	Yes
2023-2024	21/21	100%	Yes
2024-2025	22/24	92%	Yes

17.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

This assessment has also shown high scores over time, and we will consider raising the benchmark.

2021-2022:

For the current years' assessments, students in both the traditional and online programs did well on this indicator. We considered raising the benchmark based on last years' assessment, and the current good scores indicate to us that we should raise the criterion to "80% of students will demonstrate their knowledge of classic studies in psychology by scoring 80% or higher on an oral presentation of at least one such study."

2022-2023:

After increasing the benchmark a year ago students still met the benchmark for this assessment. Changes were made to this assessment somewhat inadvertently. Last year was the first year that a new instructor taught the F2F section since the course was first introduced over a decade ago. Prior to that, the F2F section gave oral, real-time presentations in front of the class, while the online section did not have virtual class meetings so recording presentations were uploaded to Moodle. Thus, this assessment has never been consistent across the two sections. The instructors for both sections met in the Summer of 2022 and worked to make all assessments in this course more consistent. This meant that students in both F2F and online programs recorded themselves giving their oral presentations (Zoom recordings) and then emailed them to their instructors, who uploaded the recordings to Moodle for other students to view. The instructors were also able to view the recordings for assessment purposes.

As students did not overwhelmingly surpass the benchmark we are not comfortable with altering that or the assessment itself this year. However, the F2F section implemented a peer evaluation last semester that worked quite well (and was included in the final grade), so we plan to do that in both sections next year. Both cohorts will use a rubric with a five-point rating scale for each component of the presentation, and the instructors will use the same rubric; these scores will be combined to make grading more consistent (and also to provide more feedback to students' about their performance on these presentations). We will review students' performance for another year to see whether addition of a peer-review and rubric scoring for both sections affects outcome data.

2023-2024:

Students performed very well on this assessment this year, with 100% of both online and F2F students meeting the benchmark of 80% of higher on their presentations. We attribute this to increased instructional support prior to the students preparing their presentations. Though performance has always been good (85%+ meeting the benchmark), we have never had both groups achieve 100% success on the benchmark.

One continued inconsistency we experienced again was in the format of the presentations themselves; additionally, scoring inconsistencies were observed. All students in the online sections submitted pre-recorded presentations (audio/visual) that were reviewed and scored only by the instructor. However, students in the F2F sections had the option of presenting "live" in front of the class (though some still pre-recorded and submitted their presentations), and then scoring was completed by TWO instructors co-teaching the course. Additionally, the F2F students each completed peer reviews of all presentations (for a grade), and the students' feedback were included when the instructor of record determined final grades for the presentations.

For the 2024-2025 academic year, instructors for both F2F and online sections have already discussed ways to make this assessment consistent across sections. We will meet in early August to finalize a decision about this, with plans to have ALL students pre-record and submit electronic versions of their presentations. We will also decide whether to include peer reviews in final scores or leave them out and this will be done for both sections. We will monitor students' performance for another year with these consistencies implemented (everyone completing the exact same assignment) before deciding about altering the benchmarks again.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional and Online Programs (95% and 92%, respectively). This is a decline from the 2023-2024 assessment year, in which 100% of students in both programs met the benchmark.

We will work toward increasing consistency between online and in-person sections so that students' exposure to with the material is as systematic as possible. Specifically, we will explore how to make the Classic/Influential Research presentation discussions that occur in the in-person section also occur in an appropriate iteration in the online section. To more accurately describe this assessment in the reporting process, we will be adjusting both the language and the benchmark. It will read as follows: "90% of students will demonstrate their knowledge of a classic study in psychology by scoring 80% or higher on an oral presentation of their assigned study in PSYC 499 - Advanced General Psychology."

18 Assessment and Benchmark Major Field Test - PSYC 499

Assessment: Psychology Major Field Test.

Benchmark: 60% of graduating students will score in the 30th percentile or higher on the Major Field Test in Psychology.

18.1 Data

Traditional Program:

Academic Year	Students in the 30th percentile or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	17/23	74%	Yes
2021-2022	17/21	81%	Yes
2022-2023	26/35	74%	Yes
2023-2024	17/28	61%	Yes
2024-2025	22/28	79%	Yes

Online Program:

Academic Year	Students in the 30th percentile or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
2020-2021	8/11	73%	Yes
2021-2022	14/25	56%	No
2022-2023	12/29	41%	No
2023-2024	10/20	50%	No
2024-2025	11/24	46%	No

18.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The instructor who teaches the Online course was unable to administer the Major Field Test and used a substitute assessment. However, that assessment was not directly equivalent to the Major Field Test, which resulted in eliminating those data for both for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. McNeese's Testing Center was able to administer the Major Field Test for students in the F2F section for both semesters. Thus, only about half of all students enrolled in PSYC 499 completed the MFT this past year.

Odd as it seems, this situation resulted in better scores and meeting the benchmark for the first time in quite a few semesters. However, it has been a challenge to meet the benchmark in the past, and the improvement for this reporting cycle does not represent a large improvement. Additionally with so many missing data points, we will monitor this for another year before considering any changes.

2021-2022:

The testing problems that occurred over the past several years are no longer problems, as students in both the F2F and online programs were able to take the Major Field Test in the Testing Center on campus. However, the scores remain problematic, especially for students in the online program. Students in that program failed to meet the benchmark for this indicator, with some of the lowest scores in years. The course will experience some changes beginning next semester, with a new instructor for the F2F section. The faculty decided not to make any changes until these transitions have taken place.

2022-2023:

We had a relatively normal testing experience in the Fall 2022 semester but experienced an unanticipated change for the Spring 2023 semester. Specifically, the Testing Center on campus informed us during the Spring semester that they would no longer offer/proctor the Major Field Test, leaving instructors to scramble to make other arrangements. We finally decided to switch to at-home testing, which ETS allows using ProctorU. Most of our students had never used ProctorU, so extensive time was devoted to testing system requirements, downloading software, days (and weeks in some cases) of trouble-shooting with ETS, and other problems. The vast majority of students were finally able to complete the Major Field Test on their own at home, but three students received an "incomplete" because they were unable to do so. By the time this assessment report was completed all but one had completed the assessment.

We are very concerned about the fact that students in the traditional F2F program met the benchmark (74% scored in the 30th percentile or higher), but only 41% of students in the online program met that benchmark. The difference between the two programs was greater in the Spring vs. the Fall semesters, suggesting the sudden switch to testing at home could have contributed. However, we are not sure why students in the online program would struggle more with that than students in the traditional F2F program. It is possible that they had several in-person class meetings in which the testing setup process was discussed, and lots of reminders about how to download the required software and get prepared for the exam. However, the Major Field Test is a nationally standardized, valid assessment of general content knowledge in Psychology; thus, it seems that students in our online program did not demonstrate a high level of general knowledge (at least in the Spring semester).

We have scheduled a meeting for both instructors of this course (including the Department Head) to discuss students' MFT performance and to try to identify their weaknesses (we DO get specific content area scores in addition to total scores), and to see if instructional support can improve performance for the online sections next year. Additionally, we have plenty of notice now about the need to set up at-home testing with ProctorU, so we will not have the last-minute preparation for testing with multiple delays we experienced in the Spring. We will wait to revisit the benchmark after observing students' performance for another year.

2023-2024:

Due to additional changes in how this course was taught and more intensive instruction in content for the Major Field Test, students in the F2F cohort (61%) barely met the 60% benchmark for this assessment and students in the online cohort (50%) did not meet the 60% + benchmark. We decided to further analyze these data because in both semesters, the online sections included several F2F students and the F2F sections included several online students. Thus the breakdown of F2F and online cohorts was less meaningful for 2023/2024. We anticipate this will continue, so it was important to the faculty to determine whether instructional format actually contributed to performance. We were surprised to discover that instructional format was a huge factor; specifically, the percent of students meeting the benchmark improved to 75% for the F2F sections, and declined to only 43% in the online sections. That is, almost twice as many students taking the course in person met the benchmark compared to those taking it online. We do not believe this reflects poor instruction in the online sections. Rather, we believe students in the online section are less engaged with course content (watching chapter lecture videos on their own compared to discussing the content in real time during in-person class meetings).

Instructors will meet in August to discuss ways to improve the performance of students taking this course online. This may include adding a more interactive component in the online sections, or recording new videos co-produced by all instructors that more closely match the lectures discussed in F2F sections that can then be posted in Moodle for the online sections. We will also discuss increasing instructional support for studying for the Major Field Test in the online sections, as the F2F sections have discussions about the exam, reminders about studying for it, and discussions about how to prepare for it throughout the semester. We will duplicate those efforts in the online sections and improve consistency to see if students' performance becomes more consistent (and better) for the 2024/2025 academic year.

2024-2025:

The benchmark was met for students in the Traditional Program (78%) but not for students in the Online Program (46%). Specifically, the percentage of students who met the benchmark in the Traditional Program in this assessment year is the second highest since 2020-2021, but the percentage of students who met the benchmark in the Online Program is the second lowest since 2020-2021.

The data from this assessment year indicate a clear need to work toward increasing consistency between the online and in-person sections of PSYC 499. Given the Major Field Test assesses knowledge from a significant cross-section of information in the field of psychology, this change will include evaluating the value of each assignment type, identifying those which are in need of improvement, conducting a thorough review of the MFT itself, and implementing the changes where appropriate based on our findings.

Given the Major Field Test is known to be high in content validity, changes we make to content delivery in this course will work to inform changes in other areas of the B.S. Psychology program. We will be increasing the benchmark for the upcoming cycle: "90% of graduating students will score in the 70th percentile or higher on the Major Field Test in Psychology."