

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Psychology
Master's and PhD Programs**

**Key Assessment Findings
2009-2010**

Comprehensive Exam

Twenty-one of the twenty-two students who took graduate comprehensive exams in AY2009-2010 passed. Seven students passed the MA comprehensive exam, and seven more passed with honors; one student who failed will retake the exam in the fall. Five students passed the doctoral comprehensives, and 2 additional students did so with honors. Overall passage rates were very high as in the previous year. Passing with honors rates are highly dependent on individual students, so the changes in those percentages with small samples is not considered to provide any useful conclusions.

**GRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS
Department of Psychology
AY2008-2009 through AY2009-2010**

	Fail		Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2009-2010							
Master's program	1	6.67%	7	46.67%	7	46.67%	15
Doctoral program	0	0.00%	5	71.43%	2	28.57%	7
2008-2009							
Master's program	0	0.00%	10	83.33%	2	16.67%	12
Doctoral program	0	0.00%	2	33.33%	4	66.67%	6

In addition to Statistics and Research Methods, the Department has a well-established process for tailoring the content of the comprehensive exams to individual students' areas of expertise. A scoring rubric that applies across all content areas was developed to include the extent to which responses (1) address the question, (2) show mastery of content, and (3) present material in a clear and organized way. Two graders independently score each question, providing a composite score for the three aspects of scoring. Discrepancies on any individual question of more than 1 point on a 4-point scale are reviewed by a third reader, and a composite grade across all three raters is assigned for that question.

Graduation and Internship

Twenty-two students graduated with an MA degree in Psychology; fifteen of these were in a terminal MA program, and seven are in a continuing PhD program. The terminal MA is

designed as a two-year program. Nine of the graduating MA students completed the program within two years or less; four students took 2 ½ years and one took 3 years. One student had left the program eight years earlier and completed his final requirement this year. Eight PhD students also graduated; 3 students took 5 ½ years; 2 took 6 ½ years; 2 took 7 ½ years. One student who moved with her advisor to another institution and then completed her research at a third institution took a cumulative total of 8 ½ years. All students who had an oral defense of their PhD dissertation passed.

For Clinical PhD students, there is a required 1-year internship in addition to the comprehensive examination, the dissertation, and the oral defense. All Clinical students who applied for internships for 2009-2010 were successful in obtaining a position. Licensure rates were last determined in December 2009, for students who graduated between 1997 and 2007. Forty-six of the 56 graduates during that period responded. Of those responding, 38 (83%) were licensed. The remaining 8 respondents had not yet attempted licensure.

Curricular Improvements for Master's Program and Ph.D. Program

The passing grade for MA comps was revised in fall, 2009, to 2.45 as an absolute minimum instead of 2.46, since the latter value was based on an irrelevant statistical rounding convention. Graduate student performance was reviewed at the Department's annual review meeting. Results from the comprehensive examinations were very positive, and no changes were made to the procedures for preparation of the examinations. A rubric for the comprehensive exam was developed, using the key areas of addressing the question, mastery of content, and presentation of material: organization and expressive clarity. This rubric is available as a guide to exam scoring, although graders still assign a global score to each question including all three components. The procedure has worked well for decades, and the faculty supported continuing the existing grading procedures.

The graduate Foundations courses, Historical and Biological Foundations (PSY709), and Cognitive and Social Foundations (PSY710) were successfully run again in the 2009-2010 academic year. The return of a department Professor who had been on sabbatical the previous year, led to significant redesign and improvement of the Cognitive and Social Foundations course. Additional neuroscience information was added, and there was improved integration of the two sections of the course.

The revised two-course graduate statistics sequence (PSY 705, 706) had been changed substantially in order to provide a more coherent approach across semesters as well as to provide an introduction of more advanced statistics concepts. A review of the course indicated that the new format does provide additional information to students. At the same time, the department plans to assess how to develop the opportunity for advanced statistical techniques to students with differing research needs.

Typically, MA students take courses with the PhD students. In general that model has worked well, although it is a challenge for weaker MA students. We plan to monitor the progress of the MA students in particular in core required courses during the coming year.

Graduates of the MA program do not regularly provide information on their plans. Fifteen of 38 graduates between 2005 and 2007 indicated their status. Nine were in PhD programs, 2 in PsyD programs, 3 engaged in research, and 1 working in law. Of the 9 students who began in 2008, 4 indicated what they were doing subsequently; 3 were continuing in a PhD program, 1 was a project director.

Given the year-to-year variation in the MA applicant pool, the Department will address whether targeted MA specializations would better serve our target populations for this degree.