

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Psychology
B.A. Program in Psychology

Key Assessment Findings
AY 2009-10

Senior Seminar:

Undergraduate majors in the Department of Psychology are required to successfully complete Senior Seminar in the fall semester of their senior year. Class size dramatically increased from 29 students in 2007-2008 to 53 in 2008-2009 and to 65 in 2009-2010. Evaluation of student performance was based on two in-class presentations and accompanying papers, ten short papers commenting on assigned readings, and participation in class, including commentaries on classmates' presentations. Overall grades improved compared to the previous two years; the number of 'A's stayed roughly constant (36.9%), while there was a higher percentage of 'B's (55.4%) and a lower percentage of 'C's (7.7%). All students passed, and a single student who failed in the previous year completed with a 'B-' grade.

SENIOR SEMINAR RESULTS

Department of Psychology

AY 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010

	A+, A, A-		B+, B, B-		C+, C, C-		F		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2009-2010	24	36.92%	36	55.38%	4	7.69%	0	0.00%	65
2008-2009	20	37.74%	23	43.40%	9	16.98%	1	1.89%	53
2007-2008	11	37.93%	13	44.83%	5	17.24%	0	0.00%	29

Comprehensive Examination:

The Department of Psychology uses performance on one of two standardized tests as its undergraduate comprehensive examination, the Major Field Test (MFT) in Psychology and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Psychology Subject Test. "Honors" is given for +1 standard deviation above the mean on the MFT, and +0.5 standard deviations above the mean for the GRE. The MFT is taken by a broad range of senior psychology majors, whereas the GRE is taken by a presumably more competitive sample of students who are planning to pursue graduate studies.

As illustrated in the table below, total passage rate for 2009-2010 was at 100%, with 25% of those passing with honors. Three students initially failed the exam, but subsequently passed. Two of the students who failed on the GRE exam, passed subsequently on the MFT. The rate of

failure was substantially below the average over the last 5 years. The rate for passing with honors was roughly comparable to the average over the previous 5 years.

On the MFT, students scored above the national mean (75th percentile based on a sample of approximately 30,000 students) for all subdomains (memory and thinking, sensory and physiology, developmental, clinical and abnormal, measurement and methodology, social). The strongest relative percentile performance was in measurement and methodology; the weakest was in social, comparable to the previous year. These results reflect, in part, difference in national subdomain performance.

Outcomes for Undergraduate Comprehensive Exam in 2009-2010 Academic Year

	First Try Fail	First Try Pass	Retry Pass	Total Pass	Pass with Honors	Total Pass & Honors
MFT	1	36	3	39	14	53
GRE Psych	2	6	0	6	1	7
Total	3 (5%)	42 (70%)	3 (5%)	45 (75%)	15 (25%)	60 (100%)

Curricular Improvements

Comprehensive Exam. Following a review of the results and current procedures for the comprehensive examination at its annual meeting, the Psychology Department approved two changes for the coming year. First, all students will take the MFT; the GRE-Psychology option will be eliminated. Having comprehensive data on a single test will help our self-assessment and curricular development, providing a common measure across all students. Whereas the department schedules and administers the MFT, GRE scheduling is left to the students and does not conform to our standard comprehensive exam times. As a consequence, several students with the intention to take the exam have missed the requisite GRE deadlines. Second, we will increase the criterion score for honors to +1.5 standard deviations above the MFT test mean; it is now set at +1 standard deviation. Since the 2006-2007 AY, the honors rate has been high, from 22% to 38%, and the revision will set a somewhat higher standard for our students. In the current year, the honors rate would have been roughly 15% instead of 25% using this revised criterion.

Senior Seminar. Despite the substantial increase in the number of seniors, a continuing effort is being made to enable substantial student participation in the Senior Seminar. The modified syllabus appears to have achieved that goal, while maintaining positive outcomes. The improvement from the previous year appears to be largely a function of the particular student cohort.

Other Initiatives. The Department also undertook several initiatives to improve the overall undergraduate experience.

- The first student to be enrolled for an UG Senior Thesis successfully completed her thesis and presented it to the faculty. The option will be continued again in the coming year.
- Six students helped the Director of Undergraduate Studies with the second year of a more formal peer-mentoring program. For the coming year, 37 *Psych Peer Mentors* were selected and trained. A specific mentoring *Handbook* has been made available for all mentors.
- Increasing opportunities were made available for undergraduate research involvement (PSY 495) with our faculty and off-campus options
- Three students did for-credit Psychology Internships this past year
- The plan for *infusing* career development information was extended to all four relevant classes: General Psychology, Statistics, Research Methods, and Senior Seminar.
- A training program was continued within the Department for the General Psychology (PSY201) instructors. A Blackboard site was established to aggregate information from instructors.