**August, 2009 Assessment Committee Feedback: Psychology**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Melissa Mercer-Tachick  
Plan also reviewed by: Beth Lincoln**

Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures, and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.

Comments specific to your plan:

Your first Steps are complete and appropriate. The specificity of which courses/experiences address which goals (Step 3) is a particularly strong element. It indicates careful thought about assessment and strong (positive) correlation between stated learning goals and enacted program.

Regarding the degree to which your learning goals are measureable or fuzzy, let us just say: wow! Overall, excellent work here! You could clarify some of the last three steps (communicate findings clearly, think critically, and use computers proficiently). These are a little bit fuzzy. Not all people would define critical thinking the same way, so the author(s) of the assessment plan and its readers (faculty peers, administration, and accreditors) may not have the same construct in mind. Similarly, communication may be formal/informal, written/verbal, etc. It seems that you mean formal written communication, given your measurement plans. Articulate this more clearly from the beginning so that you can follow the thread of the learning goal through your courses/experiences and into your measurement possibilities.

Assuming the ETS Major Field Test is being used for purposes consistent with its construction and intended purpose, this is a strong direct[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV85ZjNndDdjZGg&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o ") measure. Does the department get a breakdown of scores by field? (Does the test also probe students’ ability to analyze results?) The writing assessment is also probably a direct measure. The alumni surveys are indirect, but they are complimentary to the other sources of data. Do you have any direct measures available for the computer skills learning goal?

We look forward to reading how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data!

[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV85ZjNndDdjZGg&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o ") [\*] *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

**Next Steps:**

In coordination with your Assessment Committee reviewers and their written and verbal feedback, please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:

* September 15: Revisions to Steps 1-4 due (if necessary)
* October 1: Completion of Steps 5 & 6 using preliminary data
* November 2: Final Fall 2009 plans due

**Fall 2009:** The **Psychology Department** has done a beautiful job of using their assessment data to make curricular changes. There is a folder of documentation on Google Docs containing a number of artifacts to that effect. I have asked for statistics related to assessing poster presentations and empirical papers, but that can be added into the next round of assessment data. At this point, I believe we can consider their assessment report to be successfully completed.