

General Education Competency Showcase 2018-2019

General Education Competency: Written Communication

Department: Psychology

Why we chose to showcase Psychology:

Psychology is included in this showcase because the program utilized multiple measures to assess a student learning outcome. Application of rubrics to student work and direct observation of students' abilities allowed faculty to analyze resulting data at the dimension-level. Additionally, self-reported data collected through a survey led to changes in the way the program approaches and systematically teaches its learning outcomes.

One of the measures utilized in this assessment was NC State's scenario-based instrument that is scored using a common [Written Communication Rubric](#). Faculty in the Department of English scored students' responses to the writing task. The resulting data was included in aggregate in the 2018-2019 university-wide Written Communication General Education Competency Assessment report and in the Department of Psychology's 2018-2019 academic program assessment report. Multiple independent faculty scorers allowed for data regarding interrater-reliability and comparison data across the institution.

Assessment Plan:

The Department of Psychology has seven program-level outcomes that are assessed through standardized exams and rubrics applied to student work. For this showcase, faculty measured the following outcome: students will *"demonstrate effective communication skills by applying professional style in explaining and describing scientific results to an audience."* Faculty considered students' written *and* oral communication skills. This outcome was measured at the senior-level.

In keeping with best practices, faculty used multiple measures to assess this outcome. **For the purpose of this showcase, only data related to the scenario-based assessment of written communication are described.**

- In PSY 430 (Biological Psychology) 25 seniors completed the scenario-based common writing assessment. The assessment was administered in class and then later scored by faculty in the Department of English. Rubric scores were returned to the Department of Psychology for use in program assessment. The writing samples were scored on a 4-dimension common written communication rubric.
- Faculty supervisors observed 109 psychology seniors and scored their communication competency with a 3-dimension rubric.
- Psychology seniors received a 3-question survey concerning the degree to which they believe that the "classes and experiences as a major in Psychology" improved their communication skills. 142 seniors completed this survey.

Evidence of Student Learning:

Twenty-five (N=25) seniors completed the scenario-based common writing assessment administered by the Office of Assessment in their PSY 430 course. (76 students completed the assessment, however only 25 students were seniors in the Psychology program.) The assessment was scored by faculty in the Department of English using a 4-dimension rubric on a 4-point scale (where 1 is little/no evidence and 4 is capstone). Rubric dimensions included: "context of and purpose for writing," "genre and task conventions," "sources and evidence," and "student's position/thesis." Senior mean scores were highest in "context" and lowest in "sources." The Department of Psychology also compared senior mean scores to the mean scores of psychology sophomores/juniors and to students outside of the Department of Psychology. These data revealed that seniors score higher than sophomores and juniors on the writing task.

Use of Student Learning:

While this outcome includes written communication and oral communication, faculty reviewed the evidence collected and determined that changes were warranted only in the area of oral communication. (Students met defined benchmarks for written communication learning outcomes.)

Based on both the indirect evidence collected, Psychology faculty identified room for improvement in presentation skills. In particular, the indirect evidence collected suggested that students did not feel that they got adequate training in presenting.

Psychology faculty thought some students selected psychology courses that did not have a strong emphasis on communication skills. The faculty decided to create and enforce more systematically the implementation of course-specific learning outcomes consistent with the five assessment objectives in the major. As an example, faculty in PSY 470 (Abnormal Psychology) decided to introduce an oral presentation component (at least one presentation which is at least 15 minutes long). This presentation component will focus on students' ability to "demonstrate effective presentation skills."