

VSCS Policy 101: Program Review & Continuous Improvement (PReCIP)

Introduction

Consistent with its mission, the Vermont State Colleges System is dedicated to providing academic programs that are of high quality and remain current. Towards that end, the VSCS Board of Trustees adopted Policy 101: Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process (PReCIP) in order to ensure that VSC colleges regularly engage in practices designed to foster the improvement of academic degree programs. Through this process, faculty involved in designing and delivering VSCS academic programs periodically, systematically, and collaboratively review evidence regarding their collective effectiveness in achieving desired student learning outcomes and commit to making the changes needed to ensure continuous program improvement.

VSCS presidents must submit all PReCIP reports to the Chancellor no later than July 30. Reports must follow the guidelines below. Reports should be no longer than 20 pages, excluding appendices.

I. Student Success and Retention Data Review

Intent: Programs regularly review college-wide student success and retention data from a program perspective as an essential component of continuous improvement of the program.

Student success and retention data will be provided annually via program data dashboards and will include enrollment, retention, and completion data as well as course success rates. Programs may also consider disaggregated data by priority demographic groups and/or other priority data measures identified by the institution.

[VTSU DATA DASHBOARDS](#)

Narrative:

1. Identify and interpret challenges and improvements resulting from merger and optimization processes.

At the time of writing this report (April 22-May 30, 2025), no program-level data were available for analysis. Specifically, data were requested but not provided regarding student success & retention as called for in this part of the program assessment. Thus, we were advised by the CITL to include a note here to that effect.

2. Describe specific strategies identified during merger and optimization to improve student academic success, retention, and on-time completion, including a timeframe, specific individuals to be involved, and the intended goal(s) to be achieved via these strategies.

During the merger that formed Vermont State University (July 2023), several strategies were identified to support student academic success, retention, and timely degree completion in the Psychological Science program. Although program-level institutional data are not yet available, we are reporting based on the strategies discussed and adopted during the optimization process:

- **Strategy: Streamlined Curriculum Across Campuses**

Timeframe: Implemented starting Fall 2023

Individuals Involved: Faculty from all legacy campuses; VTSU Academic Affairs leadership

Goal: To create a consistent, coherent curriculum across campuses (Johnson, Castleton, and Online), enabling



students to transfer credits seamlessly, take courses across modalities, and follow a clear path to graduation with a streamlined core, fewer course sequences, and fewer specific course pre-requisites.

- **Strategy: Shared Capstone Experiences and Course Rotations**

Timeframe: Launched in 2023-2024 academic year

Individuals Involved: Program faculty; campus deans

Goal: To ensure that students at all locations can access required capstone experiences and upper-level electives on a predictable timetable.

II. Student Outcomes and Assessment Plan (See also VSC Assessment Systems Rubric)

Intent: A program has clearly articulated student learning outcomes at the course and program level, mapped to a transparent program of study that communicates to students the critical sequences and milestones for on-time degree completion. The program assessment banana plan includes a variety of direct and indirect measures, distributed across a sustainable five-year cycle, through which faculty determine the extent to which the program achieves its goals for student learning and post-graduation outcomes.

Student Outcomes: required attachments to be completed (see template examples below):

- A. Degree Program Map and Milestones [See pages 7-8](#)
- B. Curriculum and Learning Outcomes Crosswalk [See pages 9-10](#)
- C. Program Outcomes Assessment Matrix [See pages 11-12](#)
- D. E-Series Form [See page 13](#)

III. Program Review

Intent: Programs are designed to support students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values expected of entry-level members of the field. They are prepared for employment or further education in the field of study. Consistently delivering a high-quality educational program requires thoughtful planning but also honest and meaningful evaluation that is broad-based, systematic, ongoing, and supported by committed program faculty. Faculty and other academic resources must allow adequate time for class preparation, student evaluation and advising, program development and review, and professional development. This process will likely improve a program's effectiveness in achieving its student outcomes.

Narrative:

Describe the program's most recent cycle of program review and improvement efforts, including constituents and external perspectives included in the process. Include in this narrative as applicable:

The VTSU Psychological Science program underwent a significant period of transition and alignment following the institutional merger. While 2023–24 marked our first year under the new VTSU structure, program review was postponed by the provost to allow faculty and other constituents to respond to the many demands of functioning as a new institutional structure. Therefore, we collected no program assessment data in 2023-2024 but began that work this year (2024-2025) focusing on learning outcome #1 (reported below and in Appendix A).

1. Any significant results and trends observed in the assessment data in student achievement of learning outcomes, as observed by program faculty.

We assessed APA Goal 1: *Content Knowledge and Applications*. Using GRE Psychology subtest items, 50 Psychological Science majors completed a 25-item multiple-choice assessment aligned with core content areas. Results showed a developmental trend in which seniors scored highest ($M = 19.71$), and freshmen scored lowest ($M = 15.38$). Students who had completed Research Methods also performed slightly better. These trends support the efficacy of the current curriculum in scaffolding learning across academic years. (Please see attached appendix "YEAR 1 Psych Science Assessment Report").

2. Any specific strategies to improve student success and learning that were implemented during merger and optimization.

The merger and optimization process led to the creation of a unified B.A. and B.S. in Psychological Science with a streamlined curriculum accessible statewide. Key strategies included:

- Shared core and upper-level courses across campuses
- Early incorporation of hands-on research experiences via a 2-semester psychological research course sequence for the BS, specifically
- Required senior internship/capstone
- Modality expansion to support online, hybrid, and remote delivery in keeping with VTSU's accessibility mission. These efforts aim to increase retention and on-time completion while preserving pedagogical integrity.

3. A summary of specific feedback collected from program graduates and other external perspectives such as K12, CTE, and/or transfer pathways advisors; graduate and competitor institution faculty; advisory board members, and employers and other experiential learning partners.

No formal employer surveys were conducted this year. However, as part of PSY 4075 Senior Seminar/Internship, site supervisors evaluate student interns on interpersonal, academic, and professional readiness twice during the semester and these data are used to assess learning outcome #5 *Personal & Professional Development*. These data will be reported as appropriate in the assessment cycle. Although Exit Survey data are collected to use for program assessment regarding post-graduation employment and students' perceptions of their educational/employment readiness, the last round of data were collected in spring 2023, but do not apply to the VTSU program so are not included here. Exit survey data however will continue to be collected starting this year and graduates were sent the following survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/Xp7z51gfqa>

4. Any curriculum revisions or other programmatic changes that have been made as a result of using evidence regarding student learning, pathways to and from the program, feedback from program graduates, post-graduation outcomes, employer surveys, or other evaluations of the currency and relevance of program requirements and content.

Again, these data do not currently exist as although we are technically in "year 5" we are actually collecting data on our Year 1 Learning Outcome. However, several programmatic revisions emerged from the optimization and early assessment:

- Consolidation of core content and reduction in total credits to facilitate transfer and timely degree completion
- Standardization of foundational courses (e.g., PSY 1010, PSY 2410, PSY 3025) across campuses
- Introduction of a formal internship for all majors and a research requirement for BS students.
- Future changes will include reinforcing foundational knowledge earlier in the curriculum and aligning introductory courses more closely with APA learning outcomes as per the data collected this year.

5. Any needed academic resources and support identified via the optimization and/or program review process related to attainment of the program's outcomes.

Although strategies to improve LO1 can be implemented with minimal cost, several supports were identified:

- Faculty compensation for off-contract time to coordinate LO-related curricula across campuses, including determining what concepts should be covered in shared courses and including online and part-time faculty.
- Peer tutoring or review support via Psi Chi or work-study positions to strengthen key concepts
- Student evaluation of online faculty has (shockingly) never been conducted due to barriers in academic oversight which is *supposed* to be the purview of the Department Chair, but which has continued to evade their authority.

6. Any other program assessment and improvement accomplishments from the past five years as reported in annual program progress reports to the college's chief academic officer and/or including progress on program improvement recommendations from the last PReCIP review.

Over the past two years since the launch of VTSU, the program has:

- Unified previously separate psychology majors into coherent, statewide A.A, B.S., & BA degrees
- Developed a robust 5-goal learning outcome framework aligned with APA v3.0 standards including assessment tools to assess each outcome and a 5-year assessment cycle.
- Created flexible delivery models to improve access, including asynchronous options, without compromising in-person instruction where pedagogically vital.

Continuous Improvement Plan

Intent: Program faculty collaboratively use periodic reviews to reflect on past efforts and outcomes and to plan the continuous improvement of the program. The resulting bananas are living documents that regularly receive the collective attention of all faculty (full and part-time, within and across contributing departments) teaching in the program.

For programs due for PReCIP in 2024-25 and 2025-26:

Narrative (keep it brief, ~1page):

1. Looking ahead to the next 5-year cycle, describe 1-3 continuous improvement priorities for the program.

a. Strengthening Foundational Learning Early in the Curriculum:

Assessment findings indicated lower performance among first-year students compared to seniors on content knowledge items aligned with APA Goal 1. This is to be expected given that students were assessed at the start of the semester. However, to address this, the program will do a pre-post assessment of LO1 on first-year students to examine whether foundational concepts in PSY 1010 should be reinforced and/or whether earlier integration of applied research practices to scaffold learning across the curriculum should be considered.

b. Enhancing Curricular Consistency Across Campuses and Modalities:

As a result of merger-driven unification, course offerings are now shared across campuses, with online options supported by VTSU-Online. A priority moving forward will be to ensure that content coverage, assessments, and learning objectives are consistent in shared courses (especially core courses) regardless of modality or location. Critically, online faculty are not currently assessed with student course evaluations; instead, the Director of Online Programing uses online faculty compliance in implementing a standardized course "template" to define teaching effectiveness. Assessing all faculty via student course evaluations and departmental evaluations of online course content and engagement is critical to program effectiveness and as is currently standard for all full- and part-time faculty.

c. Expanding Experiential Learning Opportunities:

The program now requires an internship for all majors, and a two-semester research methods sequence & culture of research experience for the B.S. students. The internship experience is now coordinated by a full-time faculty member, Kristine Reynolds, so that all students regardless of campus location or primary course delivery modality meet and are assessed for APA-relevant professional development to improve post-graduate readiness.

2. What program improvement questions are currently salient? What are your preliminary thoughts on how and when you might pursue these questions? For example, what data would you need to help you answer each question?

a. Are there persistent content gaps in APA Learning Outcome 1 across campuses or modalities?

Preliminary data suggest developmental gains from the first through last years in the program. However, we do not yet know whether certain subtopics (e.g., neuroscience, cognitive processes) consistently underperform. A more granular item-level analysis and disaggregation by campus could explore curricular adjustments, as well as by modality. These adjustments, if warranted, could be achieved with faculty compensation for off-contract time to analyze and coordinate. (See question 5 above.)

b. How well do students integrate content knowledge with scientific reasoning (Goal 1 + Goal 2)?

Initial evidence links Research Methods completion with higher content knowledge scores, but this relationship needs deeper exploration. Next year we will evaluate LO#2 *Critical Thinking & Scientific Inquiry* and can further explore where students make gains in this area, including whether those gains happen during or at the end of that course sequence. Formal assessment of LO2 in Psychological Research I and/or II will determine students' ability to apply content knowledge in designing studies and evaluating claims, for example.

c. Are internships and capstone experiences leading to measurable post-graduate success?

The program will begin surveying recent graduates in 2026–27 to evaluate alignment between academic preparation and workforce experience and expectations. This feedback will inform refinements to the capstone experience.

For programs due for PReCIP in 2026-27 and 2027-28:

Narrative (~2-4 pages):

N/A

1. Describe 1-3 goals identified through the past 2-3 years of annual program assessment (since 2024) that will drive continuous program improvement work over the next several years.
2. How will these goals be accomplished via the next five years of the program's specific assessment activities, as outlined in the Program Outcomes Assessment Matrix completed in Part II Attachment C above?
3. What specific improvements in student success and learning outcomes, as demonstrated by future assessment results, would you anticipate as a result of achieving these specific program improvement goals?
4. What are the program improvement questions you have? What are your preliminary thoughts on how and when you might pursue these questions? For example, what data would you need to help you answer each question?

STUDENT OUTCOMES TEMPLATES

A. Degree Program Map and Milestones

Directions: Provide a semester-by-semester map (include links to any information publicly available to students) of the optimal curriculum sequence for a full-time student and, if applicable for your program, part-time student. Identify any required or recommended milestones (e.g. minimum grade in a key introductory course; overall GPA required for program; completion of prerequisite courses in a multi-semester sequence).

B.A. & B.S.

SEMESTER 1 (15 credits)

1. PSY 1010 Intro to Psychology (Gen Ed/Social Science)
2. Gen Ed/Connections 1
3. Gen Ed/Written Expression
4. Gen Ed/Arts
5. Elective

SEMESTER 2 (15 credits)

1. PSY 2XXX Psychology Breadth Course (2000 level recommended)
2. Gen Ed/Digital & Comp Literacy
3. Gen Ed/Humanistic Persp.
4. Gen Ed/Science
5. Elective

SEMESTER 3 (15 credits)

1. PSY 2XXX/3XXX Psychology Breadth Course
2. PSY 3025 History of Psychology
3. MAT 2021 Statistics (Gen Ed/Math & Psych requirement)
4. Connections II (CNX 2020)
5. Elective

SEMESTER 4 (15 credits)

1. PSY 3XXX Psychology Breadth Course
2. PSY 3XXX Psychology Breadth Course
3. Elective
4. Elective
5. Elective

SEMESTER 5 (13 credits)

1. PSY 2410 Psychological Research I
2. PSY 2415 Psychological Research I Lab (for BS)
3. PSY 3XXX/4XXX Psychology Breadth Course
4. PSY 3XXX/4XXX Psychology Depth Course
5. CNX 3000 Connections 3
6. CNX XXXX Connections 3 Events (0 credits)



SEMESTER 6 (17 credits)

1. PSY 3152 Psychological Research II ([for BS](#))
2. PSY 4240 Psychology Proseminar
3. PSY 3XXX/4XXX Psychology Depth Course
4. PSY 3XXX/4XXX Psychology Depth Course
5. CNX XXXX Connections 3 Events (0 credits)
6. Elective

SEMESTER 7 (15-16 credits)

1. PSY 4075 Senior Seminar/Internship (3 credits; up to 7 credits using PSY 4810)
2. PSY 3XXX/4XXX Psychology Depth Course
3. Culture of Research ([for BS](#))
4. CNX XXXX Connections 3 Events (0 credits)
5. Elective
6. Elective

SEMESTER 8 (15 credits)

1. Elective
2. Elective
3. Elective
4. Elective
5. Elective

B. Curriculum and Learning Outcomes Crosswalk

Directions: Identify which program curriculum or aligned co-curricular learning experiences address each of the program's learning outcomes. Where relevant, indicate whether a curriculum requirement provides an introductory, applied, or mastery learning experience. Also where relevant, identify specific course learning outcomes.

***For all required program courses or required elective options, identify those specific course-level objectives below that are necessary to support program outcomes (i.e. considered part of a common course syllabus or core, regardless of the individual course section taught), and the aligned summative assessments of those course objectives.**

Psychological Science A.A., B.A., & B.S.

	Program Outcome 1: <i>Content Knowledge</i>	Program Outcome 2: <i>Scientific Inquiry & Critical Thinking</i>	Program Outcome 3: <i>Values in Psychological Science</i>	Program Outcome 4: <i>Communication, Psychological Literacy, Technical Skills</i>	Program Outcome 5: <i>Personal & Professional Development</i>
Req Course 1 PSY 1010 Intro Psychology	Introductory (all learning objectives)	Introductory (course learning objective 1)	Introductory (course learning objective 1)	N/A	N/A
Req Course 2 PSY 2410 Psych Research 1	N/A	Applied (all course learning objectives)	Applied (course learning objectives 4 & 5)	Applied (course learning objectives 4 & 6)	N/A
Req Course 3 PSY 3025 History of Psychology	Applied (course learning objectives 1 & 2)	Applied (course learning objective 2)	Applied (course learning objectives 2 & 3)	N/A	N/A
B.A. & B.S. Only Req Course 4 PSY 4240 Professional Seminar	Applied (all learning objectives)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Applied (all learning objectives)
B.A. & B.S. Only Req Course 5 PSY 4075 Sr. Seminar/Internship	Mastery (course learning objective 1)	N/A	Mastery (course learning objectives 2, 3, & 4)	Mastery (course learning objectives 2-7)	Mastery (all learning objectives)
B.S. Only Req Course 6 PSY 2415 Psych Research I Lab	N/A	Applied (all course learning objectives)	Applied (course learning objectives 4 & 5)	Applied (course learning objectives 4 & 6)	N/A

B.S. Only Req Course 7 PSY 3165 Psych Research II	N/A	Mastery (all course learning objectives)	Mastery (all course learning objectives)	Mastery (all course learning objectives)	N/A
B.S. Only Req Course 8 Culture of Research	N/A	Applied (all course learning objectives)	Applied (all course learning objectives)	Applied (all course learning objectives)	N/A

Sample, following crosswalk above:

	Course-level learning objective(s) relevant to program outcomes	Aligned summative assessments
Req Course 1 PSY 1010 Intro Psychology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand psychology is an empirically based science. 2. Recognize the major schools of thought (i.e., subdisciplines) within psychology and their foci of study. 3. Understand the 4 goals of the broad field of psychology. 	LO1: GRE psychology subtest
Req Course 2 PSY 2410 Psych Research 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the role of research and the scientific method in psychology. 2. Differentiate between correlational & experimental research designs, as well as the advantages and limits of each. 3. Distinguish correlational from causal evidence. 4. Be able to read, understand, evaluate & generate general research findings in psychology. 5. Be able to generally design a psychological research study. 6. Be fluent in the vocabulary used by psychological scientists. 7. Critically read the scientific literature in psychology 	LO2: APA's Critical Thinking Exam LO3: APA Skills Inventory (adapted)
Req Course 3 PSY 3025 History of Psychology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the changing approaches within psychology from Wundt through the 20th century, and why and how such approaches changed. 2. Understand the influence of the historical and cultural context on psychological theories and issues studied by psychologists at that time. 3. Consider the influence of psychology's Anglo-centric and heteronormative perspective on the field as a whole, and on the field's perception of minority groups including people of color, women, and sexual & gender minorities. 	LO3: APA Skills Inventory (adapted)
B.A. & B.S. Only Req Course 4 PSY 4240 Psychology Proseminar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be familiar with work being done in many disciplines within the field of psychology 2. Develop post-graduation pathways, and skills to achieve those goals 	LO1: GRE psychology subtest LO5: Identify appropriate job listings/grad programs; Build a resume /CV
B.A. & B.S. Only Req Course 5 PSY 4075 Sr. Seminar/Internship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply theoretical knowledge from past and current psychology coursework to enhance workplace competency and readiness. 2. Understand the responsibilities, ethics and boundaries of applied psychological work. 3. Set and meet appropriate personal and professional development goals; create and implement a self-care plan. 4. Comprehend internship site mission, goals, objectives, programs and services, organizational philosophy, governance, funding streams, and workplace culture. 5. Enhance skills appropriate to the specific agency. 6. Apply psychological practices in the context of broader social issues. 7. Clarify possible continuing educational and career direction. 	LO1: GRE psychology subtest LO5: Site Supervisor Evaluations
B.S. Only Req Course 6 PSY 2415 Psych Research I Lab	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design a psychological research study 2. Collect, interpret, and present scientific data 	LO2: APA's Critical Thinking Exam LO3: APA Skills Inventory (adapted) LO4: Mean grades on research presentations

B.S. Only Req Course 7 PSY 3165 Psych Research II	1. Understand how to independently plan and seek institutional approval for a research project 2. Be able to conduct independent psychological research 3. Analyze and communicate research findings	L02: APA's Critical Thinking Exam L04: Mean grades on research presentations
B.S. Only Req Course 8 Culture of Research	1. Exposure to psychological science in a laboratory or research context. (Varied courses can fill this requirement.)	N/A because varied courses can fill this requirement
B.A. & B.S. Only Upon graduating		L05: Annual Exit Survey

C. Program Outcomes Assessment Matrix

Directions: For each program outcome, identify the evidence used for assessment, the responsible parties conducting the assessment, and the schedule for and use of assessment results. Note: to achieve sustainability and depth in outcomes assessment, programs are strongly encouraged to distribute assessment of outcomes across a 5-year program review cycle.

	Changes made as a result of using the data/evidence during the past cycle as discussed in Section III.	Evidence to be collected in next PReCIP cycle -(Consider direct and indirect evidence)	Responsible Parties	Assessment Schedule (distributed across a 5-year program review cycle)	Plan for Taking Action to "Close the Loop" through the next cycle
Outcome 1 [Content Knowledge]	We are technically in our first year of program assessment, so no changes have been made. However, we collected and analyzed this outcome this year. Please see Appendix A.	GRE Psychology Subtest	Faculty teaching PSY 1010, 4240, 4075 collect data via ungraded Canvas quiz	Collect GRE psychology subtest every year Focus of Year 1 analysis.	Determine if specific content needs to be included or reinforced earlier and/or if there are modality-based differences in content knowledge.
Outcome 2 [Scientific Inquiry & Critical Thinking]	N/A	APA's Psychology Critical Thinking Exam	Faculty teaching PSY 2410 or 2415, & 3165 collect data via ungraded Canvas quiz	Collect data at start & end of fall & spring semesters. Focus of Year 2 analysis.	Analysis to inform shared syllabi, learning activities, and content delivery modality

Outcome 3 [Values in Psychological Science]	N/A	Adapted APA Skills Inventory (Sociocultural section only)	Faculty teaching PSY 2410 or 2415, 3025	Collect data at start & end of semester per respective course rotations. Focus of Year 3 analysis.	Analysis to inform shared syllabi, learning activities, and content delivery modality
Outcome 4 [Communication, Psychological Literacy, Technical Skills]	N/A	1. Mean grades on 2415 & 3165 research presentations 2. Self-report mean from exit interview	Dept. Chair & program coordinator will gather these data from their respective campuses	Collect data at end of semester for relevant courses. Focus of Year 4 analysis.	Analysis to inform outcome effectiveness of assessment.
Outcome 5 [Personal & Professional Development]	N/A	1. Annual Exit Survey distributed via MS Forms to graduating seniors. 2. Site supervisor evaluations 3. Success in identifying job listings/grad programs 4. Successful resume /CV building	1. Dept. Chair @ Castleton & Program Coordinator @Johnson 2. Faculty teaching PSY 4075 3. & 4. Faculty teaching 4240	1. Collect data at end of spring semester. 2. Collect data at end of each semester. Focus of Year 5	Analysis to inform revisions to professional seminar & the capstone experience, especially with regard to successful job/grad school placement.

E-Series Form

Excerpts from NECHE's Statement on Student Achievement and Success Data Forms:

The Commission recognizes its dual responsibilities of quality assurance (the public role) and quality improvement (the private role) must be kept in balance. Nowhere is this dual role more in play than in the area commonly summarized by the term 'student assessment.' The Commission's Standards for Accreditation, especially Standard 8, Educational Effectiveness, speak to assessment for improving the academic program and services for students, and they also speak to the Commission's public responsibility for ensuring an appropriate level of student achievement and in making the results used and known – part of its responsibility for being recognized by the federal government as a reliable authority on the quality of education.

Intent: To fulfill these responsibilities and provide a framework for institutions and useful information for teams and the Commission, the Commission has developed two sets of data forms, both of which are on the CIHE website (<https://cihe.neasc.org>). The forms are used by the institution to declare their approach to the assessment of student learning and to summarize how the information is used for improvement. They are included with the institution's comprehensive self-study and interim (fifth-year) report and institutions are encouraged to complete the forms early in the report preparation process so they can incorporate data from the forms into their report.

Directions: Internally reviewed programs should complete OPTION E1: PART A. and externally accredited programs should complete Option E1: PART B.

OPTION E1: PART A. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS (FOR NON-EXTERNALLY-ACCREDITED PROGRAMS)

(1) Where are the learning outcomes for this level/program published? (please specify) Include URLs where appropriate.	(2) Other than GPA, what data/ evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course, portfolio review, licensure examination)	(3) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (e.g. annually by the curriculum committee)	(4) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence?	(5) Date of the most recent program review. (this will almost always match the date of the newest PReCIP report)
Our learning outcomes follow the APA's Guidelines for Undergraduate Psychology Majors (https://www.apa.org/about/policy/undergraduate-psychology-major) We were required to specify our LOs as part of our program review, but the institution does not publish our LOs on its website.	Please see the "Program Assessment Matrix" above where all 5 LOs are specified along with how & when they are assessed. We do not use GPA to assess any programmatic level LO.	Program assessment must be overseen by the program coordinator, according to the contract. The program coordinator gathers, analyzes, and interprets the data, which are then shared with full-time program faculty to determine whether program changes are warranted.	VTSU is only in its 2 nd year, and all programs were directed to postpone assessment in year 1 given the upheaval of merging. Thus, we are in our 1 st year of assessment even though we have been directed to proceed as though this is the 5 th year of the cycle. Therefore, no program changes have been made. We are at the beginning of the assessment process.	We have not yet had a program review as this is the first year of assessing the program which is new.

Appendix A

YEAR 1 Psychological Science Assessment Report

Instructions

1. This report should be submitted to your Program Coordinator by June 1 of each academic year.
2. Please complete a separate report for each degree program. Programs with multiple concentrations (as long as the concentrations all have the same learning outcomes) can be analyzed in a single report.
3. Select one learning outcome per year to analyze in this report.

Part I: General Information

Degree Program: **Psychological Science**

Degree level (choose one): AAS AA AS **BA BS** MA

Date submitted: **June 1, 2025**

Report completed by: **G. Mireault**

1. State the full Learning Outcome (LO) that you analyzed this year.

GOAL 1: Content Knowledge and Applications

Students will demonstrate comprehension of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical trends, and empirical findings to discuss how psychological principles apply to behavior and mental processes.

This LO is for both the BA and the BS program, so programs are not separated for the purposes of LO#1. Additionally, although online students can only opt for the BA, on campus students can opt for either the BA or BS so they are not separated for this analysis for that reason.

2. Briefly explain why you chose this LO to analyze at this time.

This goal is adapted from the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for Undergraduate Programs. The APA learning goals are described as "optimal expectations for performance by undergraduates engaged in the study of psychological science".

American Psychological Association. (2023). *APA guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major: Version 3.0*. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/undergraduate-psychology-major.pdf>

Part II: Sources of Data

3. Describe your data sources and what year(s) the data is from:

Full-time psychology faculty selected 10 items from the experimental science and social science/theory domains of the GRE Psychology subtest practice test, and 5 items from the applied and history of psychology domain. These areas represent content covered in the psychological science core. In addition, 10 items were selected from the forensic psychology domain to specifically assess the forensic psychology program. Thus, the assessment is 35 multiple choice questions and an additional 5 questions regarding students' campus, program, year, and courses taken.

4. Please attach a sample (it can be blank) of each assignment, survey instrument, etc.

Here is a link to the assessment in Canvas.

<https://lor.instructure.com/resources/addab118a740435f8c1d0592bb01b869?shared>

The assessment is also included below.

5. Please attach any rubrics or scoring guide (they can be blank) associated with the above data sources.

This is a multiple choice objective assessment, therefore there is no rubric.

Part III: Summary of Data

6. Describe the extent to which students as a whole achieved the learning outcome by providing a visual and/or written summary of significant results and trends. (If your program has multiple concentrations, include a separate summary for each).

To evaluate student performance on APA Learning Outcome 1: Content Knowledge and Applications, we analyzed results from a 25-item subset (Questions 6–30 of the attached assessment) of the GRE Psychology Practice Subtest. This subset was selected to assess foundational psychological concepts, theories, and terminology aligned with APA’s standards for undergraduate psychology education.

A total of 50 students self-identified as Psychological Science/Psychology majors, with the largest representation from Castleton (n=31), followed by Online (n=11), and Johnson (n=8).

Figure 1. Students Taking the Assessment by Major

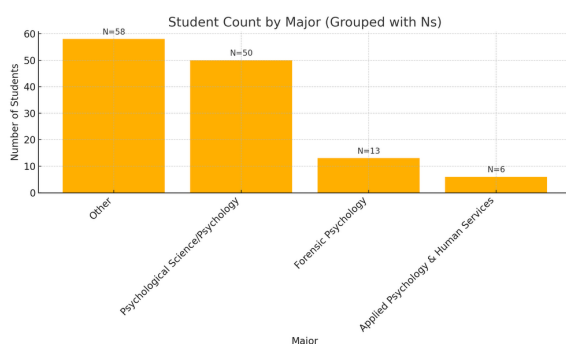
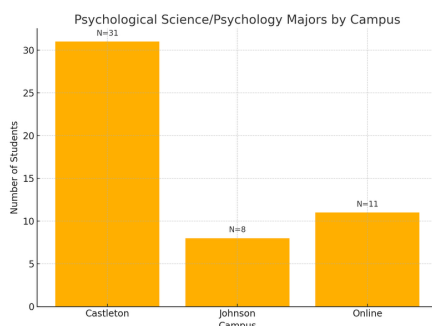


Figure 2. Psychological Science/Psychology Majors by Campus



Overall Performance

Among students who identified as Psychological Science/Psychology majors ($n=50$), the mean score for items Q6–Q35 was 18.78 ($SD = 5.77$), suggesting moderate mastery of core psychological content across the sample. While there were no statistically significant differences across subgroups, clear developmental trends emerged that indicate increasing mastery as students progress through the curriculum.

Key Trends

By Academic Year:

Seniors ($n=21$) scored higher on average ($M = 19.71$, $SD = 5.86$) than juniors, sophomores, and especially freshmen ($n=8$; $M = 15.38$, $SD = 7.17$). A t-test comparing seniors and freshmen approached significance ($t = 1.53$, $p = 0.155$), suggesting a meaningful trend of increased content knowledge with academic progression.

By Research Methods Course Completion:

Students who had completed Research Methods ($n=28$) scored slightly higher ($M = 19.64$, $SD = 5.00$) than those who had not ($n=22$; $M = 17.91$, $SD = 6.23$), though the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.29$). This may indicate that methodological training supports content integration, aligning with APA's emphasis on scientific inquiry.

See charts below for major distribution and performance trends.

Figure 3. Mean Q6–Q35 Scores by Year in College

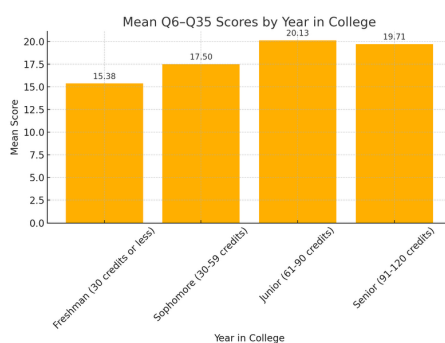
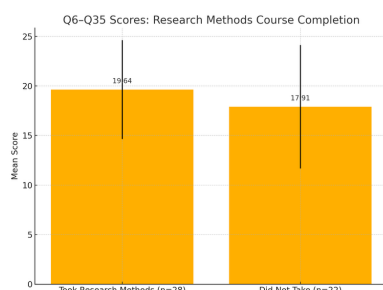


Figure 4. Mean Q6–Q35 Scores by PSY 2410 Completion



Interpretation

Although statistical significance was not reached in subgroup comparisons, the results support a developmental trend in the effectiveness of the curriculum in which students build content knowledge over time. This is a linear trend observed when comparing upper level to lower level students. Consistently higher scores among seniors suggest that students nearing graduation are better prepared to demonstrate the competencies associated with APA Learning Outcome 1. Additionally, completion of PSY 2410 Research Methods was associated with slightly higher scores suggesting methodological training supports content integration, aligning with APA's emphasis on scientific inquiry. However, the latter course can be completed at any time in the program so does not reflect the developmental trend in LO1 that is better reflected in students' class year.

Part IV: Programmatic Changes

7. Describe specific strategies to improve student learning that have been implemented as a result of your assessment of student attainment of this learning outcome.

This is year 1 of our program assessment so we have not yet implemented strategies. However, based on the assessment findings, several strategies could be implemented to improve student attainment of APA Learning Outcome 1: Content Knowledge and Applications. First, given the trend of increasing scores with academic progression, earlier reinforcement of core concepts—particularly in the first year—could help close the performance gap between freshmen and seniors. Integrating more formative assessments and low-stakes practice using GRE-style questions in introductory courses may support this goal. Additionally, since students who had taken Research Methods tended to perform better, embedding applied research experiences and methodological thinking earlier in the curriculum could further enhance content integration. Finally, targeted review focused on commonly missed concepts may help bolster mastery across all levels. However, freshman took this assessment at the start of the semester, so implementing a pre-post assessment will help determine if LO1 is being met beyond what is reflected in these results.

8. Describe specific strategies to improve student learning that will be implemented as a result of your assessment of student attainment of this learning outcome.

We will conduct a pre-post assessment of LO1 next time to understand whether strategies are needed or whether students are achieving LO1. If strategies are warranted, we can consider reinforcing core concepts earlier in the curriculum, and identifying and standardizing these in our core courses, particularly PSY 1010 Introduction to Psychology, PSY 2410 Research Methods, and PSY 3025 History of Psychology.

9. Describe any needed resources necessary to implement the strategies described in 7 or 8 above.

Faculty compensation for off-contract time to coordinate LO1-related curricula across campuses, including determining what concepts should be covered in shared courses and including online and part-time faculty would be needed. Integrating GRE-style questions and/or formative assessments into current course structures would be achievable without added cost. Early exposure to research concepts could be embedded into lower-level courses through brief activities or assignments. Peer tutoring or review sessions could also potentially be organized using advanced students as teaching assistants, a potential role taken on by our Psi Chi chapters.

The Assessment Instrument

The VTSU Psychological Science Program is committed to ongoing program evaluation to ensure that we are meeting the 5 Learning Outcomes (LOs) recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA). The first learning outcome is content knowledge in psychology.

This quiz is not graded.

It is an evaluation of the psychology program, not of individual students.

We do not expect students know all the answers. (In fact, we are as interested in what students do not know as in what they know.)

This 25-item multiple-choice assessment will help us understand which concepts need more coverage and which concepts students have a good grasp of.

Thank you for helping us assess our program in psychological science!

You have 45 minutes to complete this assessment. Please take it seriously and do the best you can.

Which is your home campus?

Castleton
Johnson
Lyndon
Online

What is your major?

Psychological Science/Psychology
Forensic Psychology
Applied Psychology & Human Services
Other

What is the best approximation of your year in college?

Freshman (30 credits or less)
Sophomore (30-59 credits)
Junior (61-90 credits)
Senior (91-120 credits)

Have you taken Psychological Research I or II (previously called Research Methods) yet?

Yes
No

How many upper-level (3000 or 4000 level) psychology courses have you completed so far?

none yet
1
2
3
4
5
more than 5

Experimental Science Questions

Which of the following can be described as the variable that is changed in an experiment in order to determine its effects on other variables?

- Dependent Variable
- Independent Variable
- Correlation
- Experiment

Which of the following could be defined as all of the members of a group under consideration in a study?

- Population
- Sample
- Parameter
- Cohort

Which of the following terms is defined as the descriptive statistic that measures the degree of the relationship between two variables?

- Mode
- Correlation Coefficient
- Dependent Variable
- Independent Variable

Why is it inappropriate to infer causal conclusions from correlative data?

- Correlative data contains more than two variables.
- One variable can be related to another without causing the other variable.

- Correlations require larger samples.
- Cause-and-effect conclusions require longitudinal data.

What is the difference between reliability and validity?

- Reliability measures veracity, validity measures accuracy.
- Reliability measures accuracy, validity measures veracity.
- Reliability measures accuracy, validity measures consistency.
- Validity measures accuracy, reliability measures consistency.
- There is no difference.

A researcher is interested in studying the cognitive development of children. She administers an appropriate instrument to three groups of children at a school: 8-year olds, 9-year olds, and 10-year olds. She tests the students only once. This study is an example of a _____.

- Case study
- Cross-sectional study
- Longitudinal study
- Sequential-cohort study

Dr. Crawford believes she has invented a pill to help with student memorization. For a trial experiment, she gathered two groups of twenty students. She gave the twenty students in Group A the “smart pill”, and the twenty students in Group B a sugar pill. After waiting five minutes, both groups of students were given a list of forty words, and were instructed to memorize the entire list in any order. The students were given five minutes to memorize the list. The students were then asked to verbally recite all of the words they could remember in any order within three minutes.

Group A recited an average of fifteen words, while Group B recited an average of ten words.

What is the IV?

Number of words recited

Students’ receipt of the smart pill vs. the sugar pill

5 minutes given to study the list

Reciting the list in any order

What is the dependent variable?

Number of words recited

Students’ receipt of the smart pill vs. the sugar pill

5 minutes given to study the list

Reciting the list in any order

Group A is the _____

Control group

Experimental group

Independent variable

Tester group

Group B is the _____

Control group

Experimental group

Independent variable

Tester group

Social Science/Theory Questions

Groupthink refers to which of the following?

Tendency for decision-making groups to separate and form sub-groups with homogenous opinions.

Tendency of decision-making groups to get caught up in different opinions of group members and delay decision making.

Tendency of decision-making groups to strive for consensus by not considering discordant information.

Tendency for decision-making groups to consider all sides of the matter rather than one perspective (multiple heads are better than one).

Which of the following social psychological phenomena occurs when individuals are less likely to intervene in a given social situation when more people are present?

Social Loafing
Bystander Effect
Reciprocity Norm
Social Exchange

Mary is a 4-year-old child who has frequent temper tantrums. Each time she has a temper tantrum her mother takes away her dessert to try to decrease her tantrums. Her mother is applying which of the following?

Negative Reinforcement
Positive Reinforcement
Positive Punishment
Negative Punishment

Which of the following processes is most likely to be impacted by damage to the hippocampus?

Memory
Hearing
Taste
Decision-making

Which of the following is not a correct statement regarding temperament and personality?

Temperament is a broader set of tendencies compared to personality
Temperament is observable in infancy, whereas personality is not
Temperament is the central aspect to personality
Temperament develops after personality

Consider a child who has been referring to all four-legged furry creatures as "cats". Eventually, the child learns that not all four-legged furry creatures are cats; there are other animals like dogs and rabbits and cows. The process of adjusting one's schema to allow for new information is known as _____.

Assimilation
Accommodation
Centration
Sublimation

Which of the following lobes of the brain is responsible for reward, attention, short-term memory tasks, planning, and motivation? It is also the lobe that tells you the difference between good and bad.

Anterior lobe
Parietal lobe
Frontal lobe
Temporal lobe
Occipital lobe

A 19 year old female is walking home from her friend's apartment when a dog begins to follow her. The girl becomes very nervous and begins to run. Which of the following neurotransmitters is responsible for her feelings of fear?

Neostigmine
Acetylcholine

Estrogen
Dopamine
Epinephrine

Your dog loves to go on walks around the neighborhood. You begin an experiment by clapping your hand 3 times before getting the least to walk your dog. Soon every time you clap your hands the dog comes running. This is an example of what concept?

Classical Conditioning
Operant Conditioning
Positive Reinforcement
Positive Punishment
Negative Reinforcement

Which of the following does not characterize memory

Memory is recorded instead of constructed in the brain.
Memory is constructed instead of recorded in the brain.
Memories change every time they are recalled.
False memories can be implanted.
None of these.

Applied & History of Psychology Questions

Which of the following theorists developed theories associated with the concept of the cognitive triad of depression?

Aaron Beck
Sigmund Freud
Carl Jung
Albert Ellis

Antipsychotic medications such as risperidone, olanzapine, and quetiapine are used to treat which of the following?

Schizophrenia
Obsessive-compulsive Disorder
Bipolar Disorder
Paranoid Personality Disorder
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

When a person has experienced a life-threatening accident, loss of a loved one, abuse, or a natural disaster they may present with _____.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Panic Disorder
Somatoform Disorder
Situational Phobias

Gottman could predict the risk of divorced in couples based upon four interaction patterns he termed the "four horsemen of the apocalypse." Which of the following is not one of Gottman's interaction patterns?

Defensiveness
Inconsistent Communication

Criticism
Contempt
Stonewalling

The presence of excessive dopamine receptors within the limbic system has been proposed to contribute to positive symptoms of which psychological disorder?

Bipolar Disorder
Parkinson's Disease
Schizophrenia
Psychosis
Tourette's Syndrome

Forensic Questions

A forensic psychologist who specializes in victimology would most likely perform which of the following tasks?

Train police officers on how to deal with mentally ill citizens
Testify at a trial in which the defendant has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity
Conduct research on the development of psychopathy
Assess, support, and counsel those who provide death notification services

Which statement most accurately summarizes a difference between forensic psychologists and forensic psychiatrists?

Psychologists can legally prescribe medication in all 50 states, whereas psychiatrists can only prescribe medication in the military.
Psychologists focus on research, whereas psychiatrists focus on application.
Psychiatrists hold a medical degree, whereas most psychologists do not.
Psychologists work primarily in institutional settings, whereas psychiatrists do not.

Fitness for duty evaluations are to ____ psychology as child custody evaluations are to ____ psychology.

Clinical; school
Social; criminal
Organizational; victim
Police; legal

Evidence suggests that the effects of criminal victimization on adults are ____.

Temporary and varied
Pervasive and persistent
Intense yet fleeting
Apparent yet untreatable

What is the fastest growing branch of forensic psychology?

Legal
Family
Correctional
Juvenile

The history of forensic psychology can be traced back to late 19th-century experiments involving which topic?

Serial murders
Prison violence
Child development
Eyewitness identification

Research on crime and delinquency suggests which factor leads to serious violent offending?

Authoritative teaching
Rejection by peers
Excessive television viewing
Poor academic performance

Which test has been found to be the most valid for the selection of law enforcement personnel?

The IPI
The CPI
The MMPI-2
The 16-PF

A method of identifying crimes that are likely to have been committed by the same offender because of similarities across the crimes is referred to as ____.

Psychological autopsy
Modus operandi
Criminal investigation
Linkage analysis

Which disorder is the predominant diagnosis of individuals found incompetent to stand trial?

Narcolepsy
Schizophrenia
Depression
Psychopathy