

# Assessment Cycle 2018-2019

## Psychology-Clinical Psychology (M.S.)

Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development** is a committed and diverse community of scholars, educators, students, and future leaders working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College produces graduates with the capabilities and confidence to be productive members of society equipped with the skill sets necessary to promote economic and social development thereby improving the overall quality of life in the region. The College offers a wide variety of exemplary undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare candidates for career success across the spectrum of professional roles and settings. These programs include teacher education, leadership, and counseling; health and human performance; psychology and addiction studies; social work; and military science. Candidates are taught to become adaptive critical thinkers and problem solvers in diverse scenarios capable of leveraging new technologies to enrich lifelong learning. As caring, competent, reflective practitioners, our graduates become positive role models in their communities and leaders in the nation's military

**Department of Psychology Mission.** The Department of Psychology (undergraduate degrees in Psychology and Addiction Studies and a master's degree in Clinical Psychology) is dedicated to providing high quality education by actively engaging in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Students develop a robust knowledge base of concepts and theories, scientific and critical thinking, ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world, communication, and professional development. As part of our educational mission, the Psychology Department provides encouragement and support for research and scholarship for both the faculty and students with opportunities for practicum and externship training experiences. These activities are designed to foster professionalism and prepare students for graduate education and/or immediate employment and service in the community.

**Clinical Psychology Program Mission Statement:** The mission of the clinical psychology graduate program is to educate students in the science and practice of

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clinical psychology so that they may develop into knowledgeable professionals who are intelligent consumers of research and competent and ethical providers of psychological services.

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the MS in Clinical Psychology program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools are collected and returned to the program coordinator;
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core graduate courses if required;
- (5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Clinical Psychology Graduate Council, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. Students will know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 5200: Theories of Psychotherapy  
PSYC 5260: Practicum I: Psychotherapy and Intervention

#### **Measure: 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

On an annual basis, students are administered a preliminary exam during orientation, before the start of the program, to establish a baseline of knowledge. The exam covers the same four areas, including theories, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no particular score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 5200, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam is composed of questions developed by a faculty member and designed to evaluate the students' foundational knowledge of the theories of psychotherapy. The goal was for 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70%. These scores were also be compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

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### **Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met in AY 2018-19; nine of nine students (100%) scored 70% or better on the comprehensive exam as a whole, but only 3 (33%) scored at least 70% on the targeted questions from the pretest.

Interesting, only 55% (5 of 9 students) improved between the pretest and the comprehensive exam in terms of the percent of correct answers, ranging from a 20-point decrease in percentage points (from 64% to 44%) to a maximum improvement of 24 percentage points (from 48% to 72%).

**Analysis:** In AY 2016-2017, 7 of 8 students achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 62.22 to 88.89 and  $M = 79.44$ ,  $SD = 71.60$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 52 to 84 with  $M = 69.5$ ,  $SD = 123.14$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(7) = -2.04$ ,  $p = .04$ , 1-tailed. The evidence for this SLO was in the desired direction; The plan of action for AY 2017-2018 was to make the scores the most comparable by selecting a sample of 25 items considered to be the most representative. Those items were to be used on both exams so that only those items were used to make a direct comparison to evaluate the objective for future assessments.

In AY 2017-2018, all nine students (100%) achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 71.67 to 95% and  $M = 85.93$ ,  $SD = 6.57$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 52 to 76 with  $M = 60.89$ ,  $SD = 84.54$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(7) = -7.64$ ,  $p < .05$ , 1-tailed. These results were favorable for students' knowledge of theories of psychotherapy from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam as well as the comparison between the two academic years. This evidence indicated improvement in the desired direction for the SLO. The improvement was the result of two changes based on the previous year's plan: a) a direct comparison of assessment items between the two measurements; and b) the instructor reviewed the items and selected 25 items considered to be representative of the breadth of knowledge in this area. Based on the improved student knowledge demonstrated in these results, however, the goal for the instructor is to now review the items to guide areas of instruction (e.g., specific theories) that need to be enhanced and to ensure that course content and assignments are consistent with this SLO.

For AY 2018-19, three of nine students (33%) scored 70% or better on the targeted questions from the pretest and comprehensive exam, with a range of 44 to 84% ( $M = 65.8\%$ ,  $SD = 12.18$ ). Scores on the pretest ranged from 48 to 72% ( $M = 61.33$ ,  $SD = 7.48.24$ ). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (two-tailed paired t-test,  $t_9 = -6.8097$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

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Despite the significant improvement in knowledge demonstrated on the t-test, the majority of the students' level of knowledge did not reach the objective of 70% or higher. Item analysis revealed three items that were missed by at least 70% of students on both the pre-test and comprehensive exam, identifying them as poor test items. The review also revealed that the number of items and item specificity were not equally balanced across theories.

### Action - Decision or Recommendation:

Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 two actions will occur: 1) the instructor will review national exams for the selection of test items that offer greater balance of assessment across theories and of content specificity across theories; and 2) additional emphasis will be placed on psychoanalytic, existential, and gestalt theories, which are more abstract theories of which the students enter the program with less knowledge.

### Measure: 1.2. (Direct – Skill/Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5270, a required course for Clinical Psychology students, were evaluated by their supervisors on their knowledge and use of theoretical and scientific approaches to psychological treatment, including evidence-based practice. The goal was for 90% of enrolled students to demonstrate a fundamental knowledge by scoring 80% or higher on the evaluation.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met in AY 2018-2019; 9 students were enrolled in PSYC 5270 and received supervisor evaluations with ratings across 3 areas that fell in the satisfactory (2) to superior (3) range.

**Analysis:** For AY 2016-2017, the sample size was small with only three students. Each student was given a 5 out of 5 on the rating scale for utilizing techniques and theory. Since there were only three students and there was only one "all-inclusive" question on the rating form that addressed this area, it was believed that the students' performance was possibly overestimated. The goal was to modify the measure to clearly assess the students' knowledge and application of theoretical approaches and their appropriate use of empirically supported techniques.

For AY 2017-2018, all nine students (100%) received a rating of at least 80% with ratings ranging from 4 to 5 and  $M = 4.625$  for their knowledge and use of theoretical and scientific approach to psychological treatment. Given that the number of students significantly increased between the academic years, these results were considered evidence of improvement in the desired direction for this SLO. These results were largely because instead of focusing on assessment as planned, practicum changes included a greater emphasis on the discussion and use of theory and evidenced-based techniques with the students, using last year's results.

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The consistently high supervisor evaluations from AY 2016-2017 to AY 2017-2018 supported the students' demonstrated knowledge and skill of theoretical approaches and techniques and therefore meets the SLO expectations. However, the same one-item assessment is still used to assess this SLO. The plan of action for 2018-2019 was to select and implement an assessment that captures all areas of practicum so that more than one question is used to assess the students' knowledge *and* application of theoretical approaches *and* their appropriate use of empirically supported techniques.

As a result, in AY 2018-2019 a new Practicum Student Evaluation Form with greater range of evaluation components allowed for a more detailed assessment of student performance in meeting learning objectives. The nine students attained a mean overall rating  $M = 2.47$ ,  $SD = .51$ , in the superior range of evaluation for Psychological Evaluation Skills. Students received the highest ratings in two areas of this section: *seeks knowledge about various therapeutic techniques* and *knowledgeable about various therapeutic techniques* ( $M = 2.56$ ). The *lowest* ratings received in this section occurred *takes a theoretically-based approach to work with clients* ( $M = 2.29$ ). Even though their ratings were all satisfactory to superior, it is not surprising that the lowest ratings for young clinicians were obtained with more advanced skills of applying theoretical knowledge with clients.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** The revised Practicum Student Evaluation Form offered greater distinction in the evaluation of various areas that make up the objective. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results from the new form, the following changes will be implemented in 2019-2020. Practicum I will require that when students are presenting in group supervision their planned intervention for the following session, they will explain it within their theoretical orientation and support its selection with empirical evidence.

**SLO 2. Demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 5300: Intellectual Assessment  
PSYC 5320: Personality Assessment  
PSYC 5750: Psychopathology  
PSYC 5260: Practicum I: Psychotherapy and Intervention

### **Measure 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge)**

The previously-mentioned preliminary exam covers the same four areas, including psychopathology, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. Coordinating targeted items allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no particular score was expected.

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Each student enrolled in PSYC 5750, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam is composed of questions developed by a faculty member and designed to evaluate the students' knowledge of psychopathology, including its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment. The goal was for at least 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70% or better. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met in AY 2018-19; nine of nine students (100%) scored 70% or better on the comprehensive exam as a whole, and 100% scored at least 70% on the targeted questions that were on both the pretest and comprehensive exams.

In addition, 100% (9 of 9 students) improved between the pretest and the comprehensive exam in terms of the percent of correct answers, ranging from a minimum 8-point increase in percentage points (from 80% to 88%) to a maximum improvement of 28 percentage points (from 68% to 96%).

**Analysis:** In AY 2016-2017, all eight students achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 84 to 94 and  $M = 86.29$ ,  $SD = 8.57$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 32 to 80 with  $M = 62.86$ ,  $SD = 259.81$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(7) = 3.43$ ,  $p = .006$ , 1-tailed. It was determined that the evidence for this SLO was in the desired direction; The plan of action for AY 2017-2018 was to make the scores the most comparable by selecting a sample of 25 items considered to be the most representative. Those items were to be used on both exams so that only those items were used to make a direct comparison to evaluate the objective for future assessments.

As a result, all 9 students (100%) achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 75 to 96 and  $M = 84.89$ ,  $SD = 6.07$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 24 to 72 with  $M = 58.22$ ,  $SD = 14.16$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(8) = 6.42$ ,  $p < .05$ , 1-tailed.

The results were favorable for students' knowledge of psychopathology from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. There was little difference between the two academic years; however, that is not surprising given that these were relatively high exam scores and an increase in the average score was not anticipated. However, the increase from the preliminary assessment to the comprehensive exam was evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO for psychopathology. The improvement was the result of two changes based on last year's plan: a) a direct comparison of assessment items between the two measurements; and b) the instructor reviewed the items and selected 25 items considered to be representative of the breadth of knowledge in this area.

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The plan was for the instructor to review the items to guide areas of instruction (e.g., mental disorders, etiology, etc) that needed to be enhanced. In addition, the instructor increased the number of diagnostic interviewing assignments to improve students' application of the material.

As a result, in AY 2018-19, students' knowledge of psychopathology clearly increased between the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. This is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO. All nine students 70% or better on the targeted questions from the pretest and comprehensive exam, with a range of 88 to 100% ( $M = 94.22\%$ ,  $SD = 4.94$ ). Scores on the pretest ranged from 68 to 88% ( $M = 79.56$ ,  $SD = 7.06$ ). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (two-tailed paired  $t$ -test,  $t_9 = -7.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The item analysis revealed no particular pattern of weakness in content knowledge. Therefore, it appears the additional assignments effectively improved students' knowledge. However, the new written assignments revealed students were limited in their ability to apply and integrate the knowledge in written reports.

### **Action - Decision or Recommendation:**

Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 additional demonstrations and interactive practice will be incorporated into class discussions and one additional report will be required with peer-review and feedback included.

### **Measure 2.2. (Direct – Assessment Skill / Ability)**

Students will demonstrate their psychological assessment and diagnostic abilities through formal clinical interviews, mental status examinations, standardized psychological testing administration, scoring and interpretative evaluation reports they are required to submit for PSYC 5300 and 5320, required assessment courses for Clinical Psychology students. Upon completion of PSYC 5320, the students submit a comprehensive psychological assessment report to evaluate the students' proficiency in performing structured clinical interviews, mental status examinations and psychological test administration, scoring and interpretation used in professional assessment and diagnosis. The goal was for at least 70% of students to score at least 80% on the comprehensive report to demonstrate competency in psychological assessment and diagnostics.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met with all nine students earning a minimum score of 70% on the comprehensive psychological assessment report.

The goal was met in AY 2018-2019; nine of nine students scored 70% or better on the comprehensive psychological assessment report.

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Analysis: In AY 2016-2017, this was identified as an area critical to the program and student learning and therefore a significant missing component of the assessment process. The decision was to include it in future cycles for program improvement, beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year.

For AY 2017-2018, all 9 students (100%) achieved over 70% on the comprehensive psychological evaluation, with grades ranging from 80 to 94 and  $M = 85.67$ ,  $SD = 4.42$ . The results were favorable in the anticipated direction and indicated that the students demonstrated knowledge of and proficiency in administering, scoring, interpreting, and writing psychological evaluations. This was an important additional component to the assessment cycle for that academic year. Based on the analysis of these results, the instructor was to enhance lecture and activities directed toward integrating information, interpreting the results, and writing the reports.

As a result, in AY 2018-2019, nine of nine students achieved over 70% on the comprehensive psychological evaluation report with grades ranging from 94 to 98 with a  $M = 96$ . These results were favorable in the anticipated direction and indicate that students demonstrated knowledge of and proficiency in administering, scoring, interpreting and writing psychological evaluations. Instructor action steps for this school year included implementation of additional class activities including classroom demonstrations, peer report reviews and provision of additional reference resources. Results indicate positive impact on student performance with an increase in comprehensive psychological report grades from AY 2017-2018 to AY 2018-2019. Detailed analysis of the comprehensive psychological report rubric indicates the weakest performance area as integration of potentially conflicting data from test results.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Through the analysis of the 2018-2019 results we identified the weakest performance area for students on the comprehensive psychological report, so in 2019-2020 additional emphasis will be placed on integration of potentially conflicting test result data. Increasing the number of data sets for review and adding additional reports with enhance opportunities to practice integration of potentially conflicting test results.

### Measure 2.3. (Direct – Intervention Skill / Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5260 and 5270, all required courses for Clinical Psychology students, were evaluated by their supervisors on their knowledge and skills of treatment planning and choosing and implementing evidence-based interventions to effect change. The goal was for at least 70% of students to score 80% and demonstrate competency in psychological intervention.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met in AY 2018-2019; 9 students were enrolled in PSYC 5270 and received supervisor evaluations with ratings across 5 areas (basic work requirements,

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ethical and professional conduct, supervision, psychological evaluation skills and psychological intervention skills) and a summary of student strengths and weaknesses.

**Analysis:** In AY 2016-2017, students in both classes were rated on a scale of 1 (very deficient in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee) to 5 (greatly excelled in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee). In the area of psychological intervention, their supervisory ratings ranged from 4 to 5, with  $M = 4.43$ . Given that these evaluations are completed by different supervisors at various practicum sites, these assessments were considered excellent and no changes or specific improvements were identified.

In AY 2017-2018, students in PSYC 5260 were rated on a scale of 1 (very deficient in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee) to 5 (greatly excelled in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee). Their ratings ranged from 4 to 5, with  $M = 4.57$ . In PSYC 5270 were rated on a scale of 1 (not satisfactory) to 4 (superior). In the area of psychological intervention, their ratings ranged from 3 to 4, with  $M = 3.875$ . In this area, 7 of 8 (87.5%) students received a superior score (4), demonstrating excellent performance by the students. Given that the number of students increased from 3 to 8, but maintained high evaluations, these findings are excellent.

The consistently high supervisor evaluations from AY 2016-2017 to AY 2017-2018 supports the students' demonstrated knowledge and skill of theoretical approaches and techniques and therefore meets the SLO expectations. However, that assessment was based on an "overall rating" and did not provide sufficient feedback to make program improvements in order to enhance student learning and preparedness for this SLO. Therefore, the goal for AY 18-19 academic year was to select and implement an assessment that captures all areas of practicum so that more than one question was used to assess the students' knowledge of psychopathology, including its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment.

As a result, in AY 2018-2019 A new Practicum Student Evaluation Form with greater range of evaluation components allowed for a more detailed assessment of student performance in meeting learning objectives. Of the 9 students enrolled in PSYC 5270 six had external practicum sites with psychological testing/assessment components used for evaluation in the Psychological Evaluation Skills of the Practicum Student Evaluation Form. The six students attained a mean overall rating  $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .47$ , in the superior range of evaluation for Psychological Evaluation Skills. Students received the highest ratings in this section for establishing rapport with clients  $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = .72$ . The lowest ratings received in this section occurred in two categories: verbal presentation of cases ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) and report writing timeliness and completeness  $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = .81$ ).

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** The revised Practicum Student Evaluation Form offered an improved mechanism for student practicum performance evaluations. However, based on student - practicum matching, 33% of students did not have a practicum site with a psychological testing and assessment component. This does not appear as a deficiency in the evaluative process as student proficiency with

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psychological evaluation utilizing psychological testing and assessments skills were also evaluated through the Comprehensive Psychological Report completed prior to external practicum placement. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in AY 2019-2020 the instructor will enhance psychological assessment courses PSYC 5300 and 5320 to emphasize report writing timeliness and completeness as a component of successful professional development. The instructor will also increase case presentation activities for skill enhancement.

**SLO 3. Students will demonstrate and apply knowledge of experimental design and statistical analysis used to evaluate, plan, and perform psychological research.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 5100: Psychological Research: Statistics  
PSYC 5120: Psychological Research: Design  
PSYC 5950: Psychological Research

### **Measure 3.1. (Direct – Knowledge)**

The previously-mentioned preliminary exam covers the same four areas, including statistics and research design, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no particular score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 5120, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam is composed of questions developed by a faculty member and designed to evaluate the students' knowledge of statistics and research design. The goal was for at least 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70% or better. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met in AY 2018-19; eight of nine students (89%) scored 70% or better on both the comprehensive exam as a whole and on the targeted questions from the pretest.

In addition, each student improved between the pretest and the comprehensive exam in terms of the percent of correct answers, with a minimum improvement of 39 percentage points (from 44% to 83%) and a maximum improvement of 67 percentage points (from 24% to 91%).

**Analysis:** In AY 2016-2017 8 of 10 students achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 68.5 to 90.5 and  $M = 78.5$ ,  $SD = 8.3$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 32 to 56 with  $M = 44$ ,  $SD = 69.33$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved

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compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(9) = -7.24$ ,  $p = .0002$ , 1-tailed. The Plan of Action for AY 2017-2018 was to make the scores the most comparable by selecting a sample of 25 multiple choice items considered to be the most representative. Those items were to be used on both exams so that only those items were used to make a direct comparison to evaluate the objective for future assessments.

For AY 2017-2018, six of nine (67.78%) students achieved  $\geq 70\%$  on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 64.5 to 93.5 and  $M = 78.5$ ,  $SD = 10.12$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 23 to 60 with  $M = 39.56$ ,  $SD = 10.28$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(8) = -28.90$ ,  $p < .05$ , 1-tailed.

For AY 2018-19, eight of nine students (89%) scored 70% or better on the targeted questions from the pretest that were included on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 65 to 91 ( $M = 81.6$ ,  $SD = 9.36$ ). Scores on the pretest ranged from 24 to 44 ( $M = 31.1$ ,  $SD = 7.42$ ). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired  $t$ -test,  $t_8 = -17.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

As a result, student knowledge of statistics and research methodology clearly increased between the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. This is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO. Item analysis on the pretest indicates that initially students were weakest in terms of multiple regression, MANOVA, and interpreting Levene's test in the independent samples  $t$ -test; performance improved significantly in each of these areas (two proportion z test,  $p_{\text{regression}} = .012$ ,  $p_{\text{MANOVA}} < .001$ , and  $p_{\text{Levene's}} < .001$ ). The weakest performance on the comprehensive exam concerned which variable types are used in analysis of variance.

### **Action - Decision or Recommendation:**

Based on the 2018-2019 analysis of the pretest and the comprehensive exam results, in 2019-2020 additional emphasis will be placed on Levene's test, multiple regression, ANOVA, and MANOVA, all more sophisticated topics not usually covered in undergraduate statistics.

### **Measure 3.2. (Direct - Knowledge)**

At the conclusion of each research project, Paper-in-lieu of thesis or Thesis, thesis advisors scored the project using a rubric that assesses critical thinking and analysis of psychology concepts and literature, development of a research question(s) and hypotheses, appropriateness of the research design and methods, presentation and interpretation of data in psychological research. The goal was for the students to earn overall rating of at least 80% to demonstrate proficiency.

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**Finding:** Insufficient number of students completed the research project.

**Analysis:** For AY 2016-2017, four students completed research projects in the 2016-2017 academic year. One student completed a Paper-in-lieu of thesis and received an overall rating of 80%. Three students completed theses and all received an overall rating of 100%. Given that the evaluation form was a new measure and effectively evaluated the objective and that the objective was met, no changes or goals were identified for AY 2017-2018.

For AY 2017-2018, all eight students (100%) completed research projects in the 2017-2018 academic year. Four students completed a Paper-in-lieu of thesis and received an overall rating of 84.5%. Four students completed theses and received an overall rating of 90%.

Based on analysis of the results, students successfully demonstrated the ability to write a comprehensive review of the literature, research design, and proposed analyses or analyses of the data, as well as the ability to present the information in an oral defense. The favorable ratings were a result of the faculty's collective initiative to improve the process by establishing contracts for students' and advisor's expectations and creating a timeline. In addition, the program improvements included requiring students to present their research at NSU Research Day, thereby adding an incentive to meet their timeline and an opportunity to orally present their research. It was based on an "overall rating" and does not provide sufficient feedback to make program improvements in order to enhance student learning and preparedness for this SLO. Therefore, the goal for 2018-2019 year was to analyze the components of the evaluation form so that more than one question is used to assess the students' knowledge and provide specific direction for program changes.

For AY 2018-2019, all second-year students presented their research (topic) at NSU Research Day. In addition, the two students who completed their research project by the end of Spring 2019 received favorable evaluations. However, it is an insufficient sample size to provide meaningful results. Instead, there is a problem with the research process and students completing their research project in a timely manner. Faculty presented several incentives to increase motivation, but they were not effective. In addition, inconsistencies in practices and applying policies were identified between major professors.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 all major professors will meet before the Fall 2019 semester to create specific deadlines and objectives for PSYC 5950 that students and major professors will be required to meet in order to meet the overall objective of students being proposal ready at the end of the Fall semester. A handbook will be created to improve consistency and communication for major professors and students.

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### **SLO 4. Students will demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 6000: Ethics and Professional Conduct  
PSYC 5260: Practicum I: Psychotherapy and Intervention  
PSYC 5270: Practicum II: Psychological Intervention and Therapy

#### **Measure 4.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

On an annual basis, students are administered a preliminary exam during orientation, before the start of the program, to establish a baseline of knowledge. The exam covers the same four areas, including ethics, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no particular score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 6000, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, will be administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam is composed of questions developed by a faculty member and designed to evaluate the students' knowledge and understanding of ethical principles and standards of practice and their ability to practice ethical decision-making skills when presented with an ethical dilemma. The goal was for 90% of enrolled students to achieve a composite score of 70%. These scores were also be compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target Met.

The goal was met with 100% of students earning a minimum score of 70% on the PSYC 6000 comprehensive exam.

**Analysis:** In AY 2016-2017, all 8 students achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 73 to 88 and  $M = 80.76$ ,  $SD = 14.73$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 48 to 64 with  $M = 55.43$ ,  $SD = 28.95$ . A pairwise t-test was performed, which showed that the comprehensive exam scores were significantly improved compared to the pre-comprehensive exam scores,  $t(7) = -9.86$ ,  $p = .003$ , 1-tailed. It was determined that the evidence for this SLO was in the desired direction; The Plan of Action for AY 2017-2018 was to make the scores the most comparable by selecting a sample of 25 items considered to be the most representative. Those items were to be used on both exams so that only those items were used to make a direct comparison to evaluate the objective for future assessments.

For AY 2017-2018, all 9 students (100%) achieved over 70% on the comprehensive exam, with a range of 71 to 91 and  $M = 80.74$ ,  $SD = 6.00$ . For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 40 to 68 with  $M = 56.44$ ,  $SD = 9.26$ . The scores were improved from the pre-comprehensive exam to the comprehensive exam. There is little difference between the two academic years due to the relatively high exam scores and an increase in the average score is not anticipated. However, the increase from the

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preliminary assessment to the comprehensive exam was evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO for PSYC6000. The improvement was the result of two changes based on last year's plan: a) a direct comparison of assessment items between the two measurements; and b) the instructor reviewed the items and selected 25 items considered to be representative of the breadth of knowledge in this area.

The consistent grades from AY 2016-2017 to AY 2017-2018 supported the use of the assessment for this SLO that includes items considered representative of students' foundational knowledge of ethic and professional practice of psychology and that are consistent between pre-comprehension exam and comprehensive exams. Based on the improved student knowledge demonstrated in last year's results, the instructor's goal was to review the items to guide areas of instruction (e.g., specific areas of ethical practice) that need to be enhanced.

Analysis for AY 2018-2019: For the pre-comp exam, the scores ranged from 48 to 76% correct with  $M = 58$ ,  $SD = 9.57$ . The comprehensive exam scores ranged from 79 to 94% with a  $M = 87$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ . The results suggest improved students' knowledge of ethical practice in the field of psychology from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. The increase from the preliminary assessment to the comprehensive exam supports goals for the student learning objective for PSYC6000.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the results in 2018-2019, in 2019-2020 Knowledge Items identified on the pre-comprehensive exam as areas of weakness will guide instruction for additional instruction. A faculty member taught the course for the first time in Fall 2019. Reviewing detailed test items from the comprehensive exam will be used to emphasize course instruction on weaker areas.

### Measure 4.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5260 and 5270, all required courses for Clinical Psychology students, were evaluated by their supervisors on their knowledge of ethical and professional practice, as well as their demonstration of ethical and professional practice. The goal was for 100% of enrolled students to demonstrate a fundamental knowledge by scoring 80% or higher on the evaluation.

**Finding:** Target met.

**Analysis:** For AY 2016-2017, students in both classes were rated on a scale of 1 (very deficient in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee) to 5 (greatly excelled in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee). In the area of ethical and professional conduct, all students received a 5, demonstrating excellent performance by the students. Given the high ratings, it was determined that the teaching, expectations, and assessment of ethical and professional conduct will continue in the same manner for the next AY.

For AY 2017-2018, students in PSYC 5260 were rated on a scale of 1 (very deficient in fulfilling responsibilities of trainee) to 5 (greatly excelled in fulfilling responsibilities of

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trainee). Their ratings ranged from 4 to 5, with  $M = 4.75$ . Students in PSYC 5270 were rated on a scale of 1 (not satisfactory) to 4 (superior). In the area of ethical and professional conduct, their ratings ranged from 3 to 4, with  $M = 3.875$  with 7 of 8 (87.5%) of student receiving a superior score (4), demonstrating excellent performance by the students. Based on the analysis of results and given that the number of students increased from 3 to 8 between the academic years, the students maintained high evaluations.

However, the results were based on an “overall rating” and did not provide sufficient feedback to make program improvements in order to enhance student learning and preparedness for this SLO. Therefore, the goal for this year was to select and implement an assessment that captures all areas of practicum so that more than one question is used to assess the students’ knowledge of ethical and professional practice in the field of psychology.

As a result, in AY 2018-2019, the emphasis was switched from PSYC 5260 to analyzing data from PSYC 5270 only since it is the primary practicum of 300 hours in an external setting therefore providing the most objective assessment. The newly implemented Practicum Student Evaluation Form allowed for analysis of practicum supervisor ratings for students enrolled in PSYC 5270 regarding ethical and professional conduct. Areas evaluated included knowledge of ethical issues specific to the practicum site, professional behavior consistent with ethical guidelines, respect for confidentiality, maturity and cooperation with others. There were 9 students enrolled in external practicum sites who obtained a mean overall rating of  $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .47$ , in the superior range of performance. Though not significantly lower, the area with the lowest rating of  $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = .45$  was for maturity. This was consistent with anecdotal experiences shared by faculty.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 PSYC 6000 instruction will include greater emphasis on professional conduct in regards to maturity this next academic year. In addition, all students will be provided information on how to demonstrate maturity in the professional setting. This emphasis will begin with orientation of new students and extend to specific mentoring with second-year practicum students in supervision.

### Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results:

Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, the following changes were implemented in 2018-2019:

- Some of the primary changes were in courses specific to the four SLOs. Instructors emphasized specific areas of course content, added resources, and/or added assignments (e.g., diagnostic interviews, classroom demonstrations, peer report reviews, self-reflective paper) to enhance weaker

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areas of knowledge that were identified in the review of comprehensive exams for all four areas.

- A new practicum evaluation form was selected based on it offering multiple items to assess students' knowledge in each of the relevant areas. This form replaced the previous evaluation form since it only had one item to assess students' knowledge and was therefore not comprehensive nor representative.
- Students enrolled in PSYC 5950 are required to submit a completed proposal at the semester. No students were considered "proposal ready." Therefore, the faculty met with students to identify barriers and set a deadline for proposals to be submitted in order to graduate in Spring 2019. This was to provide an incentive/external motivation for the students.
- Based on last year's success, second-year students were required to present either a poster or paper based on their research project at NSU's Annual Research Day. First-year students were not required, but encouraged to present a component of their research project at NSU's Annual Research Day.

### Plan of action moving forward:

- While specific actions have been identified for each objective, the program faculty will also collectively identify specific opportunities to include discussion and activities of the students theoretical orientation.
- As mentioned, a primary area of improvement identified is the research process. Where Spring 2018 provided outstanding results, 2019 results were grossly unsatisfactory with only 22% (2 of 9 students) completing their research project on time and both completed a Paper-in-lieu of a thesis, which is less involved than a thesis. The characteristics and internal motivation of the two co-horts were vastly different from 2018 to 2019, but the graduate faculty will meet before fall 2019 semester begins to institute significant changes to the research process. The details will be identified in the meeting based on these results, but examples include 1) a course handbook that offers more specific timelines and requirements that are consistently enforced across major professors and students, and 2) modifying the Advising Contract to include specific objectives and goals based on the collaboration of advisor and student but that are student generated.
- The evaluations from practicum supervisors offer one of the primary mechanisms of obtaining indirectly an objective assessment of the program's performance by outside parties evaluating the students' performance. What this assessment process revealed is that we do not have a direct assessment of the program's performance from stakeholders. The plan is to request that practicum supervisors complete a survey evaluating the program's performance in preparing students in the key areas associated with the SLOs.