

Assessment Cycle 2020-2021

Psychology-Clinical Psychology (M.S.) (552)

Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development

Department: Psychology

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Northwestern Mission Statement. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network to assist children and their families related to learning and development.

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 clinical psychology so that they may develop into knowledgeable professionals who are

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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 starting 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 compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

Finding: Target was met.

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Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. For AC 2019-2020, the instructor reviewed national exams for the selection of test items that offered a greater balance of assessment across theories and of content specificity across theories; and additional emphasis was placed on psychoanalytic, existential, and gestalt theories, which are more abstract theories with less empirical support. All seven students earned at least 70% on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 52 to 76% ($M = 64$, $SD = .08$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 78 to 100% ($M = 87.6$, $SD = .08$) and were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = -5.9$, $p < .001$). As a result, student knowledge of theories of psychotherapy clearly increased between the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. This is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO. $M = 87.6$, $SD = .08$ and were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = -5.9$, $p < .001$). As a result, student knowledge of theories of psychotherapy clearly increased between the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. This is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO.

Consistent with previous years, in AC 2019-2020, item analysis showed a relative weakness in the earlier, more abstract theories (psychoanalysis, existential, and gestalt). This is not surprising given that fewer students adopt them as their theoretical orientation and therefore do not learn it as well as those they learn and apply. What is not known is if students do not select these theories because they are less confident in their understanding. The analysis of results revealed that continued emphasis is needed on existential and gestalt theories.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, faculty used the 25 items for assessment to effectively measure the students' knowledge. Faculty modified an assessment to focus on existential and gestalt theories. The assignment required students to demonstrate their understanding of the theories in an applied, more concrete manner.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was met.

All seven students (100%) earned at least 70% on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 44 to 76% ($M = 54.29$, $SD = 13.83$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 72 to 92% ($M = 81.71$, $SD = 7.95$) and were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = -4.66$, $p = .002$). These results indicate students' knowledge of theories of psychotherapy significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy.

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Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, students completed a survey to identify the theoretical orientation most consistent with their values and beliefs. The results are used to identify two theories that were the focus for two small assignments for greater understanding of those theories. Inadvertently, the type of theories was not consistently balanced across students. Instead, in AC 2021-2022, using survey results, faculty will assign students one of the earlier theories and one of the more current, widely practiced, and empirically supported theoretical orientations to complete two art projects and present a brief description of the class, thereby gaining knowledge of the theories that students must visually represent and clearly articulate to others. Balancing the theories consistently across students will provide a comparison of diverse theories to aid in the professional development of their own theoretical orientation.

These changes will improve the student's ability to know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Measure: 1.2. (Direct – Skill/Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5270 (Practicum II), 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 100% of enrolled students to demonstrate fundamental knowledge by scoring 3 or higher on the evaluation. The equivalent rating for the recently adopted (2018) evaluation form is a score of 3 (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, and 4 = Superior).

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

For AC 2019-2020, Practicum II supervisors evaluated students' demonstration knowledge of theories of counseling and psychotherapy and taking a theoretically-based approach to working with clients. There were 9 students enrolled in practicum who obtained a mean overall rating of $M = 3.56$, $SD = .51$, in the superior range of performance. Surprisingly and unlike the previous year, students were rated higher on the application of a theoretically based approach than their demonstrated knowledge of theory. The difference is not significant but demonstrated the effectiveness of planned interventions emphasizing theoretically based approaches.

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Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In fall of AC 2020-2021, faculty supervisors in PSYC 5260 (Practicum I) directed students to provide theoretical support for the selection of treatment goals and interventions. Moreover, faculty required students to articulate theoretical support when considering therapeutic interventions, so students were able to demonstrate their knowledge and also improve their confidence in preparation for the external practicum.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was met.

Table 1

Psychological Intervention Skills	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy.	3.00	.00
Takes a theoretically based approach to working w/clients.	3.20	.45

As seen in Table 1, all seven students enrolled in PSYC 5270 during the Spring semester received a satisfactory rating (3) for demonstrating knowledge of theories of psychotherapy. For the application of this knowledge with clients, the ratings ranged from 3 ($n = 6$) to 4 ($n = 1$), with $M = 3.20$.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. It is not clear if the practicum evaluation 4-point Likert scale is limiting the possibility of differentiating a student's performance that merely "satisfactory" from a student whose performance is above average but not superior. The goal is for students to perform better than satisfactorily. Therefore, the scale will be modified to include a 5-point scale (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory/Consistently Meets Standards, 4 = Consistently Meets High Standards, 5 = Exceeds High Standards).

Faculty evaluated the focus of theory in Practicum I and found it to be more of an informal approach. Therefore, supervisors will incorporate Piercy and Sprenkle's (1988) set of theory-building questions throughout the semester during group supervision when students are discussing a client's case conceptualization, treatment plan, and therapeutic techniques. These questions will challenge students to explain and justify their therapy strategies and interventions within the context of their theoretical orientation.

During group supervision, the other students will attempt to identify the therapist's

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theoretical orientation and beliefs, which will provide students experience in carefully examining, clarifying, and articulating their own beliefs, strategies, and techniques while understanding others' orientations.

These changes will improve the student's ability to know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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 5270: Practicum II: 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.

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 was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

For AC 2019-2020, all seven students earned at least 70% on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 59 to 76% ($M = 61.1$, $SD = .10$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 80 to 96% ($M = 89\%$, $SD = .06$), which is outstanding. Results of comprehensive exams are significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = -6.55$, $p < .001$). This is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO. While the results clearly demonstrate students' knowledge of psychopathology, data shows they continue to struggle with demonstrating the knowledge in interactive, performance-based activities.

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Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, faculty enhanced skill development by demonstrating knowledge through dedicated class time activities including a performance-based assessment of symptoms to determine diagnoses through the use of multiple-choice questions, which allowed students to demonstrate knowledge through recognition, and interactive exercises and allowed students to demonstrate knowledge through gathering desired information in real time.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was met.

All seven students (100%) earned at least 70% on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 48 to 88% ($M = 65.14$, $SD = 12.59$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 76 to 92% ($M = 82.86$, $SD = 5.521$) and were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = -5.89$, $p = .002$). These results indicate students' knowledge of psychopathology significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate competency in knowledge of psychopathology, including its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, faculty will analyze pre-comp results to identify areas of weakness and guide instruction during course activities.

Faculty realized that the practicum 5270 evaluation does not include items specific to psychopathology and diagnosing. Items will be added to assess the students' ability to apply concepts of normal/abnormal behavior to case formulation and diagnoses, articulate relevant symptoms as applied to the presenting problem, and demonstrate the ability to identify problem areas and to use concepts of differential diagnosis.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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

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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 examination, 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. 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 was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

Results of comprehensive psychological assessment report data for AC 2019-2020 yielded grades ranging from 83 to 98%, with a mean score of $M = 92$. Analysis indicated student proficiency in performing structured clinical interviews, mental status examinations, test administration, scoring, and interpretation techniques used in professional assessment and diagnostics. These results support the presence of above-average skills development in the identified areas. However, there was a slight drop from the previous AC 2018–2019 overall comprehensive psychological assessment report grade mean score of $M = 96$. Through analysis of the AC 2019–2020 results, the weakest performance area remains the integration of potentially conflicting test result data.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, faculty further enhanced skill development with potentially conflicting assessment data through dedicated class time activities, including a performance-based measure at the beginning and end of the semester in addition to the comprehensive psychological assessment report.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent sudden shift to mandated virtual platform course delivery significantly impacted this course experience. The structure of assessment courses changed in line with rapidly evolving industry changes in the delivery of psychological testing services. As a result, students received additional experience not previously offered. The experience provided a unique opportunity for students to learn in real-time as the profession rapidly changed to meet challenges created by the need for decreased close physical interactions with others due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The addition of focused skills development in the administration of

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assessment subtests in person and virtually provided more opportunity for skills development with the ability to easily record and share virtual practice sessions. The documentation over time will be a useful tool for students to review performance, identify areas for improvement and focus on those skills specifically.

Additionally, to facilitate learning in weaker areas identified in the previous assessment cycle, instruction focused on an increased review of test data, statistical interpretation, and formal presentation of the data. The change is based on the theory that increased fluency with data interpretation will facilitate better understanding and interpretation of potentially conflicting data. Competency with this information was tested and reinforced with an increase in the number of brief oral and written quizzes, which encouraged developing skills with test data interpretation fluency. The skill quizzes occurred in real-time in the virtual classroom and took little time from advancing class activities but emphasized the importance of the material.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was met.

Results of comprehensive psychological assessment report data for AC 2020-2021 yielded grades ranging from 84 to 97%, with a mean score of $M = 90$, $SD = 4.59$. Analysis indicated student proficiency in performing structured clinical interviews, mental status examinations, test administration, scoring, and interpretation techniques used in professional assessment and diagnostics. These results support the presence of above average skills development in the identified areas. However, there was a slight drop from the previous AC 2019–2020 overall comprehensive psychological assessment report grade $M = 92$. However, this is the first class working in the virtual assessment environment due to COVID-19 mandated changes in the administration of psychological assessment instruments. This student cohort not only learned traditional administration techniques but also received added instruction for virtual assessment administration practices. The assessment activities for AC 2020-2021 cannot be compared to the previous years as the new techniques were not required prior to this academic year. The analysis of the AC 2020–2021 comprehensive report results indicate the weakest performance area is the overall writing section which includes APA formatting, grammar/sentence structure, and clear flow of information. The previously identified comprehensive report area of weakest performance, integration of conflicting test data, saw significant improvement for AC 2020 – 2021 with an overall mean score of 90%.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to 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 utilizing the latest techniques and requirements of industry standards modified to accommodate the provision of psychological assessment services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Decision or Recommendation.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In the AC 2021 – 2022, students will receive instruction for the administration of psychological assessment instruments virtually and in person. The course modifications based on changing industry standards will divide instruction time and performance measures between the two service environments as both are equally utilized in the professional psychology world of work. As the increased skills tests yielded positive results with data integration understanding, skills tests for the AC 2021- 2022 will also include small exercises to reinforce overall writing utilizing APA format, basic grammar skills, and professional writing techniques. A 25-point exam will be given at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester focused on these basic skills. The goal is to facilitate improvement in overall writing techniques by recognizing correct and incorrect use of APA style, grammar, and flow of information.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Measure 2.3. (Direct – Intervention Skill / Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in 5270, a required course 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 be rated satisfactory (3) and demonstrate competency in psychological intervention. The equivalent rating for the newly adopted (2018) evaluation form is a score of 3 (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, and 4 = Superior).

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

In AC 2019-2020, the supervisor's rating form yielded a mean overall rating $M = 3.47$, $SD = .51$, in the superior range. While the differences in evaluations were minute and identified no relative strengths or weaknesses, a pattern emerged of biased responses (halo effect, rating items in one area the same, etc.), thereby undermining the full benefit of the survey.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, the faculty emphasized greater assessment specificity and accuracy to drive the cycle of improvement. Clinical Director provided assessment feedback to practicum supervisors to facilitate greater accuracy in ratings and consistency across supervisors. In addition,

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in AC 2020-21, the target was modified to 100% of students to be rated satisfactory (3). After all, any student not meeting the minimum of performing satisfactorily is unacceptable. Finally, assessment would include review of individual items rather than only the overall rating to identify specific areas of improvement and strengths.

The supervisor's rating form yielded a mean overall rating $M = 3.17$, $SD = .25$, in the satisfactory range, with a minimum rating of 3 (satisfactory) for 100% of the students. The mean was slightly decreased from previous years, which was expected given our feedback and request of supervisors. The analysis of individual items (Table 2), however, revealed a relative weakness in developing treatment plans and strengths in seeking information and demonstrating knowledge about therapeutic techniques.

Table 2.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ability to propose & defend treatment plan.	2.83	.41
Seeks information about therapeutic techniques.	3.33	.52
Knowledgeable about therapeutic techniques.	3.33	.52
Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy.	3.00	.00
Takes a theoretically based approach to working w/clients.	3.20	.45
Overall Rating	3.17	.41

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology.

Decision or Recommendation.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, the instructors of PSYC 5750: Psychopathology and PSYC 5260: Practicum I, prerequisites of PSYC 5270, will further develop course content and instructional supports for treatment planning. Faculty will offer additional instructional resources and materials to include interactive class activities to help students' understanding and skills of treatment planning.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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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 was not met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was not met.

For AC 2019-2020, the comprehensive exam was changed to 100% multiple-choice format; more complex statistical analyses were converted to multiple-choice questions focused on a single critical component of the analysis. All 25 questions from the pretest were included in the comprehensive exam. Five of seven students (71%) scored 70% or better on the questions from the pretest, with a range of 64 to 88% ($M = 78.3\%$, $SD = 9.5\%$).

Scores on the pretest ranged from 28 to 48% ($M = 39.4\%$, $SD = 6.70\%$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_6 = 8.95$, $p < .001$). 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.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, faculty worked to further develop course content and instructional supports in the area of MANOVA. Since this test also incorporated ANOVA and post-hoc analysis, faculty developed additional instructional resources and materials that helped in these areas as well. Since MANOVA was well suited to test for lurking

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nominal independent variables, this approach was used to emphasize the usefulness of this technique.

In addition, a recorded review session was provided for the statistics component of the comprehensive exam so students could review at their own pace.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was not met but growth was seen across the assessment.

For AC 2020-2021, the 60-item multiple-choice comprehensive exam included all 25 questions from the pretest. Only half of the students scored 70% or higher on the entire exam; however, the three students scoring between 55 and 67% initially improved to between 88 and 90% on the retest, higher than those who passed on the first try. In addition, in AC 2020-2021, all students gave the correct answer on 26 of 60 items, while in AC 2019-2020, only 16 of 60 items were answered correctly by every student.

Five of six students (83%) scored 70% or better on the questions from the pretest, with a range of 64 to 96% ($M = 80.7\%$, $SD = 10.6\%$).

Scores on the pretest ranged from 36 to 48% ($M = 43.3\%$, $SD = 4.70\%$). For the targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired t -test, $t_5 = 13.1$, $p < .001$). As a result, student knowledge of statistics and research methodology clearly increased between the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam. These findings are evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was partially met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, faculty will redesign PSYC 5100 to meet two days a week (two 75-minute class periods) as opposed to one day a week (150-minute class periods). The purpose of this change is to reduce the amount of statistical content covered at each class period, allow more time for practice and assessment in applying each technique, and reduce the time between sessions, to improve retention of ideas. This schedule will also reduce the impact of emergency interruptions in instruction, as happened during AC 2020-2021 due to hurricane and ice storm closures which also coincided with widespread power outages that prevented students from utilizing technology when they were at home and classes were canceled.

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These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge of experimental design and statistical analysis used to evaluate, plan, and perform psychological research, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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 students to earn an overall rating of at least 80% to demonstrate proficiency.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. The intervention effectively provided structure and increased the number of completed research projects on time – six of nine students completed their PIL or thesis by May 2020, with 100% earning a rating of over 80%. Three students completed a Paper-in-lieu of thesis and received an overall rating of 97.5%. Three students completed these and received an overall rating of 96%. All nine students were prepared to present at NSU Research Day, but it was canceled due to COVID-19. While all results are in the desired direction, the results of the ratings are superficially high and appear to be an exaggerated assessment of the students' knowledge based on performance on statistics and anecdotal data.

Using the information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data and to drive the cycle of improvement, the graduate faculty reviewed the results at the start of AC 2020-2021 and determined the evaluation form was sufficiently specific and represented areas of evaluation that accurately assessed the program's desired goals. Instead, faculty emphasized attention to accuracy in evaluating student knowledge and performance. In addition, the faculty extended the research proposal deadline by a month to compensate for the added responsibility of completing PSYC 5300 (Intellectual Assessment) in the fall due to COVID-19 disruption.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was not met.

Only one of seven students completed her PIL or thesis by May 2021 and received a score of 88%. While the rating exceeded the 80% cutoff and was not an inflated assessment, only one student completed the research project by the desired date. Four other students are on track to complete the research requirement in Summer 2021, soon after the desired completion goal of May. In addition, the same four students presented at research day. One left on medical leave while the other two were given alternative assignments to facilitate progress toward the completion of their research project.

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These changes appear to have had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology. However, the concern is the completion rate.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, students' schedules will return to normal without the added assessment course and responsibilities that were necessary to accommodate the COVID-19 shutdown and regulations. Therefore, faculty will resume with the intended timeline structure of completing subgoals for May 2022 completion of their PIL or Thesis, attention to accuracy in evaluating students' research and statistical knowledge and preparing students to present at NSU Research Day 2022.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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 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 starting 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 was met.

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Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. In AC 2019-2020, students achieved pre-comprehensive exam score items with a range of 52 to 72% and $M = 58$, $SD = 7.61$. Analysis of the comprehensive exam score items indicated a range of 88 to 100% and $M = 93$, $SD = 5.47$. The scores were improved from the pre-comprehensive exam to the comprehensive exam in AC 2019-2020. The scores suggest improved student performance and increased knowledge of key concepts. Of interest to note, the mean score on the comprehensive exam increased by 5 points from the previous year. However, an increase in the average score from year to year is not anticipated due to consistently high overall comprehensive exam scores. The increase from the preliminary assessment to the comprehensive exam was evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO for PSYC 6000. The improvement resulted from the analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified as areas of weakness that guided instruction during course activities.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, faculty reviewed detailed test items from the pre-comprehensive exam and used the resulting analyses to emphasize course instruction on weaker areas as this appeared to vary for each student cohort.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent sudden shift to provision of psychological services through virtual platforms impacted the field of psychology and created new ethical concerns. As novice members of this community, it is imperative students receive new information about the newly discovered ethical challenges in psychology. New material was added to the course with subsequent evaluation of student knowledge in relation to the use of electronic platforms for the delivery of virtual psychological services.

During the academic year 2020-2021, students enrolled in the Psyc 6000 course participated in American Psychological Association-sponsored continuing education training. All students in the course completed Telepsychology Best Practices 101: Clinical Evaluation and Care: Cultural Competences and Documentation-Segment 1. The course provided basic competencies about referral processes, cultural issues, documentation, safety protocols, and common barriers to successful telepsychology sessions. This participation earned the students 2 CEUs and a professional level training class to add to their vitae.

To provide professional practice guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Psychological Association allowed students access to several virtual training sessions at no charge. Students were notified of these opportunities with reminders and encouragement to take advantage of the continuing education sessions for professional development parallel to the course participation. Most students did participate in another level of continuing education regarding ethics and telepsychology.

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Course content modifications in PSYC 6000 were aligned with real-time federal and state government requirements for HIPAA standards and the delivery of telepsychology services. The ethical dilemmas encountered during the unprecedented time of the pandemic allowed students an experience to witness firsthand how the Governor of Louisiana, the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, and professional advocacy agents such as the American Psychological Association work in tandem to protect the public and the profession. Class time was spent instructing students in ethical considerations guided by Louisiana Governor updates, federal CMS service updates, and industry-standard best practices through advocacy agents such as the American Psychological Association. There was also an emphasis on how personal choices during the pandemic impacted professional behavior and the ethical delivery of professional services.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. In AC 2020-2021, students achieved pre-comprehensive exam score items with a range of 52 to 80% and $M = 73$, $SD = 5.38$. Analysis of the comprehensive exam score items indicated a range of 76 to 100% and $M = 91$, $SD = 8.77$. The scores were improved from the pre-comprehensive exam to the comprehensive exam in AC 2020-2021. The scores suggest improved student performance and increased knowledge of key concepts. Of importance to note, analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified as areas of weakness for this student cohort guided instruction during course activities. Comprehensive exam item analysis of those same items reflected improved overall student knowledge in the weakest areas, including related legal concepts such as privilege and confidentiality (pre-comp item target response rate of 33% and comp rate of 100%) and applied knowledge about dual relationships (pre-comp item target response rate of 33% and comp rate of 100%).

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-21, the target was met.

Based on experience from AC 2020-21, the improvement resulted from analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified as areas of weakness that guided instruction during course activities was effective. This practice will continue as each cohort of students varies in these identified areas. In AC 2021-2022, faculty will ensure the expanded focus in ethical professional practice to teletherapy and technology-specific standards. This will include revision of 25% of pre-comp and comp questions specific to teletherapy and technology-specific standards as they evolved over 2020 in the world of work. The importance of business associate agreements and understanding virtual platform confidentiality standards emerged as a primary concern in ethical psychological practice during the last year. Personal versus professional use of social media platforms will also be included in the item revisions.

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Course instruction will also modify demonstration-based assignments for student presentation of informed consent procedures virtually and in-person—the goal for 90% of enrolled students to achieve assignment scores of 85%. Successful completion of these demonstrations ensures student understanding of core ethical concerns required as a foundation for ethical professional practice both virtually and in person. Ethical standards shaped our collective professional experience during the COVID-19 pandemic mandate and students' understanding of the various platforms for ethical psychological research and service delivery.

Course instructors will continue to investigate professional development opportunities outside of the traditional classroom as course enhancements for student personal and professional development.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Measure 4.2. (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 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 fundamental knowledge by scoring 3 (satisfactory) or higher on the evaluation.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2019-2020, the target was met.

For AC 2019-2020, practicum supervisors evaluated students' 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 $M = 2.63$, $SD = .52$, in the superior range of performance. Consistent with the previous year, maturity ratings yielded the lowest ratings, a mean overall rating of $M = 2.63$, $SD = .51$.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2020-2021, in PSYC 6000, faculty modified instruction to include not only attention to professional conduct in regard to maturity but also a specific activity for evaluation of student understanding of the operational definition of maturity as it applied to ethics and professional conduct at the beginning of the semester with an end of semester evaluation to determine the effectiveness of focus through more structured activities. In addition, the PSYC 5270 instructor presented a practicum orientation to

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review specific behaviors that differentiated professional immaturity from maturity (e.g., procrastination, critical thinking and decision making, patience, punctuality, and discipline).

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-21, the target was met.

As can be seen in Table 3, the supervisor's rating form yielded a mean overall rating $M = 3.83$, $SD = .41$, in the superior range, with a minimum rating of 3 (satisfactory) for 100% of the students. In fact, 67% of the students received superior ratings in two other items and 83% in three of the items. Of note, the previously identified relative weakness was maturity, with an overall rating of 2.63. For AC 2020-21, the rating is 3.83, a notable increase.

Table 3

Ethical and Professional Conduct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Knowledge of ethics.	3.67	.52
Ethical behavior.	3.67	.52
Respect for confidentiality.	3.83	.41
Maturity	3.83	.41
Cooperation with others.	3.83	.41
Overall Rating	3.83	.41

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2020-2021, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, faculty will modify the evaluation form to include a 5-point scale (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory/Consistently Meets Standards, 4 = Consistently Meets High Standards, 5 = Exceeds High Standards) rather than the current 4-point Likert scale to better distinguish performance that meets (minimal) standards from performance that meets and exceeds high standards.

Students enrolled in Practicum II (PSYC 5270) meet weekly with the Clinical Director. To enhance professional and ethical development, a formal orientation will be presented at the onset of the semester to reinforce previously identified general expectations (e.g., dress code, professional timeliness, professional maturity) and to discuss setting/population-specific expectations.

Faculty will engage students in weekly or "ethical discussions" in which a student

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presents an ethical dilemma they experienced in practicum that week for group discussion. The purpose will be for students to discover and explore ethical issues, conduct themselves professionally with appropriate debate decorum, and consider their own values within the ethical framework.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on the Analysis of the Results:

Program faculty made several decisions after examining results of data analysis from AC 2019-2020 which resulted in improved student learning and program improvement in AC 2020-2021.

- While specific actions have been identified for each objective, the program faculty collectively identified specific opportunities to include discussion and activities of the students' theoretical orientation.
- To protect against a halo effect in scoring by practicum supervisors and major professors, faculty made all supervisors aware of potential bias and the limited information the results were providing. In addition, faculty requested that practicum supervisors complete a survey evaluating the program's performance in preparing students in the key areas associated with the SLOs.
- Graduate faculty hosted one activity per semester that brought first and second-year graduate students together to foster a culture that recognizes achievement, peer and faculty-student interactions, and healthy communication.

SLO 1

- Faculty modified an assessment to focus on existential and gestalt theories only. Faculty used the 25 items for assessment to effectively measure the students' knowledge. The assignment required students to demonstrate their understanding of the theories in an applied, more concrete manner.
- Faculty directed students to provide theoretical support for the selection of treatment goals and interventions.
- Faculty required students to articulate theoretical support when considering therapeutic interventions so students could demonstrate their knowledge and also improve their confidence in preparation for the external practicum.

SLO 2

- Faculty enhanced skill development by demonstrating knowledge through dedicated class time activities, including a performance-based assessment of

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symptoms to determine diagnoses through the use of multiple-choice questions, which allowed students to demonstrate knowledge through recognition, and interactive exercises, which allowed students to demonstrate knowledge through gathering desired information in real-time.

- Faculty were provided with feedback on survey results and requested attention be given to provide detailed feedback for the students and for providing direction to the program.
- Faculty further enhanced skill development with potentially conflicting assessment data through dedicated class time activities, including a performance-based measure at the beginning and end of the semester in addition to the comprehensive psychological assessment report.

SLO 3

- Faculty worked to further develop course content and instructional supports in the area of MANOVA.
- Faculty developed additional instructional resources and materials to support content knowledge related to ANOVA/MANOVA and post hoc analyses.
- Faculty reviewed results before the start of the semester to determine if the evaluation form was sufficiently specific and represented areas of evaluation that accurately assessed the program's desired goals.
- Faculty emphasized attention to accuracy in course content and related student work and course assignments and activities.

SLO 4

- Faculty reviewed detailed test items from the pre-comprehensive exam and used the resulting analyses to emphasize course instruction on weaker areas as this appeared to vary for each student cohort.
- Faculty modified instruction to include not only attention to professional conduct regarding maturity but also a specific activity for evaluation of student understanding of the operational definition of maturity as it applied to ethics and professional conduct at the beginning of the semester with an end of semester evaluation to determine the effectiveness of focus through more structured activities. activities.
- Faculty presented a practicum orientation to review specific behaviors that differentiated professional immaturity from maturity (e.g., procrastination, critical thinking and decision making, patience, punctuality, and discipline).

Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2020-2021 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2021-2022:

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SLO 1

- Using survey results, faculty will assign students one of the earlier theories and one of the more current, widely practiced, and empirically supported theoretical orientations to complete two art projects and present a brief description of to the class, thereby gaining knowledge of the theories that students must visually represent and clearly articulate to others. Balancing the theories consistently across students will provide a comparison of diverse theories to aid in the professional development of their own theoretical orientation.
- It is not clear if the practicum evaluation 4-point Likert scale is limiting the possibility of differentiating a student's performance that is merely "satisfactory" from a student whose performance is above average but not superior. The goal is for students to perform better than satisfactorily. Therefore, the scale will be modified to include a 5-point scale (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory/Consistently Meets Standards, 4 = Consistently Meets High Standards, 5 = Exceeds High Standards).
- Faculty evaluated the focus of theory in Practicum I and found it to be more of an informal approach. Therefore, supervisors will incorporate Piercy and Sprenkle's (1988) set of theory-building questions throughout the semester during group supervision when students are discussing a client's case conceptualization, treatment plan, and therapeutic techniques. These questions will challenge students to explain and justify their therapy strategies and interventions within the context of their theoretical orientation.
- During group supervision, the other students will attempt to identify the therapist's theoretical orientation and beliefs, which will provide students experience in carefully examining, clarifying, and articulating their own beliefs, strategies, and techniques while understanding others' orientations.

SLO 2

- Faculty will analyze pre-comp results to identify areas of weakness and guide instruction during course activities in PSYC 5750.
- Faculty realized that the practicum 5270 evaluation does not include items specific to psychopathology and diagnosing. Items will be added to assess the students' ability to apply concepts of normal/abnormal behavior to case formulation and diagnoses, articulate relevant symptoms as applied to the presenting problem, and demonstrate the ability to identify problem areas and use concepts of differential diagnosis.
- Faculty will provide instruction for the administration of psychological assessment instruments by dividing instruction time and performance measures between the two service environments (virtually and in-person) as both are equally utilized in the professional psychology world of work in response to COVID-19 pandemic changes.
- Skills tests throughout assessment training will include small exercises to reinforce overall writing utilizing APA format, basic grammar skills, and professional writing techniques in addition to data integration.

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- A 25-point exam in assessment course PSYC 5320 will be given at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester focused on overall writing skills. The goal is to facilitate improvement in overall writing techniques by recognizing correct and incorrect use of APA style, grammar, and flow of information as students practice the integration of conflicting data.
- PSYC 5750 instructor will further develop course content and instructional supports for treatment planning. Faculty will offer additional instructional resources and materials to include interactive class activities to help students' understanding and skills of treatment planning.

SLO 3

- Faculty will redesign PSYC 5100 to meet two days a week (two 75-minute class periods) as opposed to one day a week (150-minute class periods) to improve comprehension.
- Faculty will resume with the intended timeline structure of completing subgoals for May 2022 completion of their PIL or Thesis, attention to accuracy in evaluating students' research and statistical knowledge and preparing students to present at NSU Research Day in 2022.

SLO 4

- Faculty will ensure the expanded focus in ethical professional practice to teletherapy and technology-specific standards. This will include revision of 25% of pre-comp and comp questions specific to teletherapy and technology-specific standards as they evolved over 2020 in the world of work. The importance of business associate agreements and understanding virtual platform confidentiality standards emerged as a primary concern in ethical psychological practice during the last year. Personal versus professional use of social media platforms will also be included in the item revisions.
- Faculty will also modify demonstration-based assignments for student presentation of informed consent procedures virtually and in person. The goal for 90% of enrolled students to achieve assignment scores of 85%. Successful completion of these demonstrations ensures student understanding of core ethical concerns required as a foundation for ethical professional practice both virtually and in person.
- Faculty will modify the evaluation form to include a 5-point scale (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory/Consistently Meets Standards, 4 = Consistently Meets High Standards, 5 = Exceeds High Standards) rather than the current 4-point Likert scale to better distinguish performance that meets (minimal) standards from the performance that meets and exceeds high standards.
- Students enrolled in Practicum II (PSYC 5270) meet weekly for group supervision. To enhance professional and ethical development, faculty will present a formal orientation will be presented at the onset of the semester to

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reinforce previously identified general expectations (e.g., dress code, professional timeliness, professional maturity) and to discuss setting/population-specific expectations.

- Faculty will engage students in weekly or “ethical discussions” in which a student presents an ethical dilemma they experienced in practicum that week for group discussion. The purpose will be for students to discover and explore ethical issues, conduct themselves professionally with appropriate debate decorum, and consider their own values within the ethical framework.