



RELEVANT LEARNING OUTCOMES For My Research Methods in Psychology Course



Abstract: This document outlines the relevant American Psychological Association learning outcomes for my research methods course. Along with the learning outcomes, this document briefly identifies where in the course these outcomes are taught or addressed, how they are directly assessed, and how students receive feedback about their achievement. Students are strongly encouraged to examine these outcomes.

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Overview of Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes for My Research Methods Course

In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) officially published a list of student learning outcomes for all psychology curricula. These guidelines are useful in that they identify a common set of potential goals for instructors to use in their teaching. These learning outcomes are important because they provide an essential set of building blocks for both curriculum and assessment.

APA recommends that instructors identify a set of objectives for each course and assess the extent to which students meet these objectives. Thus, I have chosen the following set of learning outcomes for my Research Methods in Psychology course. Students completing this course should be able to effectively:

- Describe the basic characteristics of the science of psychology. (APA Objective 2.1)
- Explain different research methods used by psychologists. (APA Objective 2.2)
- Design basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods. (APA Objective 2.4)
- Demonstrate information competence at each stage in the research process. (APA Objective 6.1)
- Produce understandable reports of the psychological literature and methods in APA style (APA Objective 6.2)
- Use information and technology ethically and responsibly. (APA Objective 6.3)
- Demonstrate computer skills in finding and summarizing psychological literature. (APA Objective 6.4)

How the Learning Outcomes are Addressed in My Courses

The relevant learning outcomes are outlined on the first day of the course, are explicitly emphasized throughout the course, and form the cornerstone of the grading rubric used in the course (see Wendorf, 2007).

In Table 1 (whose format is adapted from Fink, 2003), I have outlined how my research methods course is designed around these learning outcomes. The table briefly describes the learning experiences and assessment techniques that are directly relevant to each outcome. In general, I encourage all of my students to be familiar with this information because it explains why and how the various portions of the course are important.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2007). *APA guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved July 7, 2008 from www.apa.org/ed/resources.html
- Fink, D.L. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wendorf, C. A. (2007). *The grading rubric explanation for all of my courses*. Available for download at http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/cw/portfolio/Wendorf_GradingRubricExplanation.pdf

Table 1: Explicit and Assessed Learning Outcomes for PSYC 200 (Research Methods in Psychology)

Learning Outcomes What specific learning outcome is explicitly addressed in this learning experience?	Course/Unit/Experience Design What do students specifically do to address the learning outcome during this learning experience?	Assessment Context What is the assessment method and its context/setting for this learning experience?	Formal Feedback What formal feedback do students receive about their representation of learning in this experience?						
2.1: Describe the basic characteristics of the science of psychology.	These two learning outcomes form the main content core of the course. In-class lectures and discussions emphasize the importance and relevance of research methods for psychology. Students complete in-class small-group exercises targeted at applying the relevant principles.	The in-class small group activities are graded to check for comprehension. Additionally, in-class multiple-choice and essay exams assess the extent to which students accurately use these concepts.	Students receive a rubric that shows their level of performance on these objectives. Written comments are also made on the activities and the exams.						
2.2: Explain different research methods used by psychologists.				2.4: Design basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods.	These learning outcomes address the primary skills for the course. Students complete a series of out-of-class homework assignments that are designed to reflect the major components of a research proposal. As a result of successfully completing these homework assignments, students will have achieved each of these learning outcomes.	This series of homework assignments is graded to check students' performance on each of these learning outcomes.	Students receive a rubric that shows their level of performance on these objectives (and their implied subcomponents). Written comments are made on the homework assignments. Students are also encouraged to revise and update the assignments as the sequence progresses; similar feedback is given at each and every step.	6.1: Demonstrate information competence at each stage in the research process.	6.2: Produce understandable reports of the psychological literature and methods in APA style.
2.4: Design basic studies to address psychological questions using appropriate research methods.	These learning outcomes address the primary skills for the course. Students complete a series of out-of-class homework assignments that are designed to reflect the major components of a research proposal. As a result of successfully completing these homework assignments, students will have achieved each of these learning outcomes.	This series of homework assignments is graded to check students' performance on each of these learning outcomes.	Students receive a rubric that shows their level of performance on these objectives (and their implied subcomponents). Written comments are made on the homework assignments. Students are also encouraged to revise and update the assignments as the sequence progresses; similar feedback is given at each and every step.						
6.1: Demonstrate information competence at each stage in the research process.				6.2: Produce understandable reports of the psychological literature and methods in APA style.				6.3: Use information and technology ethically and responsibly.	6.4: Demonstrate computer skills in finding and summarizing psychological literature.
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