

Report: Assessment Cycle Details for: Applied Psychology

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Assessment Plan: 2014-2015 Assessment Cycle: Assessment Plan and Assessment Findings

Assessment Plan Template: Academic Program Assessment Plan

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Measures and Findings

Applied Psychology Outcome Set

Outcome

Learning Goals

1. *Integrate theory and research knowledge appropriate to student's field of specialization.*

Mapped to:

- **RI - University of Baltimore Learning Goals:** Measurable Outcome 6a, Measurable Outcome 6b, Measurable Outcome 6c, Measurable Outcome 6d, Measurable Outcome 7a, Measurable Outcome 7b, Measurable Outcome 7c

Measure

Measure 1

COURSE LEVEL; DIRECT - STUDENT ARTIFACT

Details/Description:

Assessment of papers addressing a case concerning need for increasing employee motivation in APPL 641.

Acceptable Target:

Criterion is 80% of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the attached rubric (Appendix A), which measures "Demonstrates accurate understanding of basic psychological research and theory."

Ideal Target:

Implementation Plan (timeline):

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Supporting Attachments:

 Appendix A (Adobe Acrobat Document)

Findings

for Measure 1

Summary of Findings:

On the rubric addressing understanding of basic research and theory (Appendix A), independent ratings were completed by two subject-matter experts (I/O faculty members) for the 23 students enrolled in APPL 641 in Fall, 2014. The artifact was a written response to a case study on organizational leadership. The inter-rater reliability (Pearson r) on for the rubric was .49. The average rating, combined across raters, was 1.59 on the 3-point rating scale, where 0 = "does not meet expectation"; 1 = "meets expectations"; and 2 = "exceeds expectations." Two students or 8.7% of the class) fell beneath a combined rating of 1.0. Therefore, 91% of students (21 of 23) met or exceeded expectations, surpassing the criterion of 80% meeting or exceeding

expectations.

Acceptable Target Achievement:

Exceeded

Ideal Target Achievement :

Exceeded

Recommendations :

Reflections/Notes :

The competency addressed in this question was derived from the Guidelines for Education and Training at the Master's Level in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, published by SIOP (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology) (www.siop.org), in the domain of "work motivation". The Guidelines note that basic competencies may have been obtained at the undergraduate level, and this question may tap more directly into undergraduate preparation than graduate instruction in basic theories. Nevertheless, the application to an IO work problem makes this an important dimension for assessment in the graduate course. Results indicate that students are performing at an acceptable level in early application of basic psychology theory and research to their work products.

Measurement Concerns:

The inter-rater reliability obtained on this rubric is low. The restricted range of scores from the 3-point rating scale likely contributed to this problem, and alternatives will be explored for future assessments.

In addition, an acceptable level of reliability will be determined prior to rating of artifacts, and raters can be trained, as needed, to an acceptable agreement level.

There is also a question as to whether this particular assignment asks students to integrate basic psychological theory into their answers. For future assessments, more attention will be given to the fit between the assignment and the assessment measure.

Substantiating Evidence:

Learning Goals

2. Construct solutions for real-world problems in student's area of specialization.

Mapped to:

- **RI - University of Baltimore Learning Goals:** Measurable Outcome 4A, Measurable Outcome 4B, Measurable Outcome 4C, Measurable Outcome 4D, Measurable Outcome 5A

Measure

Measure 1

COURSE LEVEL; DIRECT - STUDENT ARTIFACT

Details/Description:

Assessment of papers addressing a case concerning need for increasing employee motivation in APPL 641.

Acceptable Target:

Criterion is 80% of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the attached rubric (Appendix B)

Ideal Target:

Implementation Plan (timeline):

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Supporting Attachments:

Findings *for Measure 1*

Summary of Findings:

The papers written in APPL 641 assessed for LO #1, concerning a case study on organizational leadership, were also assessed for LO#2. Ratings were completed on four dimensions of this LO, represented in the rubrics in Appendix B. Ratings were done independently by the raters described above for Items 1-3. The fourth item was rated by only one faculty member, due to a misunderstanding of instructions by one rater.

Results are presented here for each of the measured dimensions.

Familiarity with theories of motivation including (but not limited to) need theories, cognitive theories, and reinforcement theories.

The inter-rater reliability on this item was .46. The average rating for the two raters combined was 1.63. Again, only two students received ratings (averaged between raters) of less than 1.0, indicating that 91% of students met or exceeded expectations, surpassing the criterion.

Understanding of research and theory in IO psychology ... general application of one or more motivational perspectives (i.e., general strategies for work motivation such as goal setting, job design, incentive systems, and participation in decision making)

The inter-rater reliability on this item was .71. The mean combined rating 1.7. Two students received a combined rating of less than 1.0, indicating, again, that 91% of students met or exceeded expectations, surpassing the criterion.

Awareness of very specific practices that adapt motivational constructs to specific cases
The inter-rater reliability on this item was .26. The mean rating across raters was 1.7. Only one student received a combined rating of less than 1.0, indicating, again, that 96% of students met or exceeded expectations, surpassing the criterion.

General Intervention Planning

This item was rated by only one faculty member, due to a misunderstanding of directions. On this item, the mean rating was 1.5. Two students received ratings below 1.0. Therefore, 91% of students met or exceeded expectations, exceeding the criterion of 80% set for this assessment.

Acceptable Target Achievement:

Exceeded

Ideal Target Achievement :

Exceeded

Recommendations :

Reflections/Notes :

As with the previous rubric, competencies measured here were derived from SIOP guidelines. The first three items represent theory, research and practice competencies that pertain to work motivation. The descriptions provided with each rubric (underlined and appearing above the actual rubric) were taken directly from SIOP guidelines. The fourth rubric is more general and was constructed specifically for this evaluation.

Measurement Concerns:

The inter-rater reliability on the first and third items was low, and unacceptably low on the third. This concern has been addressed with IO faculty who served as raters, who have suggested improvements to the rubrics for this subject matter. At a minimum, in future assessments the scaling of the rubrics will be modified, and training will be done as necessary to achieve an accepted level of inter-rater reliability. We will also ensure that all items are rated by both raters.

One rater also raised concerns about the fit between the assignment that was the artifact for this assessment and the rubrics employed. Specifically, it was noted that the APPL 641 course instructor actively discourages use of theory-based jargon in preparation of reports that will be submitted to employers. That made the use of theory hard to pick up in the artifact. Future assessments will need to bear this in mind to select artifacts sensitive to student learning in the area of theory.

Outcomes:

Although the inter-rater reliabilities vary among the four items rated by two experts, there was 100% concordance on which students did not meet expectations. The same two students were consistently rated lower than their peers by both raters, and were the only ones to receive any ratings of less than 1.0. Overall, however, the 91% rate at which students met the criteria established for these items indicates that satisfactory progress is being made in this course toward students' ability to construct interventions that draw upon IO theory and research, knowledge of applicable techniques, and consider client attributes. It was specifically noted that students' responses were well-written, reflecting points emphasized in their instruction, to be prepared to "sell" their ideas to employers, and thus tailor recommendations to employer needs.

Substantiating Evidence:

Measure

Measure 2

COURSE LEVEL; DIRECT - STUDENT ARTIFACT

Details/Description:

Assessment of treatment plans submitted for APPL 703/708.

Acceptable Target:

Acceptable performance is 80% of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the attached rubric (Appendix C), as rated by two faculty members.

Ideal Target:

Implementation Plan (timeline):

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Supporting Attachments:

 Appendix C.pdf (Adobe Acrobat Document)

Findings

for Measure 2

Summary of Findings:

Treatment plans for one section of APPL 703 and 708, which is conducted as a cross-listed class, were independently rated by two subject matter experts (faculty in counseling psychology) on the rubric in Appendix C. Nine students enrolled were APPL students; only those were rated for this assessment.

The inter-rater reliability for this rubric item was .50. Only one student received a rating of less than 1.0 from one rater, and only this student received a rating of less than 1, averaged across the two raters. Thus the criterion of 80% of students meeting or exceeding expectations was passed.

Acceptable Target Achievement:

Exceeded

Ideal Target Achievement :

Exceeded

Recommendations :**Reflections/Notes :**

Measurement Concern:

This rubric suffered the same low inter-rater reliability as those used in the IO class. For future assessments, the acceptable level of inter-rater agreement will be set prior to rating of artifacts; modifications of artifacts will be discussed among faculty members; raters will be trained to the acceptable level of agreement; and discrepancies in ratings will be discussed until raters come to agreement.

Taking these steps will hopefully yield more than better psychometrics in our assessment. Working for inter-rater agreement will also compel better agreement on what constitutes various levels of successful or unsuccessful performance, and hence, better agreement on what it is that we are trying to teach in these courses.

In discussion following the rating of this artifact, raters agreed that the one student who was given a "0" by one rater had the poorest performance on the treatment plan. It seems that our perceptions may already be more similar than the statistic suggests, and we need to find better ways to measure the nuances of student performance.

Instructional and Measurement Improvements:

Although Counseling Psychology students met the criterion that had been set for this artifact, several aspects of the form used in treatment planning were noted as ripe for improvement. The form consists of two sections (See Appendix F). The first asks students to consider important client factors, such as current degree of social support and cultural variables. All of the factors on the form have been shown in psychotherapy research to be important in treatment planning. The second section of the form asks for students to list the goals, objectives, and planned interventions that will constitute treatment. An observation from the current assessment was that students are adept at listing important client factors, but those factors rarely show up in the actual treatment plan.

Second, though not stated in this LO, it is important that students plan treatments from a theoretical base. The existing form does not ask students to reflect upon or report the theory underlying the treatment plan.

Finally, it is widely recognized that treatment plans are most useful when they are done collaboratively with one's client. The existing form can be wholly created by the counselor without client consultation.

These concerns with the treatment planning process have been discussed with all faculty

involved in teaching of practicum (APPL 703) and internship (APPL 708) in Spring semester, 2015, and the following changes have been agreed upon:

For future semesters, all practicum students will be assigned reading and provided instruction in the client factors that have been shown, in psychotherapy research, to be important to treatment planning. This instruction will cover the dimensions requested in the first part of the treatment plan form, and students will be asked to incorporate these factors into the actual treatment plan that follows.

In addition, in subsequent semesters, the required treatment plan form for practicum and internship classes will ask students to:

- a. complete a brief summary of the treatment plan that will be shared with clients. Client responses to the plan will be solicited and noted on the form, and the client will also “sign off” on the form, ensuring that the treatment planning process is a collaborative one.
- b. include a statement of the theoretical orientation that was utilized in the formulation of goals for the treatment, and will be utilized in the delivery of the treatment.

These steps should hopefully lead to the creation of more comprehensive and plans that are more tailored to individual clients.

Improvement of Outcome Assessment:

Another consideration to emerge from the assessment process concerns the use of the current rubric across varying levels of student experience. Students may take anywhere from 1 to 3 semesters of APPL 703 and 708 during their master’s programs. Faculty will engage in discussions about how to design rubrics that can measure the important dimensions of counselor growth across 2-3 semesters. This may involve modification and expansion of the current rubric, use of sub-rubrics for students at different levels of training, or a redesign of rubrics related to the design and implementation of “real-world” solutions in counseling. It is expected that this discussion will be ongoing.

Substantiating Evidence:

Learning Goals

3. Integrate knowledge and valuation of ethical principles and standards into the design and/or implementation of original plans.

Mapped to:

- **RI - University of Baltimore Learning Goals:** Measurable Outcome 3A, Measurable Outcome 3B, Measurable Outcome 3C

Measure

Measure 1

COURSE LEVEL; DIRECT - EXAM

Details/Description:

Essay question on the final exam in APPL 602, which asks students to apply ethical principles to a case description. Rubric is attached as Appendix D.

Acceptable Target:

Criterion is for 80% of APPL counseling students to meet or exceed expectations.

Ideal Target:

Implementation Plan (timeline):

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Supporting Attachments:

Findings *for Measure 1*

Summary of Findings:

Seventeen APPL Counseling Psychology students enrolled in APPL 602 completed an essay question as part of their final exam that asked them to respond to a case in terms of ethical principles and an ethical decision-making model studied in this course. Student responses were rated by the course instructor on the rubric appearing in Appendix D.

On the first item of the rubric, naming of moral principles underlying ethical decision-making, 16 of 17 (94% of) students named 5 or 6 of the principles, thus meeting or exceeding expectations, and thus surpassing the criterion.

On the second item, accurate application of the moral principle to the case, 13 students met or exceeded expectations, or 76%. The criterion was not met for this item.

Similar results were obtained on the naming and application of the steps in an ethical decision-making model. Fourteen students, or 82%, could name at least five of seven steps taught throughout the course, meeting the criterion.

In application of the steps, 13, or 76% could accurately apply at least 5 steps to the given case. Thus, the criterion was not met for this task.

Acceptable Target Achievement:

Not Met

Ideal Target Achievement :

Approaching

Recommendations :

Reflections/Notes :

In this course, which is generally taken in the first or second semester of graduate study, the moral principles and ethical decision-making model are stressed throughout. It is emphasized that these concepts need to be "over-learned," so that they can be readily called to mind in the moment when students are facing an ethical dilemma with a counseling client. (Actual practice usually commences within 3-9 months of completing the Ethics course). Indeed, a high percentage of students, by the end of the course, could name most of the principles and steps to be taken to lead to an ethically justifiable action. A percentage almost as high, but just under criterion, was found for students' ability to accurately apply the principles and steps to an actual case – arguably a far more difficult task and more important outcome.

Measurement Concerns:

The first measurement concern is that students may not have given their best effort to the essay question used as the artifact. This question was given as a separate section of the students' final exam, and given after students had completed a lengthy multiple choice section. It was also treated as extra-credit. It is not clear that students were highly motivated to give comprehensive answers. For example, one student named all 7 of the steps involved in decision-making, but did not apply any of the steps to the case. To ensure that students are motivated to show all that they have learned, this section of the final exam will be given before the objective part of the exam in ensuing semesters.

Second, the rubric used for this assessment was constructed specifically for the assessment,

and the criterion of 80% was an arbitrary one, as was the decision as to how to demarcate various levels of proficiency on the scale. It may be more useful to use more levels on the rating scales. A 6-point assessment on the moral principles, and 7-point scale for the steps of ethical decision-making could be easily constructed, which could then be utilized in various courses, with different benchmarks set for proficiency across the curriculum.

Third, given the problems with inter-rater reliability found on other rubrics used in this assessment, it is obvious that more than one rater should evaluate the artifacts. The considerations listed above for achieving adequate inter-rater reliability will be incorporated into future assessments in APPL 602.

Instructional Improvements:

Regardless of measurement issues, the results support an expectable outcome: that accurate application of principles is a more difficult task than naming of principles. Learning in application can be reinforced by allowing more classroom time for small-group consideration of case studies, or by requiring online discussion of cases in which students must apply them. Cases could easily be presented online, assigned to small groups, and the groups requested to present their conclusions in the next class. These options will be discussed further with counseling faculty members, and at least one of them will be implemented in the next academic year.

Knowledge of ethical principles and their application is also routinely assessed when students reach practicum (in the second year), as well as when students take the National Counseling Examination (see #2 below). Although the final measure suggests that our students are performing at a superb level, there is still room for improvement in our instruction. Discussions among faculty about usage of the same language (e.g., "moral principles), decision-making steps, and professional code (e.g., the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association) across the curriculum will be held. Specifically, discussions will focus on:

- a. proposed modification to the rubric used in this course
- b. whether a similar rubric might be used in practicum/internship courses
- c. whether written assignments in practicum/internship can more explicitly require attention to ethical concepts and principles

Improvement of Outcome Assessment:

A common language of "principles" and "steps" will also make a second faculty member ready to serve as a rater in subsequent outcome assessments on this (or an alternate, improved) rubric.

Substantiating Evidence:

Measure

Measure 2

OTHER LEVEL; DIRECT - EXAM

Details/Description:

Student scores on "Professional Orientation and Ethics" area of the National Counseling Examination.

Acceptable Target:

Criterion is that the mean for UB students who take the exam will meet or exceed the mean for all students taking the exam, nationally.

Ideal Target:

Implementation Plan (timeline):

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Supporting Attachments:

Findings *for Measure 2*

Summary of Findings:

Thirteen students took the National Counseling Exam in October of 2014. All students passed the exam, and on the Professional Orientation and Ethics subset of questions, UB students' mean was 22.46 (out of 29 possible items). This mean exceeds the mean score of all other reported groups: 20.35 for students in CACREP-accredited programs, 20.38 for "non-CACREP" students, and 17.84 for other national applicants, presumably, applicants who have graduated from their programs already. Thus, our criterion on this measure was exceeded.

Acceptable Target Achievement:

Exceeded

Ideal Target Achievement :

Exceeded

Recommendations :

Reflections/Notes :

Since CACREP training is touted as the "gold standard" for counselor training in the U.S., we are proud of the accomplishments of our students, who take this exam generally in their final semester of enrollment in the master's program. Nevertheless, training in ethical decision-making and should be infused across the curriculum, as it is critical to competent counseling practice. Discussion among counseling faculty will focus on how ethics content can be infused into other courses in such a way that it builds upon that given in the foundational course, and measures can be undertaken of increasing understanding and utilization of ethical reasoning across the curriculum.

Substantiating Evidence:

No measures specified

Learning Goals

4. Integrate knowledge of and appreciation for cultural diversity and social justice into the creation and/or implementation of original plans.

Mapped to:

- **RI - University of Baltimore Learning Goals:** Measurable Outcome 2A, Measurable Outcome 2B, Measurable Outcome 2C, Measurable Outcome 2D

