

Memo

To: Robert Santee, Ph.D.

From: Tracy Trevorrow, Ph.D.

Re: Psychology Major Course Requirements at CUH

Date: 3/1/12

I've reviewed the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (attached). It is not prescriptive in stipulating what courses should be required. The report leaves institutions the latitude to offer a variety of course offerings, recognizing that institutions will stress areas of the discipline based on local factors, faculty backgrounds, and institutional mission. What the report does outline are 10 "Learning Goals" and states that undergraduate psychology majors should be exposed to coursework and learning experiences that would ensure that these goals are met. The Learning Goals are divided into five that are specific to psychology and its application and five that are more general, addressing broader skills and development of the self and career preparation.

It seems that Learning Goals #1, #2, and #4 "Knowledge Base of Psychology," "Research Methods in Psychology," and "Application of Psychology" address most directly which courses would be needed to provide appropriate breadth and depth in a psychology curriculum.

Specifically, Goal #1.2 outlines four general domains:

- (1) Learning and cognition
- (2) Individual differences (psychometrics, personality, social processes, sociocultural issues)
- (3) Biological bases of behavior and mental processes, including sensation, perception, comparative psychology, motivation, and emotion
- (4) Developmental changes in behavior and mental processes across the lifespan

This Goal further recommends that the history of the field and its methods should be covered, and analysis should be made on variety of levels from cellular to societal. Learning Goal #2 outlines the need for undergraduate students to understand and apply basic research methods. Learning Goal #4 indicates that courses such as clinical/counseling, I/O, Health Psychology/Stress and Stress Management should be offered. The other Learning Goals appear to address characteristics that we expect to be integral to most courses, e.g., critical thinking, ethics, and communication skills.

Comparing CUH Major Requirements to APA Guidelines

It seems we cover Goal # 1.2 regarding Individual Differences and Development. We satisfy Goal #2 by requiring coursework in Research Methods and Goal #4 by several courses that are applied in focus, i.e., Organizational Psychology, Counseling, and Stress and Health. We appear to fall short of the APA guidelines by not offering coursework in Learning and Cognition and by not having Biological Bases of Behavior a required course.

Comparing CUH with Major Requirement at UH, HPU, and BYU

It's hard to make direct comparisons between our program and other local universities regarding the psychology major requirements, as UH and HPU require their students, in part, to choose amongst a list of courses (see attached Table). Our program requires 13 courses, the highest number of required courses for psychology majors; 7 more courses than UH, 5 more courses than BYU, and 2 more courses than HPU. As such, courses that are required at CUH such as Organizational Psychology, Health and Stress, Evolutionary Psychology, and Career Development are not required at the other universities. Conversely, we do not require Biological Bases of Behavior as a requirement although it is required by BYU, HPU, and satisfies a requirement for UH. Only HPU offers Learning and Cognitive Processes and this course is a requirement for a psychology major.

Recommended changes to our course offerings and Psychology Major requirement

I think we have strengths integrating Eastern philosophies into the psychology curriculum. We also have a number of courses with a clinical focus and students can elect to gain hands-on research experience in a psychology lab. I believe we only briefly cover the history of the field (in PSY 101) and this area may be reviewed in other courses. We do not appear to be matching APA Guidelines in the areas of Learning and Cognition (which is not offered) and Biological Bases of Behavior (offered only as an elective).

It seems that several of our required courses are not typically required by other institutions and are not strongly indicated by APA Guidelines as warranting a required status, i.e., Organizational Psychology, Health and Stress (both have an applied focus meeting Learning Goal 4, but this is already met by requiring Counseling Psychology), Evolutionary Psychology, and Career Development. We may want to reclassify these courses as electives.

I have also included a graph of a 1992 survey that asked respondents to indicate which courses best prepared them for obtaining their primary position, which I'm guessing may include graduate school. A course in Learning ranked relatively high, whereas Biological Bases of Behavior was not listed.

I hope this review has been helpful. Perhaps this can be a topic of discussion at our next Department meeting.

Cheers,

-Tracy