

**UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM  
COMPRHENSIVE EXAM  
CONSTRUCT VALIDITY STUDY  
SUBMITTED BY  
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One of the assumptions when creating program student learning outcomes is that the outcomes are distinct. This allows for determining strengths and weaknesses, and thus the improvement of the content and delivery of the program. This process becomes problematic when the focus is directed to creating extremely detailed matrixes linking courses to program outcomes, and then creating detailed rubrics for each program outcome as if the components of the rubrics are distinct entities. Thus, this type of assessment process assumes distinct program learning outcomes which are assessed by rubrics which also assume distinct components. No evidence for these distinctions is usually provided.

Assessment must be evidence based. If there are distinct program learning outcomes, then there must be evidence to support these distinctions. The same holds true for the components of any rubric. There must be evidence that validates the assumptions.

It would make more sense to simply assume a single program learning outcome and then subject it to an analysis. The evidence will validate or invalidate the assumption.

This is exactly what we did with the Psychology program Comprehensive Exam relative to our program student learning outcomes. Even though there are five scales, each one corresponding to an assumed distinct program student learning outcome, the hypothesis is there is only one component and thus only one program student learning outcome being assessed by the Psychology program's Comprehensive Exam.

### **Validity Study**

The construct validity of the Comprehensive Exam ( $\alpha = .76$ ), given in the Senior Seminar capstone course (Psy 490) was determined (N=129) using a principle component analysis procedure from SPSS. The analysis addressed the first five Psychology program student learning outcomes.

Five Scales (49 total items), each one corresponding to a specific Psychology program student learning outcomes were used for the analysis. The 5 items from the Marianist Educational Values scale were eliminated as the Marianist Educational Values are not a Psychology program student learning outcome. The one item that represents the Integrative Scale was also eliminated as one item was not sufficient for this type of analysis.

The hypothesis was that there should only be one component as all the scales are essentially assessing various aspects of the same construct, basic knowledge of psychology. In other words, although scales are created to represent distinct student learning outcomes, in all likelihood there are not five distinct program student learning outcomes. There is just one.

Using the principle component extraction method within the SPSS Factor Analysis program, with no rotation, one component was extracted, thus supporting the hypothesis and establishing the construct validity of the Comprehensive Exam. It also indicates that although we created five student program learning outcomes to assist us in assessing the Psychology program, there is, in fact, only one program student learning outcome: basic knowledge of psychology.

Component Matrix

	Component
	1
SCIMETH	.755
SOCCC	.707
COUNSTHE	.701
LIFESPAN	.664
APPPSY	.454

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
a 1 components extracted.