



**Executive Summary
AA Integration Group**

GROUP MEMBERS

Donna Alexander, Chair

Eric Amsel

Bryan Gerber

Robin Hailstorks

Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges

Kris Leppien-Christensen (CABE)

CONTEXT

An associate's degree is awarded to students at graduation in community colleges and en-passant in some four-year colleges to students who apply for it after completing the 60 credit requirement. Typically, the associate's degree marks the completion of General Education requirements in addition to classes on topics of interest to students. Some schools offer a more specialized associate's degree by requiring a number of classes in psychology. On average, associate's degree programs in psychology require about 5 psychology courses, the most popular being Introduction to Psychology, Developmental/Life Span Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, and Social Psychology (Norcross et al., 2016).

Generally speaking, there is little agreement across institutions as to which courses students are required to complete for the associate's degree in psychology. This variability is particularly acute in community colleges where there are various constraints on the forms of courses that they can offer. Some community colleges are required by institutional or State Regent policy to offer only lower division classes which may preclude key courses in the psychology curriculum, such as Research Methods or Statistics.

Psychology programs in community colleges vary in size and organization, with programs functioning as stand-alone departments or embedded as a program in broader departments, divisions, or colleges. The number of faculty teaching psychology courses in community colleges varies from 1 to 2 to multiple dozens. As a result, no assumption can be made about the number or type of courses in psychology that students complete when graduating with an associate's degree in psychology.

RATIONALE FOR AA ASSESSMENT

The following are the three assessment goals for AA degree students.

1. To ensure that the psychology classes are effective in fulfilling institutional and department missions (particularly in Gen. Ed).
2. To certify that students acquire the deeper foundational ideas of the discipline that go beyond exposure to its breadth in an Introductory Psychology class.

To confirm that students are prepared to successfully complete upper division psychology courses (either by transfer to four-year colleges or continuing on in a 4-year college)

CORE CONCEPTS:

Given the different classes and contexts in which an Associate's Degree in Psychology is granted and the three assessment goals, we propose that AA students should demonstrate competence in each of the following

1. Explain the nature, value, and methods of psychology as a science
2. Demonstrate quantitative literacy in psychology
3. Explain why theory is fundamental to psychology
4. Integrate psychology within the broader interdisciplinary nature of science and behavior
5. Apply psychological science to improve the quality of personal well-being, interpersonal collaboration, professional development, and civic engagement.
6. Promote the value of psychological science for addressing community needs and societal problems and advancing science as a whole

MAPPING OF GUIDELINES

EXEMPLARS

Group members developed several exemplars to illustrate AA assessment but expressed that the complexity of the task made addressing the charge problematic. Consequently, we identified a number of recommendations that will facilitate the larger unresolved issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote recommended courses to be required within the AA program: Intro, Abnormal, at least one Methods/Stats class, and an Applications course.
2. Establish an APA task force dedicated to conceptualizing, empirically verifying, and identifying ways of assessing key acquisitions (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, skills, and knowledge) acquired in the first 3-5 courses in the discipline that are
 - aligned to LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes
 - reflective of foundational concepts in psychology
 - likely to ensure student success in upper division courses
3. Recommend that Associate's degree students be assessed at both the course and program level.