

Empirical and Quantitative Skills Report - Psychology Department, Spring 2017

The method of assessment of student mastery for the Texas Core Objectives related to the Empirical and Quantitative Skills Area of Social and Behavioral Science¹ utilized a number of multiple-choice questions². The questions were developed to target “Empirical and Quantitative Skills.” Depending on the course section of Introduction to Psychology, the questions that were part of the assessment were integrated into regular course assessments during the semester, or occurred as a single assessment at the end of the semester.

The demographics of the student population are shown in the Excel spreadsheet³. Due to the nature of the assessment, a sample of n=523 students were included in the final analysis. The sample consisted of student respondents from Psyc 1315 sections 001, 002, 003, 005, 007, 700, and 701. Visual inspection of the student population indicates that the sample is an appropriate representation of the entire population of students that would have completed the assessment. As a consequence, the outcome of the assessment can be used as a valid starting point to assess achievement towards our threshold of student mastery.

The threshold for determining student master for the Texas Core Objectives related to the Empirical and Quantitative Skills Area of Social and Behavioral Science was set at 70% of students scoring, on average, 70% or higher across the questions within the core area. This threshold was determined based on the historical use of similar thresholds for the Department of Psychology’s ongoing Unit Effectiveness Plan which assesses student learning outcomes across a number of domains. We are pleased to report that on the dimension of Empirical and Quantitative Skills, 436/523 (83%) of the students achieved greater than 70% performance level within the domain of Empirical and Quantitative Skills. We are pleased that the results of the performance assessment demonstrated that we met our threshold criteria. However, we want to achieve better. So, moving forward we plan to evaluate the items within each the core objective area to make sure that they are appropriate to evaluate the objective. In addition, we will continue to monitor our core curriculum and instructional approaches to ensure that the material is being appropriately conveyed within the core area.

Below is the list of items used to assess this Texas Core Curriculum objective. Please note that there are 14 items within the Empirical and Quantitative Skills core.

Also note that there are 2 attached Excel Spreadsheets³. The first sheet (PSYC 1315 Spring 2017) is data regarding the student population enrolled in Introduction to Psychology. The second sheet (Core assessment data Psychology Spring 2017) is the raw data showing the individual student outcome for the core area. The outcome for the core area was calculated as the total number of students achieving greater than 70% performance divided by 523.

Notes:

¹ The report, above, was furnished to the University by Psychology Department Chair, Dr. Perry Fuchs.

² A list of the 14 multiple-choice items developed by the Psychology Department for use in assessing Empirical and Quantitative Skills is available by permission; please contact the department directly.

³ The Psychology Department provided Excel files containing roster information to generally describe the students enrolled in Spring 2017 Introduction to Psychology course sections. However, individual outcome data matching descriptive information with student scores was not tracked by the department, thus actionable comparisons are not available related to trends in student attainment (e.g., means by classification, ethnicity, gender, or college major), nor to provide historical evidence (e.g., year-to-year comparisons).