

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

### Psychology-Clinical Psychology (M.S.) (552)

**Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development**

**Department: Psychology**

**Prepared by: Cynthia Lindsey, Billie Myers, & Patrice Moulton**

**Date: May 14, 2026**

**Approved by: Dr. Mary Edith Stacy**

**Date: May 28, 2026**

**Northwestern Mission Statement.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its undergraduate and graduate certificate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community, with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

**The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development** is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and the professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network, to assist children and their families with learning and development.

**Department of Psychology Mission.** The Department of Psychology, which offers undergraduate degrees in Psychology and Addiction Studies, as well as a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, is dedicated to providing high-quality education by actively engaging in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Students develop a robust knowledge base of concepts and theories, as well as scientific and critical thinking, ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world, effective communication, and professional development. As part of our educational mission, the Psychology Department offers encouragement and support for research and scholarship to both faculty and students, providing opportunities for practicum and externship training experiences. These activities are designed to foster professionalism and prepare students for graduate education, immediate employment, and community service.

**Clinical Psychology Program Mission Statement:** The mission of the clinical psychology graduate program is to educate students in the science and practice of clinical psychology, enabling them to develop into knowledgeable professionals who are intelligent consumers of research and competent ethical providers of psychological services.

## **Assessment Cycle 2025-2026**

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the MS in Clinical Psychology program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools are collected and returned to the program coordinator.
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core graduate courses if required.
- (5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Clinical Psychology Graduate Council, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period, and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### **SLO 1.**

**Students will know and utilize the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 5200: Theories of Psychotherapy  
PSYC 5260: Practicum I: Psychotherapy and Intervention

#### **Measure: 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

Annually, students are administered a preliminary exam during orientation before starting the program to establish a baseline of knowledge. The exam covers the same four areas, including theories, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments because this is a preliminary evaluation; no minimum score is expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 5200, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam consists of questions developed by a faculty member to evaluate students' foundational knowledge of the theories of psychotherapy. The goal was for 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70% or higher. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Of the nine students, the results showed the students performed significantly better on the post-test ( $M = 83.63$ ,  $SD = 8.09$ ) than on the pre-test ( $M = 56.84$ ,  $SD = 19.47$ ),  $t(8) = -4.15$ ,  $p = .002$ . These results indicate students' knowledge of theories of psychotherapy significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for this SLO.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty decided to continue focusing on the broader modality of andragogy and to provide course sessions on Socratic questioning and open discussions regarding the content and application of the theoretical foundations of psychotherapy. This method was intended to provide support for the information learned and encourage critical thinking. The method would also provide students with more opportunities to apply the theories in practice. Case studies were used for treatment planning based on various theoretical models, allowing students to experience differences in techniques and strategies and to better understand how to combine them for best practice. These changes were intentionally implemented to advance the cycle of improvement.

As a result of these changes, the target was met in AC 2025-2026. The results showed the students performed significantly better on the post-test ( $M = 87.12$ ,  $SD = 12.24$ ) than on the pre-test ( $M = 56.88$ ,  $SD = 13.96$ ),  $t(8) = -4.89$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . These results indicate that students' knowledge of theories of psychotherapy significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for this SLO.

### Decision or Recommendation.

Based on analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The decision is to continue focusing on the broader modality of andragogy, provide Socratic questioning sessions, and open discussions on the content and application of the theoretical foundations of psychotherapy. Case studies will continue to be used for treatment planning based on various theoretical models, allowing students to experience differences in techniques and strategies and to better understand how to combine them for best practice. In addition, the sequence of teaching the theories will be changed to group "like theories" to assist with comprehension of the approach, and the case conceptualization model will be incorporated as a worksheet for the treatment planning process.

### Measure: 1.2. (Direct – Skill/Ability)

At the end of the semester, site supervisors evaluate students enrolled in PSYC 5270 (Clinical Internship) on their knowledge and use of theoretical and scientific

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

approaches to psychological treatment, including evidence-based practice. The goal was for 100% of enrolled students to demonstrate fundamental knowledge by scoring three or higher on the evaluation. The equivalent rating for the recently adopted (2018) evaluation form is a score of 3 (1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, and 4 = Superior).

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

**Table 1**

| <b>Psychological Intervention Skills</b>                   | <b><i>M</i></b> | <b><i>SD</i></b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy.       | 4.6             | 0.55             |
| Takes a theoretically based approach to working w/clients. | 4.4             | 0.55             |

For the application of this knowledge with clients, the ratings ranged from 4 ( $N = 3$ ) to 5 ( $N = 2$ ), with  $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ . In terms of the SLO, the objective was met, with 100% of students earning a rating of 3 or higher from their supervisor, consistently demonstrating high standards.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the students' efforts to apply the theory again exceeded their overall knowledge. Faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the improvement cycle. The PSYC 5270 Instructor continued to emphasize a theoretical orientation and its application as students presented cases during weekly group supervision for the internship. In addition, students participated in discussions of best practices and the utilization of strategies and techniques as they presented case staffing with supervisors.

As a result of these changes, the target was met in AC 2025-2026.

**Table 2**

| <b>Psychological Intervention Skills</b>                   | <b><i>M</i></b> | <b><i>SD</i></b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy.       | 3.5             | 0.50             |
| Takes a theoretically based approach to working w/clients. | 3.6             | 0.49             |

As seen in Table 2, internship supervisors rated the students enrolled in PSYC 5270 during the Spring semester three and four for demonstrating knowledge of theories and psychotherapy. For the application of this knowledge with clients, the ratings also ranged from 3 ( $N = 5$ ) to 4 ( $N = 6$ ), with  $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ . In terms of the SLO, the objective was met: 100% of students earned a rating of 3 or higher from their supervisor, consistently demonstrating high standards.

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

### Decision or Recommendation.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The PSYC 5270 Instructor will emphasize theoretical orientation and application when students present cases during weekly group supervision for the internship. In addition, students will participate in discussions of case conceptualization, best practices, and the use of strategies and techniques as they present cases to supervisors.

These changes will enhance the student's ability to understand and apply the theories, techniques, and outcomes of major approaches to psychotherapy, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement for this Student Learning Objective (SLO).

### SLO 2.

Demonstrate understanding of research, theory, and methods of clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology.

**Course Map:** PSYC 5300: Intellectual Assessment  
PSYC 5320: Personality Assessment  
PSYC 5750: Psychopathology  
PSYC 5270: Practicum II: Psychotherapy and Intervention

### Measure 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

The preliminary exam covers the same four areas, including psychopathology. Coordinating targeted items allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 5750, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam consists of questions developed by a faculty member to evaluate students' knowledge of psychopathology, including its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment. The goal was for at least 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70% or higher. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

The AC 2024-2025 target was partially met.

Consistent with years past, the comprehensive exam for 2024-2025 included 75 multiple-choice questions and two discussion questions, and 69% (nine of 13) of the students passed with a grade of 80% or higher. The exam included the 25 items from the pre-test. Of the 13 students, 69% scored 80% or higher on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 45.83 to 83.33% ( $M = 60.07$ ,  $SD = 13.11$ ). For the same

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 75 to 95.83% ( $M = 86.36$ ,  $SD = 7.18$ ) and were significantly higher than those on the pretest,  $t(12) = 2.61$ ,  $p = .03$ . While 80% of the students did not earn a score of 80% or higher, these results indicate students' knowledge of psychopathology significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for the SLO.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes for AC 2025-2026 to drive the improvement cycle. The changes to instruction and activities guided by the analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified as areas of weakness were effective. This practice will continue as each cohort of students has variable performance levels in these identified areas. However, a review continued to show a large percentage of the cohorts missed two of the 25 items, one about intellectual disability and one about mood disorders, suggesting that the issue was the wording of the items and not a deficit in knowledge. These items were replaced with new items for the same disorders, but they were worded with greater clarity.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026, the target was partially met. The comprehensive exam continues to include 75 multiple-choice questions and two discussion questions. Only three of eight students (37.5%) passed with a grade of 80% or higher. The exam also included the 25 items from the pre-test. Of the eight students, 100% achieved a score of 80% or higher on the targeted multiple-choice questions. Scores on the pretest ranged from 56% to 92% ( $M = 74.50$ ,  $SD = 11.89$ ). For the same targeted items, scores on the comprehensive exam ranged from 80 to 100% ( $M = 93.75$ ,  $SD = 7.71$ ) and were significantly higher than those on the pretest, one-tailed paired t-test,  $t(7) = -3.27$ ,  $p = .01$ . Although 80% of the students did not achieve a score of 80% or higher, the target was partially met as results demonstrate a significant increase in students' knowledge of psychopathology from the pre-comp assessment to the comprehensive exam, indicating improvement in the desired direction for the SLO.

### Decision or Recommendation.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the improvement cycle. The changes to instruction and activities, guided by the analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified as areas of weakness, were effective. This practice will continue as each cohort of students has variable performance levels in these identified areas. In addition, item analysis of all items on the comprehensive exam will be conducted to identify poorly worded, ambiguous, or low-discrimination items. The instructor will remove ineffective questions. In addition, a structured review session will be conducted before students take the comprehensive exam, with emphasis on problematic areas identified in the pre-comprehensive exam.

These changes will directly impact the student's ability to demonstrate competency in psychopathology, including its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment.

## **Assessment Cycle 2025-2026**

### **Measure 2.2. (Direct – Assessment Skill / Ability)**

Students will demonstrate their psychological assessment and diagnostic abilities through formal clinical interviews, mental status examinations, standardized psychological testing administration, scoring, and interpretative evaluation reports that they are required to submit for PSYC 5300 and 5320, required assessment courses for Clinical Psychology students. Upon completing PSYC 5320, students submit a comprehensive psychological assessment report evaluating their proficiency in conducting structured clinical interviews and mental status examinations, and in administering, scoring, and interpreting psychological tests used in professional assessment and diagnosis. The goal was for at least 70% of students to score at least 80% on the comprehensive report to demonstrate competency in psychological assessment and diagnostics.

**Finding:** Target was met.

#### **Analysis:**

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

In the AC 2024-2025, faculty provided instruction for the administration of psychological assessment instruments, including the WAIS-5. Students conducted a final comprehensive report that included a clinical interview, mental status examination, personality assessment, and intellectual assessment. Their scores ranged from 69-92% with  $M = 90.4\%$ ,  $SD = 4.54$ . The results confirm student competency in integrating findings from multiple data sources to formulate a comprehensive psychological evaluation.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, faculty continued to provide instruction for the administration of psychological assessment instruments, including the WAIS-5. Students conducted a final comprehensive report that included a clinical interview, mental status examination, personality assessment, and intellectual assessment. Their scores ranged from 81% to 92% ( $M = 86.0\%$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ). The results confirm student competency in integrating findings from multiple data sources to formulate a comprehensive psychological evaluation.

#### **Decision or Recommendation**

Based on the AC 2025-2026 results, the continued focus on learning to conduct comprehensive evaluations that include clinical interviews, questionnaires, personality inventories, and intellectual tests will be a priority. Additionally, to maintain continued compliance with industry standards, students will use technology obtained for the Clinical Psychology Master's Program to administer all personality testing instruments on iPads, in addition to paper-and-pencil. This will provide students with the leading methods for administering standardized emotional and personality measures in the workplace.

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

These changes will enhance the student's ability to demonstrate an understanding of research, theory, and methods in clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention for normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### Measure 2.3. (Direct – Intervention Skill / Ability).

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5270 (Internship) were evaluated by their supervisors on their knowledge and skills of treatment planning and choosing and implementing evidence-based interventions to effect change. The goal was for 100% of students to be rated satisfactory (3) and demonstrate competency in psychological intervention. The rating scale on the evaluation form is 1 = Not Satisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, and 4 = Superior.

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

**Table 3**

|                                                      | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Ability to propose & defend treatment plan.          | 3.5      | 0.58      |
| Seeks information about therapeutic techniques.      | 3.75     | 0.50      |
| Knowledgeable about therapeutic techniques.          | 3.5      | 0.58      |
| Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy. | 3.67     | 0.58      |
| Takes a theoretically based approach.                | 3.75     | 0.50      |
| Overall Rating                                       | 3.75     | 0.50      |

Overall, 100% of students received a satisfactory rating. One student's placement focused entirely on assessment. Therefore, the therapeutic theoretical orientation was not applicable to her evaluation. Another student received satisfactory ratings but few superior ratings. The analysis over two years revealed a trend among students assigned to an internship placement that focuses on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Therefore, while our students are demonstrating competency in psychological intervention, the ratings were consistent with the program's more general approach to preparing students for adult populations.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. The plan to introduce ABA principles and techniques in Theories of Psychotherapy (PSYC 5200) was implemented with the cohort; however, the students were not required to give a presentation on their setting, the population, and the therapeutic approach typical to that setting, as they were not placed in time to meet the goal due to challenges with the internship sites' willingness to commit to placement.

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

The data revealed the target was met for AC 2024-2025

**Table 4**

|                                                      | <i><b>M</b></i> | <i><b>SD</b></i> |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ability to propose & defend treatment plan.          | 3.8             | 0.42             |
| Seeks information about therapeutic techniques.      | 3.8             | 0.42             |
| Knowledgeable about therapeutic techniques.          | 3.4             | 0.52             |
| Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychotherapy. | 3.38            | 0.52             |
| Takes a theoretically based approach.                | 3.50            | 0.53             |
| Overall Rating                                       | 3.73            | 0.47             |

Overall, 100% of students received a satisfactory rating. One student was not evaluated in the noted areas as her placement pertained exclusively to assessment. In general, the data indicate that students are evaluated lower in knowledge of therapeutic techniques and theories of psychotherapy.

### Decision or Recommendation

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following changes to drive the improvement cycle. A formal refresher workshop will be held for second-year students prior to seeing their practicum clients. In addition, case analyses in PSYC 5750 will also focus on providing reminders of empirically supported therapeutic techniques for mental disorders rather than theoretical orientations alone.

These changes will enhance the student's ability to demonstrate an understanding of research, theory, and methods in clinical practice, including assessment, diagnosis, and intervention for normal versus dysfunctional development and psychopathology, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### SLO 3.

**Students will demonstrate and apply knowledge of experimental design and statistical analysis used to evaluate, plan, and perform psychological research.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 5100: Psychological Research: Statistics  
PSYC 5120: Psychological Research: Design  
PSYC 5950: Psychological Research: Application

### Measure 3.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

The preliminary exam covers the same four areas, including statistics and research design, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

evaluation, no minimum score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 5120 was administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam consists of questions developed by a faculty member to evaluate students' knowledge of statistics and research design. The goal was for at least 80% of students to achieve a composite score of 70% or better. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target was not met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met.

The faculty made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. The PSYC 5120 instructor emphasized the importance of acquiring detailed knowledge by educating students on the aspects of critical language and decision-making in statistics. These changes were expected to improve students' ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge of experimental design, the responsible conduct of research, and statistical analysis for evaluating, planning, and conducting psychological research, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

As a result of these changes, the target was not met in AC 2024- 2025. For AC 2024-2025, all 25 pretest questions were included in the comprehensive exam. Of the eight students who took both tests, zero scored 80% or better on the targeted items from the comprehensive exam, with a range of 32 to 76% ( $M = 56.4\%$ ,  $SD = 11.8\%$ ). Scores on the pretest ranged from 16 to 44% ( $M = 31.6\%$ ,  $SD = 8.5\%$ ). Scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest (one-tailed paired  $t$ -test,  $t(10) = -4.78$ ,  $p = .001$ ). As a result, student knowledge of statistics and research methodology clearly increased, both statistically and practically, between the pre-comp and comprehensive exams. It is also important to note that although zero of eight students scored 80% or better, when the complete comprehensive examination was considered, which included 75 multiple choice questions and three essay questions, nine out of 12 students scored 70% or higher, and one out of 12 students scored 80% or better on the complete comprehensive exam.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. The instructor made changes to the comprehensive exam by adjusting some of test items that most students missed. In addition, the instructor ensured that all students had access to voluntary tutoring in statistics, which some students chose to utilize.

As a result of these changes, the target was not met in AC 2025- 2026. For AC 2025-2026, all 25 pretest questions were included in the comprehensive exam. Of the seven students who took both tests, zero scored 80% or better on the targeted items from the comprehensive exam, with a range of 40 to 84% ( $M = 64.7\%$ ,  $SD = 14\%$ ).

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

Scores on the pretest ranged from 28 to 72% ( $M = 50.0\%$ ,  $SD = 15.4\%$ ). It is important to note that although one of seven students scored 80% or better, when the complete comprehensive examination was considered, which included 75 multiple choice questions and three essay questions, eight out of nine students scored 70% or higher, and two out of nine students scored 80% or better on the complete comprehensive exam.

### Decision or Recommendation.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the improvement cycle. Faculty will set a 70% benchmark since 80% benchmark has consistently resulted in not meeting the benchmark. Additionally, in AC 2025-2026, as in the previous year, students performed better on essay questions than on multiple-choice questions. Therefore, emphasis will be on enhancing knowledge of detailed information. These changes will improve students' ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge of experimental design, the responsible conduct of research, and statistical analysis for evaluating, planning, and conducting psychological research, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### Measure 3.2. (Direct - Knowledge)

At the conclusion of each research project, Paper-in-lieu of thesis or Thesis, thesis advisors scored the project using a rubric that assesses critical thinking and analysis of psychology concepts and literature, development of a research question(s) and hypotheses, appropriateness of the research design and methods, presentation, and interpretation of data in psychological research. The goal was for students to earn an overall rating of at least 80% or a rating of 3 on a 4-point Likert scale to demonstrate proficiency.

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

In AC 2024-2025, faculty implemented the ongoing intervention in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. With the Provost's approval, PSYC 5130, an elective research course, was offered again in Summer 2025 to impose structure and required timelines on their research proposals. There were no required summer courses that bridged the program's first and second years. The intention for the summer was for students to prepare drafts of their research projects and pursue concentrations if desired. The intention of this class was to address the ongoing challenges students face in completing their theses or PIL in a timely manner. The ongoing intervention effectively provided structure and again increased the number of completed research projects on time – 100% of students proposed before the conclusion of the Fall semester and completed their thesis or paper in lieu of the thesis by May 2025, with 100% earning a rating of over 80%. The students ( $n = 6$ ) who completed their theses

## **Assessment Cycle 2025-2026**

received a mean overall rating of 3.71 on a 4-point scale. The students from this year's cohort presented at NSU Research Day.

In AC 2025-2026, the target was met.

The ongoing intervention effectively provided structure and again increased the number of completed research projects on time – 100% of students proposed before the conclusion of the Fall semester and completed their thesis or paper in lieu of the thesis by May 2026, with 100% earning a rating of over 80%. The students (n = 11) who completed their theses received a mean overall rating of 3.75 on a 4-point scale. Students from this year's cohort presented at NSU Research Day, and two presented at a regional psychology conference.

### **Decision or Recommendation.**

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the improvement cycle. The faculty will again offer PSYC 5130 as a research course in Summer 2026 with the present cohort to impose structure and required timelines on their research proposals. The intention of this class was to address the ongoing challenges students face in completing their theses or PIL in a timely manner, and the results showed that 100% of those students successfully completed their theses. In addition, faculty will encourage students in the research design planning to consider research designs that require fewer participants since a main barrier for students again in AC 2025-2026 was in recruitment of the initial required number of participants, and/or encourage students to be proposal-ready earlier in the fall semester, so some of them can collect data in the fall of 2026. This would prevent the difficulty of all students collecting data simultaneously from the same participant pool. In addition, to encourage the timely initiation of the thesis, the faculty will ensure that students have a solidly selected thesis topic by the second week of the Spring 2027 semester in the first year of graduate school.

Areas for improvement noted in the evaluations included the clarity of results and tables/figures, proofreading drafts prior to submitting them to the major professor, and thoroughly addressing the advisor's feedback to minimize revisions.

These changes will improve students' ability to demonstrate research knowledge and its application in a timely manner, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### **SLO 4.**

**Students will demonstrate understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in research and clinical practice.**

**Course Map:** PSYC 6000: Ethics and Professional Conduct  
PSYC 5270: Practicum II: Psychological Intervention and Therapy

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

### Measure 4.1. (Direct – knowledge)

Annually, students are administered a preliminary exam during orientation before starting the program to establish a baseline of knowledge. The exam covers the same four areas, including ethics, which are covered by the program's comprehensive exams. This allows for pre- and post-course assessments. Because this is a preliminary evaluation, no score was expected.

Each student enrolled in PSYC 6000, a required course for Clinical Psychology graduate students, will be administered a comprehensive exam as the final evaluation of the course. The exam consists of questions developed by a faculty member, designed to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of ethical principles and standards of practice, as well as their ability to apply ethical decision-making skills when presented with an ethical dilemma. The goal was for 90% of enrolled students to achieve a composite score of 70%. These scores were also compared to the preliminary exam scores with an anticipated positive change.

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-25, the target was met.

The results showed that the students performed significantly better on the post-test ( $M = 79.38$ ,  $SD = 6.70$ ) than on the pre-test ( $M = 50.77$ ,  $SD = 16.84$ ),  $t(-5.27)$ ,  $p < .001$ . The scores improved from the pre-comprehensive exam to the comprehensive exam in AC 2024-2025. The scores suggest improved student performance and increased knowledge of key concepts. The goal of 90% of students demonstrating proficiency at 85% was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026, the faculty added course instruction and evaluation of students' knowledge of the ethical responsibilities for self-care in the professional practice of psychology, raising awareness of the need for continued emphasis on this aspect of professional development. Given this increased awareness, students will continue to prioritize the essentials of self-care while practicing. In addition, feedback was provided by students that they did not feel they retained the knowledge gained in the spring theories course to feel confident and prepared to create treatment plans/treat ethically, when re-entering practicum in the fall. Therefore, it was decided that a mini workshop/review of the basic theoretical components would be provided in the Fall of 2025 to help students prepare to see clients for the first time in their practicum.

As a result of these changes, the target was met in AC 2025-2026. The results showed the students performed significantly better on the post-test ( $M = 85.71$ ,  $SD = 10.03$ ) than on the pre-test ( $M = 63.43$ ,  $SD = 8.77$ ),  $t(6) = (3.55)$ ,  $p < .05$ . These results indicate students' knowledge of theories of psychotherapy significantly increased from the pre-comp to the comprehensive exam, which is evidence of improvement in the desired direction for this SLO.

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

In AC 2025-2026, students achieved pre-comprehensive exam scores with a range of 44 - 52% and  $M = 63.43$ ,  $SD = 8.77$ . Analysis of the post-comprehensive exam score items indicated a range of 72-96% and  $M = 85.71$ ,  $SD = 10.03$ . The scores improved from the pre-comprehensive exam to the comprehensive exam in AC 2025-2026 by 22.29 percentage points. The scores suggest improved student performance and increased knowledge of key concepts.

### Decision or Recommendation:

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the improvement cycle. Faculty will further focus with students on retaining ethical knowledge throughout their instruction and to highlight the need for self-care. In addition, a formal workshop will be added to the fall of the practicum semester prior to students beginning to see clients. The emphasis will be on ethics, a review of case conceptualization, and theory-driven best practice for treatment planning to ensure ethical treatment of clients.

These changes will enhance students' ability to demonstrate understanding and application of the theories as they begin treating clients, and to confirm the provision of ethical care, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### Measure 4.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in PSYC 5270 were evaluated by their supervisors on their knowledge of and demonstration of ethical and professional practice. The goal was for 100% of enrolled students to demonstrate fundamental knowledge by scoring 3 (satisfactory) or higher on the evaluation.

**Finding:** Target was met.

### Analysis:

In AC 2024-25, the target was met.

The supervisors' ratings are summarized in Table 5 and yielded an overall mean rating of  $M = 5$ ,  $SD = .09$ , in the superior range, with a minimum rating of 3 (satisfactory) for 100% of the students.

**Table 5**

| <b>Ethical and Professional Conduct</b> | <b><i>M</i></b> | <b><i>SD</i></b> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Knowledge of ethics.                    | 4.6             | 0.55             |
| Ethical behavior.                       | 4.8             | 0.45             |
| Respect for confidentiality.            | 5.00            | 0                |
| Maturity                                | 5.00            | 0                |
| Cooperation with others.                | 5.00            | 0                |
| Overall Rating                          | 5.00            | 0                |

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

Overall, 100% of students received superior ratings with an overall mean rating of  $M = 5$ ,  $SD = 0.00$ . This cohort demonstrated strong ethical and professional conduct during the practicum, earning superior ratings across all areas.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Because of observations of unprofessional behavior among the first-year cohort and then no concerns during practicum and internship among the second-year cohort, it was determined that the mini-workshop on professionalism would continue in the Fall of 2025, prior to students' placement in internship settings, to better prepare them for professional practice. The faculty supervisor will continue to monitor.

**Table 6**

| <b>Ethical and Professional Conduct</b> | <b><i>M</i></b> | <b><i>SD</i></b> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Knowledge of ethics.                    | 3.7             | 0.47             |
| Ethical behavior.                       | 3.7             | 0.47             |
| Respect for confidentiality.            | 3.9             | 0.30             |
| Maturity                                | 3.8             | 0.40             |
| Cooperation with others.                | 4.0             | 0.0              |
| Overall Rating                          | 3.9             | 0.30             |

Overall, 100% of students received superior ratings with an overall mean rating of  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ . This cohort demonstrated strong ethical and professional conduct during the practicum, earning superior ratings across all areas.

### **Decision or Recommendation:**

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the improvement cycle. It is noted that, while the overall rating is positive and goals are met, the current class's scores are slightly lower than those of the previous class. One student was identified as having lower-than-average scores, which affected the overall rating. The faculty mentor will further seek formative feedback on students' professionalism during internships and monitor their behavior. The faculty mentor will incorporate discussions of professionalism into supervision hours and apply professional standards to specific situations as they arise. If needed, the faculty mentor will provide one-on-one support to address situations in a developmental manner.

These changes will enhance students' ability to demonstrate an understanding and application of ethical and professional standards in clinical practice, thereby continuing to advance the cycle of improvement.

### **Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on the Analysis of the Results:**

The program faculty made several decisions after examining data analysis results from the 2024-2025 academic year, which led to improved student learning and

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

program improvements in the 2025-2026 academic year.

To foster stronger relations and encourage meaningful dialogue among students and faculty, the Graduate Faculty organized a game night and an end-of-year celebration to celebrate the completion of the first year and all required coursework for the respective cohorts.

### SLO 1

- The focus was placed on the broader modality of andragogy, and Socratic questioning and open discussions regarding the content and application of the theoretical foundations of psychotherapy were utilized. In addition, a portfolio approach was adopted for application assignments, complementing each of the course's major theories with interactive, process-oriented andragogy in mind.
- To address a previous weakness, emphasis was placed on students identifying and conceptualizing cases from a theoretical perspective. Supervisor ratings improved, and overall, 100% of students earned a rating of 3 or higher from their supervisor, consistently meeting high standards.

### SLO 2

- Increasing the target from a 70% to an 80% benchmark on the Psychopathology Comprehensive Exam continued to prove challenging for the cohort, as only 37.5% of students met the standard. However, the students continue to demonstrate improved knowledge when comparing their performance on the pre-comprehensive exam upon entering the program to that on the comprehensive exam they complete at the end of the semester.
- Students completed sample activities and conducted three mock comprehensive psychological assessments, which included a clinical interview and review of detailed substance use behaviors. These experiences were reviewed in class discussions so that all students could benefit from one another's experiences. Students integrated assessment results, and 100% earned at least 80% on their final comprehensive report in PSYC5320, demonstrating their competency in integrating findings from multiple data sources to formulate a comprehensive psychological evaluation.
- While areas of needed emphasis were identified, all students received satisfactory ratings from their internship supervisors.

### SLO 3

- One of seven students taking both tests scored 80% or better on the questions from the pretest, even though scores on the comprehensive exam were significantly higher than those on the pretest. It is also important to note that although one of seven students did not score 80% or better, when the complete comprehensive examination was taken into account, which included 75 multiple

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

choice questions and three essay questions, eight out of nine students scored 70% or higher, and two out of nine students scored 80% or better on the complete comprehensive exam.

- 100% of students proposed before the conclusion of the Fall semester and completed their thesis or paper-in-lieu of thesis by May 2025, with 100% earning a rating of over 80%. The students from this year's cohort presented at NSU Research Day.

### SLO 4

- Analysis of pre-comprehensive exam items identified areas of weakness, guiding instruction during course activities.
- A targeted assignment revealed that students effectively understand the need for self-care from a professional and personal development standpoint. However, they had difficulty clearly identifying the steps to maintain self-care consistently.
- Overall, 100% of students received superior ratings with an overall mean rating of  $M = 4$ ,  $SD = .00$ . This cohort illustrated a strength in their ethical and professional conduct at practicum with superior ratings across all areas.

### Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2025-2026 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2026-2027:

### SLO 1

- The decision at this time is to further the focus on the broader modality of andragogy and provide course sessions for Socratic questioning and open discussions regarding the content and application of the theoretical foundations of psychotherapy. Case studies will continue to be used in treatment planning based on various theoretical models, allowing students to experience differences in techniques and strategies and to better understand how to combine them for best practice. In addition, the sequence of teaching the theories will be changed to group "like theories" to assist comprehension of the approach, and the case conceptualization model will be incorporated as a worksheet for the treatment planning process.
- The PSYC 5270 Instructor will emphasize theoretical orientation and application when students present cases during weekly group supervision for the internship. In addition, students will participate in discussions of case conceptualization, best practices, and the use of strategies and techniques as they present case staffing with supervisors.

### SLO 2

## Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

- The 2026-2027 benchmark will be set at 70% since only one student met the 80% benchmark, even after revising test items to better represent instruction provided.
- To drive continued compliance with industry standards, students will utilize technology obtained for the Clinical Psychology Master's Program and administer all personality testing instruments on iPads and via paper and pencil. This will provide students with the leading methods for administering standardized emotional and personality measures in the workplace during professional psychological activities.
- A formal refresher workshop will be presented to second-year students prior to seeing their practicum clients. In addition, case analyses in PSYC 5750 will also focus on providing reminders of empirically supported therapeutic techniques for mental disorders rather than theoretical orientations alone.

### SLO 3

- Faculty will set a 70% benchmark since 80% benchmark has consistently resulted in not meeting the benchmark. Additionally, in AC 2025-2026, as in the previous year, students performed better on essay questions than on multiple-choice questions. Therefore, emphasis will be on enhancing knowledge of detailed information.
- In preparation for AC 2026-2027, the faculty will continue having PSYC 5130, an elective research course, in Summer 2026 with the present cohort in order to impose structure and required timelines to their research proposals in an effort to address the ongoing challenges of students completing their theses or PIL in a timely manner. In addition, faculty will encourage students in the research design planning to consider research designs that require fewer participants since a main barrier for students in AC2025-2026 was in the recruitment of the initial required number of participants, and/or encourage students to be proposal-ready earlier in the fall semester, so some of them can collect data in the fall of 2026. This would prevent the difficulty of all students collecting data simultaneously from the same participant pool. Additionally, students will be encouraged to have the final selection of their thesis topic completed by the second week of their first spring semester.

### SLO 4

- Faculty will further focus with students on the retention of the ethics knowledge throughout their instruction and to highlight the need for self-care. In addition, a formal workshop will be added to the fall of the practicum semester prior to students beginning to see clients. The emphasis will be on ethics, a review of case conceptualization, and theory-driven best practice for treatment planning to ensure ethical treatment of clients.
- Because of observations of unprofessional behavior among the first-year cohort and then no concerns during practicum and internship among the second-year cohort, it

## **Assessment Cycle 2025-2026**

has been determined that the mini-workshop on professionalism will continue in the Fall of 2026, prior to students' placement in internship settings, to better prepare them for professional practice. The faculty mentor will seek formative feedback on students' professionalism during internships and monitor their behavior. The faculty mentor will incorporate discussions of professionalism into supervision hours and apply professional standards to specific situations as they arise. If needed, the faculty mentor will provide one-on-one support to address situations in a developmental manner.