

Cover Memo for Proposed Admission and/or Standards Change (MTSU)

On-campus memo:

TO: Admission and Standards Committee

FROM: Greg Schmidt, Department Chair
(Department Chair or Program Coordinator)*
Department of Psychology
(College, Program or Department)*

Contact Person: Michelle Boyer-Pennington
EMAIL michelle.boyer-pennington@mtsu.edu

RE: proposed pre-major requirements for all prospective psychology majors
(Specify issue[s] being submitted to the committee.)

DATE: December 13, 2013

Level or area to which change(s) would apply:

☐ University ☐ College ☐ School ☒ Department ☐ Program
☐ Other? _____

Program(s) and/or student population(s) affected: prospective psychology majors
(Note that an Impact Data Form must be submitted along with the proposal.)

This change would fall into the following classification(s) (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in GPA for admission | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in policies or requirements for retention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in GPA for retention | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in policies or requirements for graduation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in GPA for graduation | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in grading scale |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in test or pre-requisite requirements for admission | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proposed change to academic program requirements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in other requirements for admission | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed standards for a new program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed change in policies or requirements for placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Description of Change Proposed:

(Attach separate sheet as needed.)

(see attached document)

Rationale/justification for change (Please ensure that all aspects and ramifications of the change are addressed. Attach separate sheet as needed.):

(see attached document)

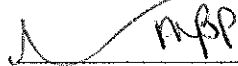
Dissemination of information:

The following colleges, program or departments may be affected by this decision:

unknown

I certify that I (or my representative) have consulted with each college or program that may be affected by the proposed changes.

Proposer's signature




12/13/2013

Date

Other permissions sought: *If this change is connected to curriculum or program development, have the appropriate forms been submitted to the general education, curriculum or graduate committees? If a proposal will/may impact enrollment in specific courses or programs, have concerned departments or programs been consulted? Please include dates of submission and/or approval as relevant.*

This proposal is also being submitted to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee for consideration at their January 31, 2014 meeting.

Other signatures needed for approval of proposal:


Department Chair or Program Coordinator*

12/13/2013

Date of initial proposal


College Dean *

1/6/14

Date of college approval

Chair Admission and Standards Committee

Date approved by ASC

Vice-President for Student Affairs / Vice-
Provost for Enrollment & Academic Services

Date approved by VP/SA

Provost

Date approved by Provost

President

Date approved

* Note: When the proposal does not come from an academic unit, replace titles as needed. If a proposal comes directly from a dean or higher, the first signature may be omitted.

Description of Change Proposed: The Department of Psychology proposes establishing pre-major candidacy requirements and G.P.A. requirements for all prospective psychology majors. All prospective psychology majors will be considered pre-psychology majors in their first 30 hours or until their pre-major coursework has been satisfied (in cases where a student has more than 30 hours).

Implementing this proposal necessitates establishing a pre-major advising center for students (transfer and nontransfer) who are satisfying pre-major requirements. Dedicated pre-major advisors (and transfer advisors when relevant) will meet with students every semester until they have either declared a psychology major or selected a more appropriate major for their interests.

Under the proposed plan, all students who are interested in being psychology majors (Incoming freshmen, transfer students, students changing their major) will be considered Pre-Psychology majors until they have fulfilled the designated candidacy requirements, and their application to be a Psychology major has been approved (applications will be reviewed no fewer than 3 times a year, each semester after grades have posted). Fulfilling these requirements before declaring the major will allow students to learn about the major, understand the rigors and skills required in coursework, and master certain skill sets necessary for success (e.g., English and Math) before committing to Psychology as a major. Thus, the purpose of this plan is to benefit students by:

- (1) identifying those students who do not have the skills to be successful in the psychology major early enough that an alternative major (in which students could be successful) can be selected without negatively impacting students' ability to graduate on time, stay in school, keep their financial aid; and
- (2) increasing the likelihood that declared majors will be well-informed about the major, have a career plan in place, and have the skills necessary to successfully complete the major in a timely manner.

This plan has been modeled after other MTSU majors that require a pre-major candidacy process.

A. Incoming first time freshmen who are prospective majors will be pre-Psychology majors until they have completed 30 credit hours at MTSU and have (a) a minimum overall G.P.A. of 2.0 (general education courses—see below); and (b) a minimum psychology G.P.A. of 2.0. Pre-psychology candidacy coursework must include the following 20 hours of psychology and general education coursework:*

1. PSY1410 with a grade of C- or better (3 credits)**
2. PSY2000 with a passing grade (pass) (1 credit) (not required for I/O psychology majors)
3. PSY2210 or PSY2300 with a C- or better (3 credits)**
4. MATH 1530 or MATH1710 or 1730 or a math course that is higher than MATH1730 (3 credits)
5. ENG1010 & ENG1020 with a minimum grade of C- (6 credits)**
6. A natural science course (a biology course is preferred but not required) (4 credits)

*this coursework is consistent with the psychology major academic map for the freshman year

**does not constitute a change in grade requirement

Pre-psychology majors will have mandatory advising (enforced by an advising hold) every semester until they (a) are admitted into the psychology program or (b) declare a non-psychology major. Pre-

psychology major advisors (self-selected Psychology faculty) will review each student's progress each semester with the student to assist with major selection and course selection. Advisors will recommend that students who do not meet one or more of the G.P.A. requirements for admission to the major once 30 (and no more than 45) credit hours have been completed select a different major. Advisors will help students with their major selection as necessary. If at that time, students changed their major, they would still be able to use all of their psychology credits towards a psychology minor, if they so desired, and would still be able to complete another major's requirements in a 4-year/120-hour period.

B. Transfer students (and students who change their major) who are prospective majors will also be classified as pre-psychology majors until they are eligible to apply for candidacy. Transfer students (and students who change their major) may apply for candidacy once they have met the following conditions: (a) a minimum overall general education G.P.A. of 2.0; and (b) a minimum psychology G.P.A. of 2.0. To be eligible for candidacy, transfer students (and students who change their major) must also have completed the following 20 credit hours of courses: *

- a. PSY1410 with a grade of C- or better (3 credits)**
- b. PSY2000 with a passing grade (pass) [must be taken at MTSU] (1 credit) (not required of I/O majors)
- c. PSY2210 or PSY2300 with a C- or better (3 credits)**
- d. MATH1710 or 1730 or 1530 (or a math course higher than MATH1730)(3 credits)
- e. ENG1010 & ENG1020 with a minimum grade of C- (6 credits)**
- f. A natural science course (a biology course is preferred but not required) (4 credits)

*consistent with the graduation requirements at MTSU

**does not constitute a change in grade required

Prospective majors who have more than 30 hours should satisfy their remaining pre-major requirements within 1 semester of being at MTSU. After one semester at MTSU, transfer students who do not meet the G.P.A. requirements for admission to the major but who have completed the required pre-major courses will be encouraged to select a different major with the assistance of a pre-major advisor. Students may apply at least some of their psychology credits toward a psychology minor if they change their major; there are residency restrictions on the number and type of psychology courses (upper division vs. lower division) that can be transferred and counted towards a psychology major or minor at MTSU.

Advising will play a critical role in students' success in the psychology major. We are in the process of establishing an **advising center**. If this curriculum plan is approved the advising center will consist of dedicated pre-psychology major advisors and transfer advisors. ***All transfer advising would take place at the pre-psychology major stage.*** All pre-psychology majors would be advised by advisors in this center every semester, rather than by the faculty at large. All pre-psychology majors will be required to make an appointment with a pre-psychology major advisor prior to preregistration each semester. This will be enforced through registration holds. Candidacy forms and applications, new student orientation, as well as all substitution forms related to general education and psychology courses taken at other schools, would be handled by advisors in the pre-major advising center. An advising software program,

such as that used by the college advisors (e.g., Advisor Track), will be used to track the content of student-advisor meetings over time. Some administrative tasks will be handled by one or more graduate students. Upon acceptance into the major, students would be assigned a new faculty advisor in the department, although students would have the option of continuing with their pre-major advisor.

Rationale/Justification for Change: This plan was developed in response to the administration's mandate to increase student retention in the major and at the university, and to ultimately increase graduation rates.

- (1) All students must complete 41 hours of general education coursework to graduate with a psychology degree. We have ensured that the required general education coursework for candidacy is coursework that is consistent with the Academic Maps for all three psychology majors and concentrations (psychology, pregraduate concentration, & I/O) for the 1st year. Due to the nature of, and skills required in, psychology courses, it is important for potential psychology majors to demonstrate proficiency in science (biology), math, and writing and reading comprehension.
- (2) Prior to declaring a psychology major, we also think that it is important for students to have an understanding of different professions in psychology (e.g., the Seminar on Careers in Psychology courses), to have gained some knowledge about the field, and to have demonstrated the skills and abilities necessary to be successful in the major by completing at least two of the following required lower division psychology courses (PSY1410 & either PSY2210 or PSY2300), in addition to the PSY2000 (Careers) course. Analyses of student data indicate that performance in the PSY2210 course predicts overall G.P.A. at graduation (and thus psychology G.P.A.). Also, at present, many psychology majors do not take the Seminar on Careers in Psychology course until the junior or senior year although it is a 2000-level course. We think it is important for this course to be one of the first psychology classes that all students take so that they can make an informed decision about selecting psychology as a career path.
- (3) The rationale for designating minimum G.P.A. requirements for candidacy is to better ensure student success in the major and student graduation; students who cannot maintain a 2.0 major G.P.A. cannot graduate. Students who are unsuccessful in their lower division major coursework are unlikely to be successful in their upper division major coursework. Presently, there are no departmental admission requirements to the major for students who transfer from other universities or those who are already MTSU students. For transfer students, if the university admits them, they are admitted to the psychology major, even if their overall G.P.A. is lower than a 2.0 or their psychology G.P.A. is lower than a 2.0. If students want to change their major to psychology, they can do so with the click of a button. Not only are some students at risk for not being successful in their upper division major coursework, but they are at risk of not meeting the departmental and university requirements for graduation. Thus, under the new plan, any student (transfer or otherwise) who does not meet the minimum pre-major G.P.A. requirements would not be eligible to be a psychology major. Through intensive, developmental advising at the pre-major level, students who are not likely to be successful in their major coursework will be encouraged to select a different major, one where they could be successful (see details in second paragraph of next section). This will occur early enough in the student's coursework that it should not adversely affect the student's ability to graduate in 4 years or at 120 hours.

Issue Regarding Increasing Standards: We appreciate and respect Dr. Sells' concern that by implementing candidacy programs or increasing G.P.A. requirements for admission to a program that some students will find themselves without a major and that this could be a retention issue; however, we have carefully designed this plan so that it should improve student success rather than hinder it. First, we are not proposing an increase in student G.P.A.; students must have a 2.0 G.P.A. in the major and in their general education courses to graduate from MTSU. The pre-major G.P.A. requirements are in line with the G.P.A. requirements for graduation. Students who are unable to achieve the minimum required graduation G.P.A. for the psychology major and for general education cannot graduate. Also, students who are unable to achieve the minimum required grade for a required core course in the major would be in danger of not graduating on time or of being retained. If students have to change their major their junior or senior year, they are unlikely to graduate on time and their financial aid may run out (e.g., the HOPE scholarship only pays for 120 attempted hours). Also, they may lose their financial aid if they have to retake too many courses or their success rate in their courses is too low; for instance, some students have to take the statistics and research methods courses 3 or 4 times before they achieve the required minimum grade of C-. As an example, during Fall 2013, the only thing keeping one of our majors from graduating was her continued inability to achieve the required C- in the 1-hour research methods in psychology lab. Thus, the purpose of the proposed plan is to help students select an academic pathway where they can be successful.

Second, as part of the newly re-designed Seminar on Careers in Psychology course, all students will take an interest survey that will help them identify their skill sets and possible career paths. Results from that survey can be used to guide students towards better-suited majors when appropriate. We should note that, at present, no student will be told that they cannot continue taking psychology courses; thus, students may continue to take psychology courses in the major without being psychology majors even if they are advised not to do so (and it is possible that at a later point, they may meet the required G.P.A.'s).

Third, requiring all prospective majors to take the Seminar on Careers in Psychology course prior to taking the majority of their major coursework may help students make more informed choices about their electives, their minors, and their job/career options and opportunities (and perhaps their choice of major). Although this course was originally intended for students in the freshman and sophomore year, many students don't take it until their senior year, and sometimes their last semester. Requiring the course for admission to the major will eliminate this problem.

It is important to note that any student who meets the premajor requirements will be admitted to the major. Although some programs only admit a certain percentage of students who meet the requirements, Psychology will admit all students who meet these requirements.