

# Experimental Specializations Assessment (PhD)

## Data-Based Decisions

The faculty of the experimental specializations continuously work to examine and revise curriculum, activities, and organization to maintain excellence and meet specialization goals more effectively. Faculty members collectively have responsibility for the specialization and are accountable for working with the Program Coordinator to ensure that specialization goals, requirements, and procedures are implemented.

Faculty meet monthly to discuss alignment of the specialization procedures, goals, and outcomes. During these meetings input from both faculty and student representatives is considered. The discussions from these faculty meetings often includes more qualitative / process information that is not completely reflected in numeric data presented above. However, the overall input of faculty and students is considered very important in shaping the specialization.

### **1) Breath of knowledge of psychology.**

Based on student performance in coursework over time and yearly evaluation outcome data above, faculty have remained confident that students are demonstrating appropriate depth of knowledge of psychology.

In faculty meetings during the 2012-13 year, however, it became clear from comments regarding certain courses that both faculty and students felt that the general nature of a small number of courses early in the curriculum were not advanced enough. These courses were offered to both Master's level and Doctoral-level students from a wide range of departments within the college, and these students possessed highly variable amounts of background training. As a result, the specialization worked with the Department and College to create sections of these courses with more advanced material for Doctoral-level students only. We will continue to assess student course performance and to consider input from students at faculty meetings to evaluate the effects of this change.

## **2) Specialized knowledge in a specialization area of psychology:**

Given the high levels of student performance in specialization-area specific seminars as measured by course performance and standardized yearly evaluations, the faculty have remained confident that, in general, this goal is being met.

However, based on discussions at faculty meetings regarding training for students, it became clear that the training needs of a subset of students would be better served by the creation of a new specialization area in Quantitative Psychology. Thus, a new specialization area and its associated specialization seminar were created at the conclusion of the Spring of 2015 semester to provide specialized knowledge in this area of psychology.

## **3) Active engagement in psychological research:**

Yearly evaluation of student progress in this area is critical because our best source of data about our success in generating competent researchers is ultimately student productivity in generating research presentations and publications. However, bringing research projects to fruition requires time. Thus, it is important to ensure that students are continuously on track in working toward such research products.

Outcomes data from standardized yearly student evaluations have suggested that the vast majority of students in the specialization are meeting our rather high expectations for actively engaged in research. Thus, the faculty are confident that this goal is being met and have made no recent changes.

## **4) Professional competence in dissemination of research:**

Student levels of involvement in dissemination of research have been high as documented by the number of student co-authors on presentations at professional meetings and publications. Faculty have voiced high levels of enthusiasm with this level of productivity of the students. Given that the overall goal of the specialization is to produce experts in psychological research capable of contributing to the scholarly knowledge base, it is with these data that the faculty place the most confidence in assessing specialization success. Given the high levels of achievement of students in this area, faculty have made no recent changes to the specialization structure in this regard.