



Psychology Department Core Competencies

PSY 4020 Vital Engagement Video Presentation
Oral Communication

PSY 4020 Good Life Paper
Information Literacy
Critical Thinking
Written Communication

PSY Quantitative Reasoning Assessment
Quantitative Reasoning

Psychology
Core Competencies FA2025-SP2026

Core Competency Outcome: Oral Communication

Students will be able to speak about their work with precision, clarity and organization (Oral Communication).

Outcome Measure:

PSY4020 Vital Engagement Video Presentation

Criteria for Success:

80% of our students will score a 3 or higher on the Core Competency AAC&U Oral Communication rubric based on the oral resume video project completed in PSY4020.

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. **Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies**
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning
5. Civic and Global Learning

Table 1

*Percentage of students who met department standards on the Oral Resume Video Project:
Criteria for Success is 80%*

Rubric Categories	2021-22 (n = 20)	2022-23 (n = 20)	2023-24 (n = 20)	2024-25 (n = 18)	2025-26 (n = 20)
Organization	90% (18)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (18)	90% (18)
Language	100% (20)	95% (19)	100% (20)	100% (18)	100% (20)
Delivery	100% (20)	95% (19)	100% (20)	100% (18)	85% (17)
Supporting Material	90% (18)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (18)	95% (19)
Central Message	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (18)	100% (20)
<u>Summary</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>98%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>94%</u>

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

- The criteria for success were met for all categories of the rubric and overall.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

- We will continue to work with the instructor for our capstone course PSY4020 to ensure that this assignment integrates into our assessment plan and utilizes the current rubric.

Rubric Used: The AAC&U Oral Communication Rubric.

ORAL COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3 2		Benchmark 1
Organization	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.
Language	Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.
Delivery	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.
Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
Central Message	Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.

Core Competencies FA2025-SP2026

Core Competency Outcome: Information Literacy

Students will be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and cite information for the task at hand (Information Literacy)

Outcome Measure:

PSY 4020 Good Life Paper

Criteria for Success:

70% of our students will score a 3 or higher on the Information Literacy Rubric.

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. **Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies**
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning
5. Civic and Global Learning

Table 1

Percentage of students who met department standards for Information Literacy

Rubric Categories	2021-22 (n = 20)	2022-23 (n = 20)	2023-24 (n = 20)	2024-25 (n = 20)	2025-26 (n = 20)
Determine the Extent of Information Needed	90% (18)	85% (17)	100% (20)	100% (20)	90% (18)
Access the Needed Information	95% (19)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	95% (19)
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	95% (19)	90% (18)	100% (20)	100% (20)	90% (18)
Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	90% (18)	100% (20)	100% (20)	90% (18)	90% (18)
Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally	75% (15)	60% (12)	95% (19)	100% (20)	80% (16)
Summary	89%	87%	99%	98%	89%

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

- We met our criteria for success for all categories and overall.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

- None at this time.

Rubric Used: We used the AAC&U Information Literacy rubric to assess our students in Information Literacy.

INFORMATION LITERACY VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. - The National Forum on Information Literacy

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (all one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Determine the Extent of Information Needed	Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis completely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis incompletely (parts are missing, remains too broad or too narrow, etc.). Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected partially relate to concepts or answer research question.	Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis. Has difficulty determining key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected do not relate to concepts or answer research question.
Access the Needed Information	Accesses information using effective, well-designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.	Accesses information using variety of search strategies and some relevant information sources. Demonstrates ability to refine search.	Accesses information using simple search strategies, retrieves information from limited and similar sources.	Accesses information randomly, retrieves information that lacks relevance and quality.
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth.	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved.	Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved.	Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately (misquoted, taken out of context, or incorrectly paraphrased, etc.), so the intended purpose is not achieved.
Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally	Students use correctly all of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrate a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly three of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly two of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly one of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.

Core Competencies FA2025-SP2026

Core Competency Outcome: Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking: Students will be able to examine, critique, and synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions.

Outcome Measure:

PSY 4020 Good Life Paper

- In 2023-2024, PLNU transitioned from using the ETS exam to assess Critical Thinking to a department-defined task. Before the ETS exam was used, the Psychology Department assessed the Core Competency: Critical Thinking by using the Theory and Research Findings portion of the PSY4020 Capstone Good Life Paper and will return to using this measure.

Criteria for Success:

Current Criteria: 70% of our students will score a 3 or higher on the PSY4020 Good Life Paper: Theory and Research Findings rubric.

Previous Criteria: 70% of our students will score a 3 or higher on the ETS Level 2 Critical Thinking Exam.

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. **Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies**
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Core Competency Critical Thinking: Percentage of Students Proficient Using the PSY4020 Good Life Paper					
	2023-24 (n = 20)	2024-25 (n=20)	2025-26 (n=20)		
Good Life Paper: Theory and Research Findings	100%	100%	80%		

Core Competency Critical Thinking: Percentage of Students Proficient Using the ETS Level 2 Critical Thinking Exam					
	2018-19 (n = 59)	2019-20 (n = 44)	2020-21 (n = 43)	2021-22 (n = 63)	2022-23 (n = 66)
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Critical Thinking	69.5%	63.6%	39.5%	81.0%	62.1%

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

- The students met the criteria for success.
- We continue to believe the Psy4020 Good Life Paper: Theory and Research Findings is a better measure of our students' Critical Thinking than the ETS exam for the following reasons:
 - The Good Life Paper and its rubric have been used by our department for over ten years to assess our Department Learning Objectives. It has been vetted and proved discriminating.
 - The Good Life paper is the signature assignment for our PSY4020 Senior Capstone class. Our students put their best effort into it and we believe it is a fair representation of their true abilities.
 - The ETS test suffered from low participation, effort, and engagement. Students did not know why they were taking the test and their scores often did not represent their best abilities as shown by the variability in performance from year to year.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

- None.

Rubric Used

PSY4020 Rubric for Core Competency: Critical Thinking				
	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Theory and Research Findings	Student can enumerate and clearly articulate detailed and comprehensive knowledge of theory and research findings related to 1 of the components of a good life. Student provides clear explanation of how theory and research supports 1 component.	Student can describe general knowledge of theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life.	Student can describe satisfactory knowledge of theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life.	Student cannot identify and adequately describe theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life. Descriptions are vague and incomplete.

Core Competencies FA2025-SP2026

Core Competency Outcome: Written Communication

Written: Students will be able to effectively express ideas and information to others through written communication.

Outcome Measure:

PSY4020 Good Life Paper.

- In 2023-2024, PLNU transitioned from using the ETS exam to assess Written Communication to a department-defined task. Before the ETS exam was used, the Psychology Department assessed the Core Competency: Written Communication by using the “Good Life Concepts” portion of the PSY4020 Capstone Good Life Paper and will return to using this measure.

Criteria for Success:

Current Criteria: 70% of our students will score a 3 or higher on the PSY4020 Good Life Paper: “Good Life Concepts” rubric.

Previous Criteria: 70% of the students will be marginal or proficient at ETS Level 2 Writing.

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. **Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies**
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Core Competency Writing: Percentage of Students Proficient Using the PSY4020 Good Life Paper					
	2023-24 (n = 20)	2024-25 (n=20)	2025-26 (n=20)		
Good Life Paper: "Good Life Concepts"	100%	100%	85%		

Core Competency Writing: Percentage of Students Proficient Using the ETS Level 2 Writing Exam					
	2018-19 (n = 59)	2019-20 (n = 44)	2020-21 (n = 43)	2021-22 (n = 63)	2022-23 (n = 66)
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Writing	78.0%	65.9%	48.8%	77.8%	69.7%

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

- The students met the criteria for success.
- We continue to believe the Psy4020 Good Life Paper: “Good Life Concepts” is a better measure of our students’ Written Communication Core Competency for the following reasons:
 - The Good Life Paper and its rubric have been used by our department for over ten years to assess our Department Learning Objectives. It has been vetted and proved discriminating.
 - The Good Life paper is the signature assignment for our PSY4020 Senior Capstone class. Our students put their best effort into it and we believe it is a fair representation of their true abilities.
 - The ETS test suffered from low participation, effort, and engagement. Students did not know why they were taking the test and their scores often did not represent their best abilities as shown by the variability in performance from year to year.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

- None.

Rubric Used

PSY4020 Rubric for Core Competency: Written Communication				
	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
"Good Life" Concepts	Student will be able to answer the question: what makes a "good life" good? Student can enumerate and clearly articulate detailed and comprehensive knowledge of 1 component of a "good life" . Student provides clear explanation of how 1 component contributes to well-being.	Student can describe general knowledge of theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life.	Student can describe satisfactory knowledge of theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life.	Student cannot identify and adequately describe theory and research findings related to 1 component of a good life. Descriptions are vague and incomplete.

Core Competencies FA2025-SP2026

Core Competency Outcome: Quantitative Reasoning

Quantitative Reasoning: Students will be able to solve problems that are quantitative in nature.

Outcome Measure:

Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam (V3).

- In 2025-2026, after the emergence of AI LLMs that made remote quantitative assessment meaningless, we transitioned to using an in-person version of our qualitative reasoning exam (V3). This test was shortened for use in class.
- In 2023-2024, PLNU transitioned from using the ETS exam to assess Quantitative Reasoning to a department-defined task. The Psychology Department Assessment team piloted a quantitative reasoning test in Fall 2023 (V1). After reviewing the results the assessment and its rubric were revised and piloted again in Spring 2024 (V2).

Criteria for Success:

Current Criteria: 70% of the students will score a 3 or more on the Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam (V3) Rubric.

Previous Criteria: 70% of the students will be marginal or proficient at Level 2 Math.

Aligned with DQP Learning Areas:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad Integrative Knowledge
3. **Intellectual Skills/Core Competencies**
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning, and
5. Civic and Global Learning

Longitudinal Data:

Core Competency Quantitative Reasoning: Percentage Proficient Using Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam					
	2023-24 (n = 20)V2	2024-25 (n=19)V2	2025-26 (n=23)V3		
Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam	90%	100%	91.3%		

Core Competency Quantitative Reasoning: Percentage Proficient Using the ETS Level 2 Math Exam					
	2018-19 (n = 59)	2019-20 (n = 44)	2020-21 (n = 43)	2021-22 (n = 63)	2022-23 (n = 66)
ETS Proficiency Profile Level 2 Math	71.2%	63.5%	44.2%	63.5%	66.7%

Conclusions Drawn from Data:

- Students met the criteria for success in this exam.
- The Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam (V3) was designed to assess quantitative reasoning ability in scenarios directly tied to Psychology majors' lives. Four questions assessed quantitative reasoning in the areas of:
 - Annual earnings
 - Total Cost of a Graduate Program
 - Time flexibility
 - Cumulative Earnings Across 5, 25, and 40 Years
- This assessment is given in class during the capstone PSY4020 course.
- In using personal finance questions that apply to students' lives, we hoped to increase student engagement and effort.

Changes to be Made Based on Data:

- These questions and rubric were developed in 2023 and piloted in 2024; however, since that time, the advent of AI services such as ChatGPT has made answering these quantitative questions in a take-home exam trivial. We piloted the in-class version (V3) this year and are pleased with the results.

Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam V3 (2025-26 in-class version)

Quantitative In-Class Assessment 2025-2026

Your friend is deciding whether to pursue a Master's degree to become a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) or remain with a Bachelor's degree (BA). You're comparing the financial outcomes of the BA Path (Bachelor's degree) and MFT Path (MFT with Master's). Use the following data for calculations:

- BA Path: Average hourly wage in California = \$25.72 (ZipRecruiter).
- MFT Path: Average hourly wage in California = \$42.98 (ZipRecruiter).
- MFT program cost: \$48,500 (median in California).

Revised Questions:

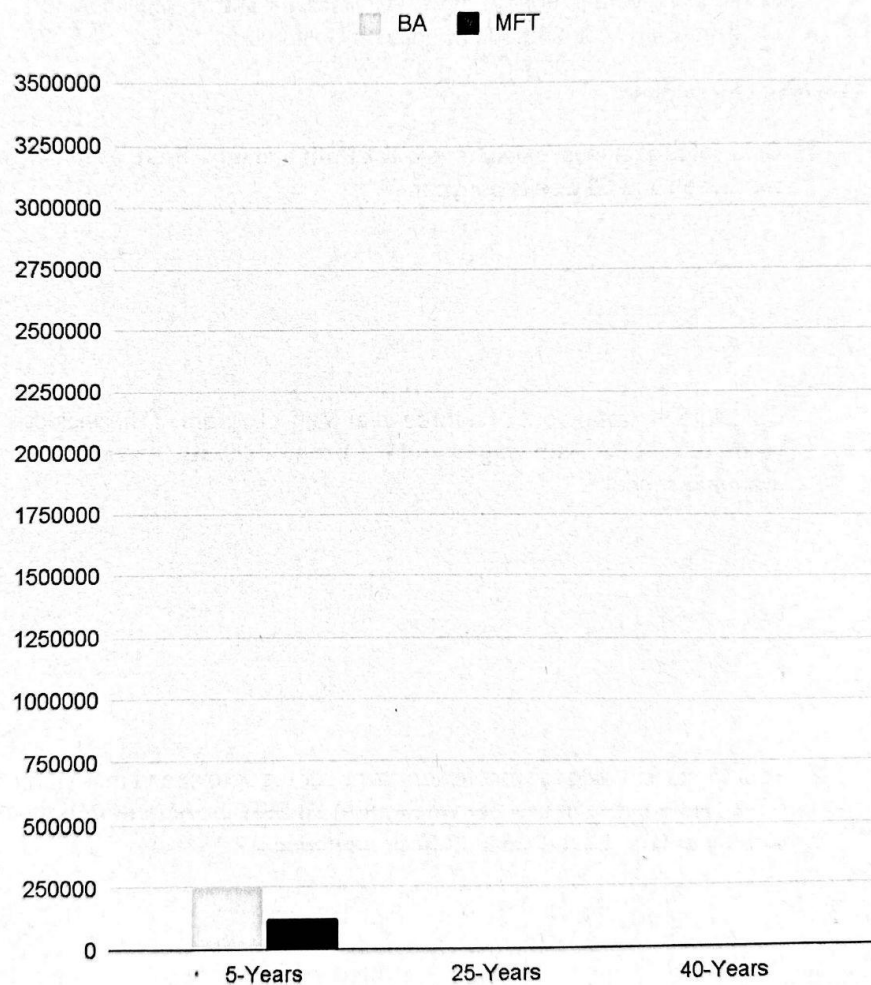
1. Calculate the annual salary for the **BA Path** and **MFT Path**, assuming a **40-hour** workweek and **50** weeks per year.

Calculate the **total cost of a three year MFT program**. (This includes **three years of lost BA Path wages and the program cost**). Assume no work during graduate school.

2. Your friend is willing to work fewer hours per week to spend more time with loved ones. **How many hours per week must an MFT work to match the BA Path's weekly salary (based on a 40-hour workweek)?**

3. Create a bar chart of total earnings for the **BA** and **MFT Paths** (working 40 hours a week) at **25 years**, and **40 years**. Remember to account for zero income in the first three years and the cost of the MFT program for the MFT total earnings. Write the dollar values atop each bar.

Net Earnings (minus cost of program)



Psychology Quantitative Assessment V3 - Answers (in-class version)

1. Annual salaries:
 - a. BA Path \$51,440
 - b. MFT Path \$85,960
2. Total Cost of MFT Program:
 - a. \$202,820
3. Hours per Week for MFT to match BA Weekly Salary:
 - a. 24 hours
4. Bar Chart (at 5, 25, 40 years)
 - a. BA Path \$257,200 / \$1,286,000 / \$2,057,600
 - b. MFT Path \$123,420 / \$1,842,620 / \$3,132,020

Rubric Used:

Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam V3 Rubric

Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam V3 Rubric				
	4	3	2	1
Psychology Quantitative Reasoning Exam Scores	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1