

Annual Assessment Report AY22-23
Psychology Major & Minor Aggregate

Report due date: Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Submitted by Aline Hitti, AY22-23 Psychology Assessment Committee Chair
AY22-23 Assessment Committee: Aline Hitti (Chair), Ben Levy, Zachary Reese, Lisa Wagner
Please send feedback to Dr. Hitti and Dr. Cheung (current Co-Chair, Psychology)

Mission Statements (no changes):

Major:

The Bachelor of Arts in Psychology provides a foundation for traditional and nontraditional students who wish to become psychologists. It also prepares students to become lifelong learners by delivering analytical, quantitative, and problem-solving skills that lead to self-awareness, critical social/cultural engagement as well as employment in a variety of work settings.

Minor:

The Minor in Psychology provides a foundation for traditional and nontraditional students in psychology. It also prepares students to become lifelong learners by delivering analytical, quantitative, and problem-solving skills that lead to self-awareness, critical social/cultural engagement as well as employment in a variety of work settings.

PLOs (no changes):

Major:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology
2. Respect and use critical thinking, skeptical inquiry and a scientific approach to understanding human behavior and psychological processes
3. Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation
4. Apply psychological theory, methodology and findings to develop a greater understanding of the whole person, as an individual and as a member of a large community, society, and culture
5. Be able to communicate psychological information effectively in a variety of formats
6. Recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity

Minor:

1. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
2. Students will use critical thinking, skeptical inquiry and/or a scientific approach to understanding human behavior and psychological processes underlying human behavior.
3. Students will apply psychological theory and findings to develop a greater understanding of the whole person, as an individual and as a member of the larger community.

Curriculum Map (no change):

Please refer to the attached curriculum maps.

Assessment Schedule (Past Assessments):

Our last APR was 2017-2018.

- In 2018-2019, we assessed Major PLO #6 across our Psychology Diversity courses.
- In 2019-2020, we filed an alternative assessment report; it did not assess PLOs but instead assessed faculty responses to transitioning to remote instruction across all of our classes during Sur COVID-19.
- In 2020-2021, we assessed Major/Minor PLOs #1 & #2 across our Biological Psychology sections. Biological Psychology was the one remaining course that our department teaches that is taken by all of our majors (i.e., courses other than Breadth and elective courses, which are only taken by a subset of our majors) that we had not yet assessed. [For historical context, we assessed PLOs #2 & #3 in Psychological Statistics and Research Design in 2015-2016, PLOs #2, #3, & #5 in ARM/ART in 2016-2017, PLOs #1, #3, & #4 in General Psychology in 2017-2018, and PLO #6 in Psychological Diversity courses in 2018-2019]. As Writing in Psychology is taught by the Rhetoric and Language Department we have not assessed that course, but are instead reporting on an indirect assessment of writing across our program in this assessment report.
- In 2021-2022, we gathered student perspectives through a survey of all of our majors and minors—not tied to any specific class(es)—on their experiences of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our curriculum and in their experiences in our classes.
- In this current report (AY2022-2023), we begin a detailed examination of PLO #5 (Be able to communicate psychological information effectively in a variety of formats), with an indirect assessment of writing within the major.

2022-2023 Assessment:**Method used:**

Our assessment this year represents our initial steps towards revising how we handle writing instruction in the Psychology major. To do this we are borrowing from the “Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC)” model (<https://wac.umn.edu/wec-program>) developed at the University of Minnesota. In the WEC model, the initial step is to survey faculty and students about what writing abilities are relevant in our discipline. At this stage you also survey “professional affiliates” who are meant to represent the kind of careers that our students are likely to go on to after graduation. The goal is to see where there is common agreement among these various

stakeholders about what is important and to identify areas of disagreement, both of which can help shape discussions about how we revise our writing curriculum. These surveys were developed by the University of Minnesota and examples can be found here:

<https://wac.umn.edu/wec-program/research-assessment>.

We sent out these surveys (through Qualtrics) in early March of 2020 to all full-time and part-time faculty in the department and all majors in Psychology. We also asked all faculty to share the Affiliate survey with any professional connections they had with the following prompt: "In addition to surveying faculty and students, we also want to get input from outside 'affiliates.' The idea here is to hear from people who either work with undergraduate psychology majors (current or recent graduates) or who are working in jobs that our students may pursue in the future. We would like your help in reaching out to colleagues, professional contacts, or former students who might be appropriate for this survey. Importantly, there are many fields that apply here (e.g., clinical practice, social work, public health, marketing, human resources, user experience) and we would like to broadly sample, so feel free to share this request widely."

Participants

Students. 147 psychology students completed our survey. These included 15.6% 1st year students, 30.6% 2nd year students, 36.7% 3rd year students, and 17.0% 4th year students. 13% were transfers and 9% have declared more than one major. 75% had taken our RHET 203 Writing in Psychology course and 88% reported English as their primary language.

Faculty and Affiliates. Eighteen faculty members responded. 56.6% were full-time faculty (term or tenure track), 44.4% were adjunct faculty. We also received responses from 34 affiliates within these career domains (32% Business/HR, 24% Clinical Psychology, 18% academia and research, 6% Law, and 6% education).

Measures

For the first question, stakeholders were asked to choose the top 3 most important characteristics of psychological writing. The array of response choices included: (1) Expressive: emphasizing personal feelings and impressions, (2) Interpretive and/or evaluative of others' works and ideas, (3) Descriptive: conveying processes, objects, data, environments, etc., (4) Analytical: emphasizing the logical examination of subject(s), (5) Persuasive: presenting and evidencing positions or claims, (6) Exploratory: investigating and developing ideas using discovery-based writing, (7) Visual: emphasizing visual components such as graphic presentation, sketches, drawings, videos, etc., (8) Explanatory and/or instructive: translating complex content into audience-appropriate definitions and/or instructions, (9) Innovative: approaching subject in fresh and inventive ways, (10) Collaboratively-authored, (11) Unsure, (12) Other (please specify).

For the second question, stakeholders were asked to rank the different writing abilities in order of importance. The array of response choices included: (1) Use field-specific terminology, organizational formats, and/or conventions (i.e., APA style), (2) Argue a position using a central

thesis or hypothesis and evidence, (3) Represent data using figures, drawings, charts, and/or tables, (4) Describe processes, objects, findings, environments, etc., (5) Summarize ideas, texts, or events, (6) Synthesize disparate ideas, and/or perspectives, (7) Create multimodal presentations (slides, posters, sites), (8) Analyze, interrogate, and/or evaluate ideas, texts, or events, (9) Use correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics (punctuation, etc.), (10) Propose innovative ideas or perspectives, (11) Integrate and correctly cite information from well-chosen sources, (12) Report and explain complex data and findings, (13) Use writing to develop and deepen thinking, (14) Solve complex problems, (15) Reflect upon experience and/or assumptions, (16) Co-author texts with one or more writer(s), and (17) Other (please specify).

RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

Which three characteristics are the most important?

For this question we analyzed 177 stakeholders, including 127 psychology students, 18 psychology faculty, and 32 psychology-adjacent affiliates. As shown in Figure 1, the four most commonly selected characteristics were analysis (75%), description (64%), explanation (43%), and interpretation (42%).

Figure 1. Most Common Characteristics

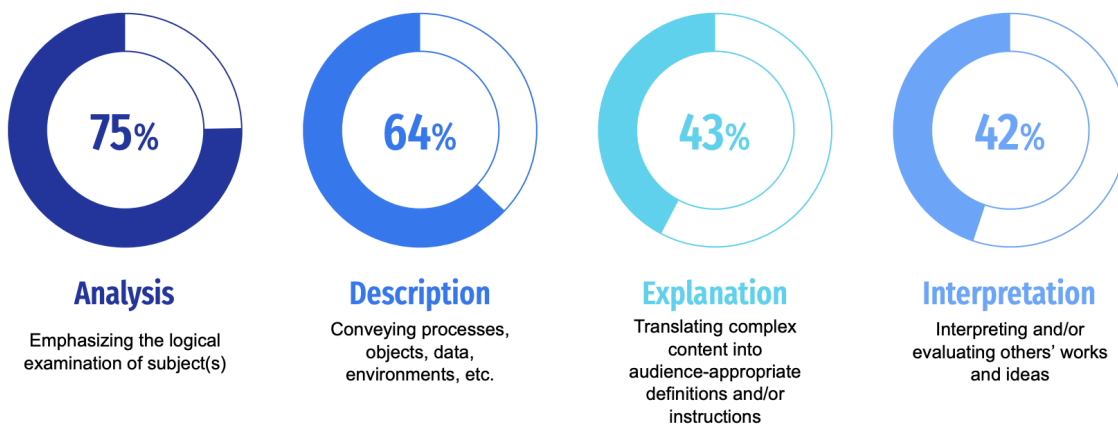


Figure 2 focuses on agreement between stakeholders. Agreement was loosely operationalized as “no more than 2x different representation in the top 3 between any two stakeholder categories.” Stakeholders generally agreed that it was highly important to (1) examine subjects analytically and to (2) describe projects, objects, data, etc. All stakeholders generally felt it was less important to (3) express feelings and impressions.

Figure 2. Agreement Over the 3 Most Important Characteristics of Psychological Writing

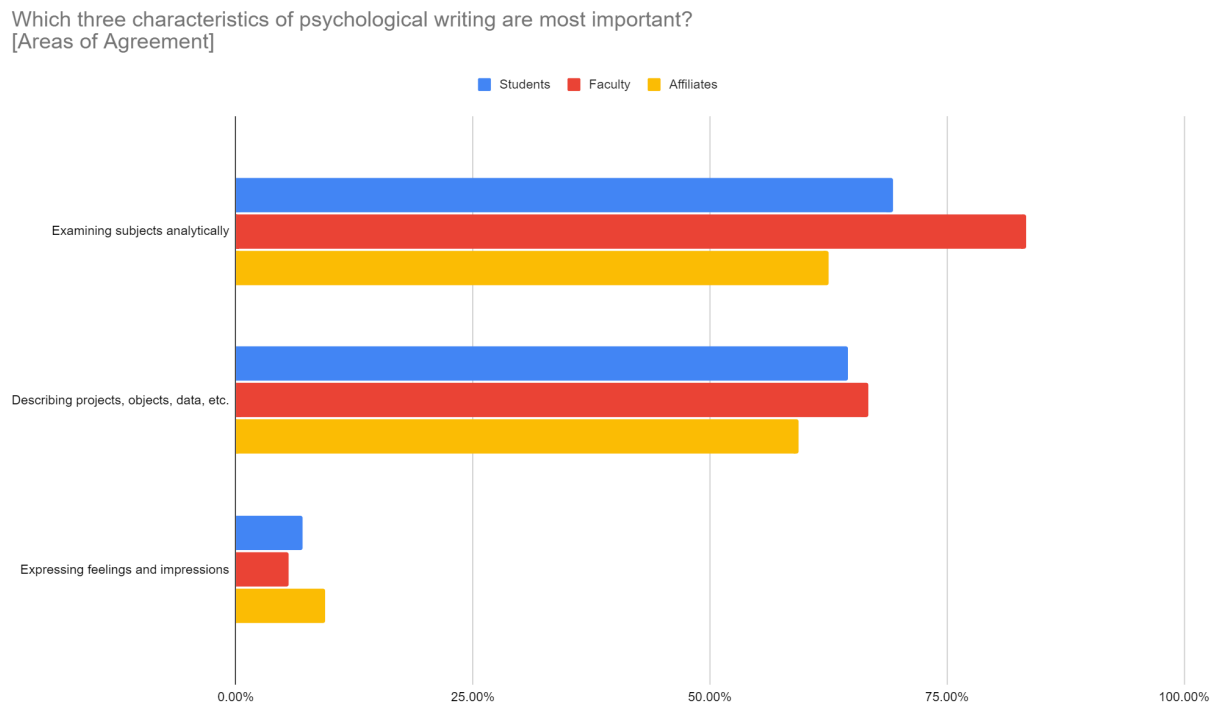
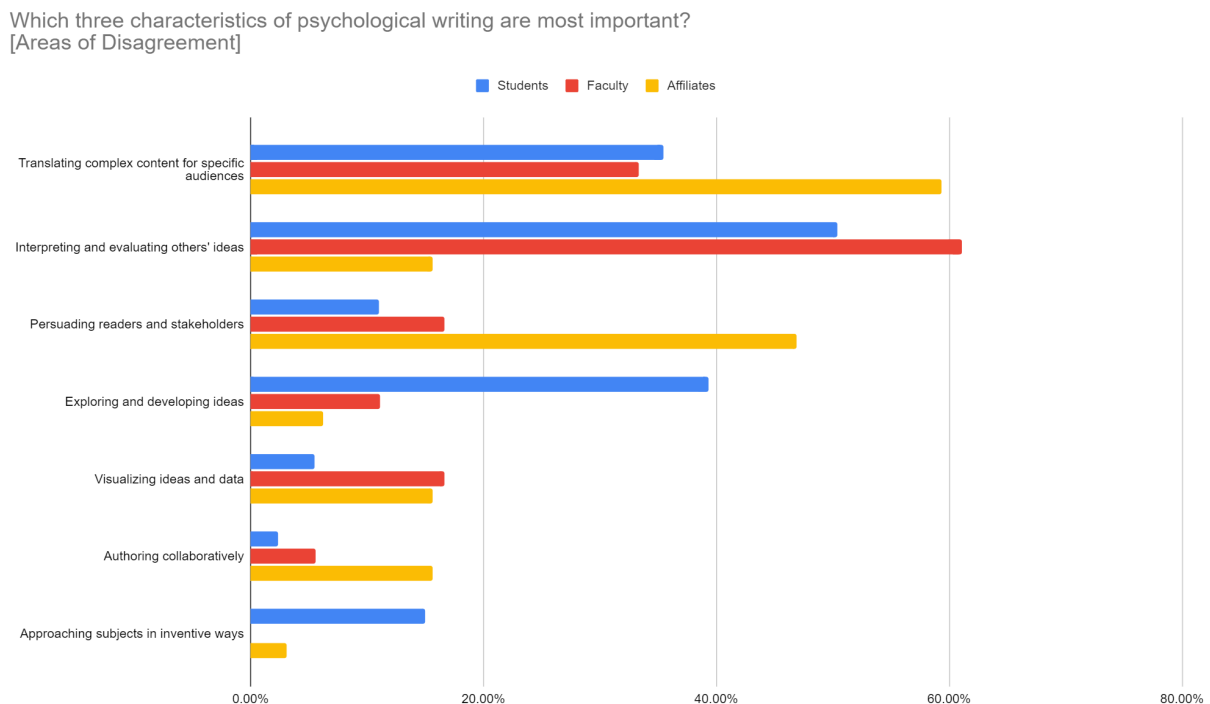


Figure 3 focuses on disagreement between stakeholders. Disagreement was loosely operationalized as “at least 2x different representation in the top 3 between any two stakeholder categories.” First, we focus on differences between affiliates and faculty/students. Affiliates were more inclined than faculty and students to indicate that it was highly important to (1) translate complex content for specific audiences and (2) persuade readers and stakeholders. Affiliates were less inclined than faculty and students to indicate that it was important to (3) interpret and evaluate others’ ideas.

Next, we focus on differences between students and faculty/affiliates. Students were more inclined than faculty and affiliates to indicate that it was highly important to (4) explore and develop ideas and (5) approach subjects in inventive ways. Students were less inclined than faculty and affiliates to indicate that it was important to (6) visualize ideas and data.

Finally, we examine differences between all three stakeholders. Students were less likely than faculty, who were in turn less likely than affiliates, to indicate that it was important to (7) author collaboratively.

Figure 3. Agreement Over the 3 Most Important Characteristics of Psychological Writing



What are the three most important writing abilities?

For this question we received responses from 172 stakeholders, including 121 psychology students, 18 psychology faculty, and 33 psychology-adjacent affiliates. Stakeholders selected from a list the three most important writing abilities in their field. Figure 4 shows that the four most commonly selected characteristics collapsing across stakeholders were analysis (49%), explanation (35%), mechanics (30%), and persuasion (29%). Note that the number of options for this question was greater than the number of options for the previous question; so, the relatively lower percentages here do not necessarily reflect less endorsement.

Figure 4. Most Common Writing Abilities

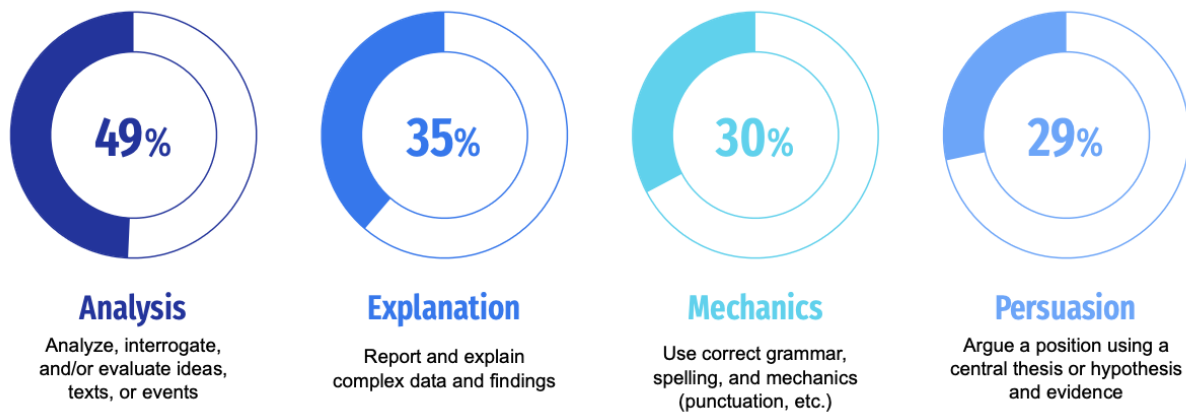


Figure 5 focuses on agreement between stakeholders. Agreement was loosely operationalized as “no more than 2x different representation in the top 3 between any two stakeholder categories.” Stakeholders generally agreed that it was highly important to (1) analyze ideas, texts or events, (2) report and explain complex data and findings, (3) argue a position, (4) integrate and cite information from well-chosen sources. Stakeholders generally agreed it was less important to (5) describe phenomena, (6) use writing to develop and deepen thinking, (7) represent and visualize data, and (8) co-author texts with others.

Figure 5. Agreement Over the 3 Most Important Psychological Writing Abilities

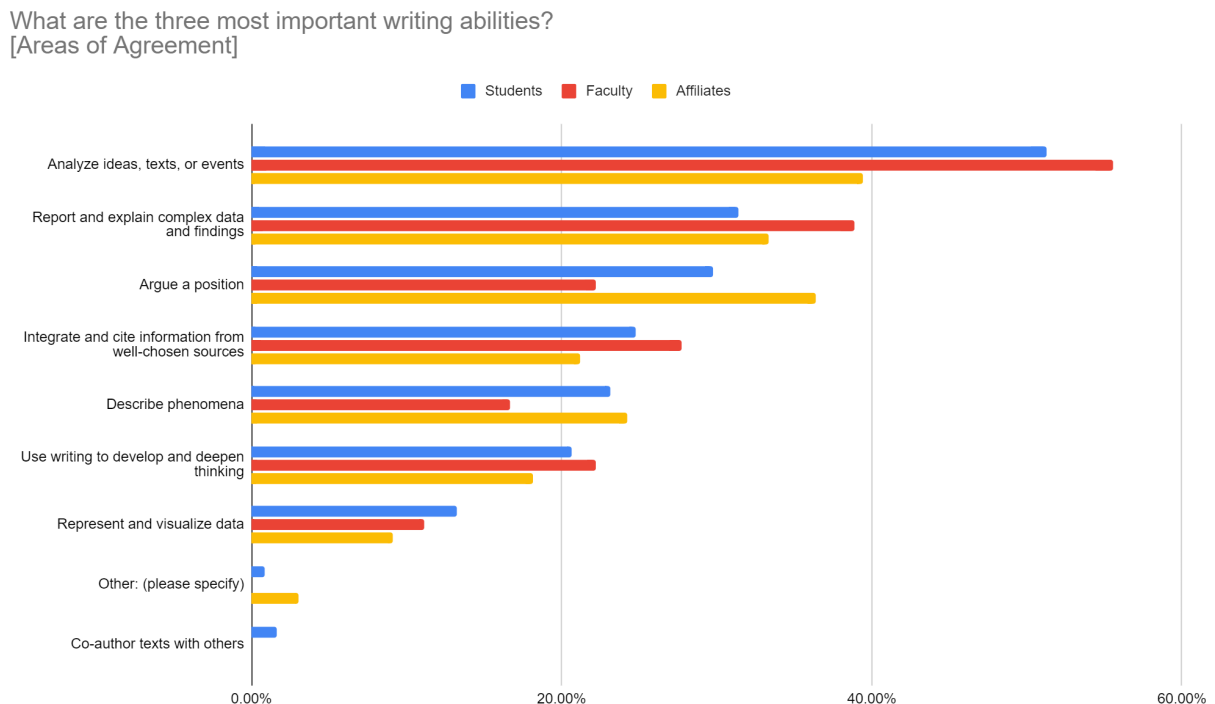


Figure 6 focuses on disagreement between stakeholders. Disagreement was loosely operationalized as “at least 2x different representation in the top 3 between any two stakeholder categories.” First, we focus on differences between affiliates and faculty/students. Affiliates were more inclined than faculty and students to indicate that it was highly important to *summarize ideas, texts of events*.

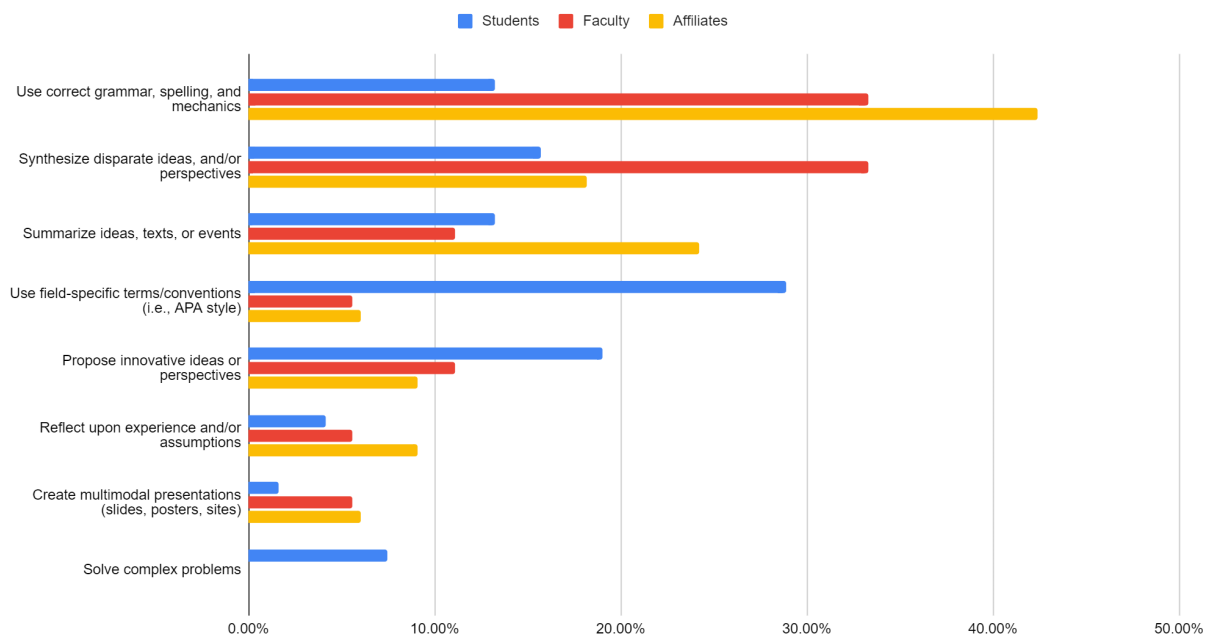
Next, we focus on differences between students and faculty/affiliates. Students were **more** inclined than faculty and affiliates to indicate that it was highly important to (1) *use field-specific terms/conventions*, (2) *propose innovative ideas or perspectives*, and (3) *solve complex problems*. Students were **less** inclined than faculty and affiliates to indicate that it was important to (1) *use correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics* and (2) *create multimodal presentations*.

Next, we examine differences between faculty and students/affiliates. Faculty were more inclined than students and affiliates to indicate that it was highly important to *synthesize disparate ideas and/or perspectives*.

Finally, we examine the differences between all three stakeholder categories. Students were less likely than faculty, who were in turn less likely than affiliates, to indicate that it was highly important to *reflect upon experiences and/or assumptions*.

Figure 6. Disagreement Over the 3 Most Important Psychological Writing Abilities

What are the three most important writing abilities?
[Areas of Disagreement]



Summary

Overall while some convergence over importance of writing characteristics and abilities exist among stakeholders it is notable that more disagreements exist. Future work will use these data to guide discussions about how to revise our writing curricula. For example, perhaps learning outcomes may target abilities highlighted by affiliate stakeholders while pedagogical approaches could be designed to establish convergence between students and faculty perspectives.

Department response to the results

The results were shared with faculty members of the psychology department through google drive and email and feedback was solicited. Any feedback was addressed through email and incorporated into this report. Department responses were positive and highlighted the interesting findings in disagreements between stakeholders, indicating a motivation to reduce such disagreements.

Discussion of any significant feedback from your previous year's report and how your program responded to that feedback

Feedback for our 21-22 assessment report acknowledged and commended our examination of student perspectives. We continued this effort with this report but with a focus on examining agreements and disagreements in perceptions of students, faculty, and affiliates about the importance of writing and writing abilities.

Closing the loop

We plan to continue with the full WEC model in AY 2024-2025. Among other things this would include identifying points of disagreements and adapting approaches which aim to establish more convergence among all three stakeholders.