

Subject: Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology
From: Rita Curl-Langager <Rita.Curl-Langager@MINOTSTATEU.EDU>
Reply-To: STP Extended Executive Committee <TOPEC@LIST.KENNESAW.EDU>
Date: Thu, 19 Nov 2009 10:59:10 -0600

Hello everyone,

As the semester comes close to an end, I hope that you are able to be healthy and think about the wonderful semester break ahead.

Janet Carlson asked the PQUEP Working Group to put together comments for the Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology sent to us from the APA Board of Educational Affairs on July 30, 2009. Our feedback is due December 1, 2009.

Attached is the DRAFT of the PQUEP report that summarizes our comments. Please send additional comments about agreements and disagreements, discuss the points and positions presented in the draft report attached, and suggest further edits and examples where you think they will be helpful.

I looked at the comments on the <http://apaoutside.apa.org/EducCSS/Public/> website, and this is much longer than the others, but comparable in content. Please send a yeah or nay and any comments that you have by Sunday, November 29. Janet and I will submit the final report.

I look forward to hearing from you.

My best,
Rita

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SOCIETY FOR THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY
Extended Executive Committee Discussion List

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Requested Comments:

Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology

STP PQEUP Working Group

November 18, 2009

Requested Comments: *Principles for Quality Undergraduate
Education in Psychology*

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology Executive Committee enthusiastically endorses the *Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology (PQUEP)*. The *PQUEP* speaks to psychology issues in relation to national and global communities, complementing the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Major in Psychology* that addresses issues in higher education. Exciting aspects of the principles concern (1) their possible application to high school audiences (e.g., Quality Principle (QP) 1, 2, & 3) and (2) our (i.e., members of the discipline) need to educate the public in general (QP 5), a call reminiscent of George Miller's "giving psychology away" from the 60s. The quality principles offer more guidance than past attempts to galvanize psychology educators and the public, and to generate new thinking, teaching, and sharing of ideas. While there are questions and issues that everyone needs to address, the principles can be a starting point for a more directed discussion.

The *Principles* document outlines an admirable set of goals toward which our discipline should strive, especially important issues related to teacher training and psychological literacy. It outlines responsibilities for students, faculty, departments, administrators, and policymakers and the public. The document incorporates technology proficiency in the recommendations. The approach conveys that we all can contribute, and are vital, to undergraduate education in psychology. The entire discipline can benefit from such a movement and the trickle down effects will be beneficial for all sub-disciplines. If students encounter effective teachers helping them to become increasingly effective learners, and suitably expectant family and community members, then the benefits are seemingly endless.

General Comments

The following comments, questions, and editorial suggestions provided below represent our collective interest in clarifying the intent and improving the accessibility of the quality principles.

The rationale, the applicability and adaptation of the quality principles, and the supporting literature provide an important foundation for the *PQUEP*. First, the rationale is important to include at the beginning of the delineated quality principles. The current position of the rationale, placed before the *PQUEP* (p. 7), suggests that it might not appear with the final document. We believe that the rationale helps to establish the purpose of the *PQUEP*. Second, some statements about previous supporting documents, e.g., Dunn et al., 2007; Halonen et al., 2007; Halpern, 2010, or references to these throughout the *PQUEP*, seem appropriate. A vast literature serves to explain "how" we assess and intervene to accomplish these goals. We would like some assurance that others know about these resources. Third, the applicability of the *Principles* to individual institutions should appear at the beginning of the *PQUEP*. We suggest that *PQUEP* direct institutions to establish goals and objectives that fit the specific institution's needs, missions, and student populations and are consistent with the *PQUEP*. Similarly, a statement about the overarching need for teacher training may be better placed at the beginning of the document than with a few quality principles. The following sections offer clarification to specific wording and recommendations for consideration by the Board of Educational Affairs.

Rationale

The PTN article explains that the

“principles for undergraduate education in psychology are designed for creating a world-class educational system that provides students with the workplace skills needed in this information age, a solid academic background that prepares them for advanced study in a wide range of fields, and knowledge, skills, and abilities that will enhance their lives”

(Halpern, 2009, p. 7).

We recommend that this statement appear in a predominant position at the beginning of the *Principles* document.

Page 7, end of first full paragraph: "Thus, most departments and program on college and university campuses can adopt these quality principles with minimal revisions to their program.”

It is important to acknowledge that different educational institutions have varying needs and

strengths and that some of them may have already addressed the *PQUEP* recommendations. However, the above sentence weakens the *PQUEP's* argument that these recommendations should serve as the blueprint for psychology education for the next several decades.

Objectives

Several working group members indicated their concern for effecting change to align thought and/or behavior with these principles. Specifically:

In some areas of the *PQUEP*, the language following the recommendations is vague (e.g., QP 3, Recommendation (Rec.) 2), or too specific or ad hoc (e.g., QP 5, Rec. 1).

The specific recommendation for teacher training and development is missing from QP 4 although present in QP 3, Rec. 7. Perhaps requiring teacher training for all graduate students is excessive.

QP 2, Rec. 3 provides examples to show how the objectives of the principles may be met. These types of examples need to be included throughout the document.

To document progress toward a principle, each institution should identify outcome measures and other indicators, tailoring them to its needs and characteristics, to gauge whether it is making progress towards the recommendations.

Quality Principle 1

1. QP 1 and QP 2 present parallel recommendations. For the most part, the categories used to organize the principles work well by clearly identifying areas of focus. Unfortunately, this also causes some overlaps and redundancies.
2. QP 1, Rec. 4: This recommendation seems rather obvious. Does it change how we advise, or, as a chairperson, how we set up faculty advising?

Quality Principle 2

1. QP 2, Rec. 1: It might be helpful to include examples that are more relevant to students.
2. QP 2, Rec. 2: Explain how we help faculty to “know how to teach the information in their specialty area?” This recommendation stops short of recommending faculty development and training for teaching, and perhaps it should go ahead and do so.

3. QP 2, Rec. 5: It would be helpful to include examples of behaviors that exemplify critical thinking skills, rather than repeating the recommendation.
4. QP 2, Rec. 6: Add, “acknowledge and appreciate diverse perspectives” after “working cooperatively with others.” After “...and thinking with numbers”, replace “which can be incorporated in classes within and outside of the major” with “and working with others who may have different perspectives, values, attitudes, and skills.”
5. QP 2, Rec. 7: What is meant by “full range of students, staff, and other faculty on their campus...?” Does this refer to people’s cultural backgrounds, values, etc.?
6. QP 2, Rec. 8: Faculty simply becoming proficient in technology use is not as meaningful as faculty doing so *to facilitate learning*. Too many faculty jump on a technology band wagon (even though it is costly in both time and money) but don’t stop to assess whether the technology has any value for learning or makes other differences.

Quality Principle 3

1. QP 3, Rec. 1: Can we go further and suggest departments only offer a B.S and not a B.A., in the context of reinforcing the scientific underpinnings?
2. QP 3, Rec. 2: Does this apply to the psychology major or every major, including non-psychology majors? As stated earlier, Rec. 2 is vague. Which courses are in those domains? It would be a good idea to be more explicit about which courses from current catalogs fit in each domain.
3. QP 3, Rec. 4: Sections of Rec. 4 overlap with QP 2, Rec. 5 (writing and speaking) and QP 2, Rec. 8 (think critically).
4. QP 3, Rec. 5: How can one enforce and monitor how introductory psychology represents the field. Can there be models of departmental evaluation, either statewide or as an STP or APA function?
5. QP 3, Rec. 6: Perhaps add “and assess” after “agree on the desired learning outcomes for the major.” Suggest how to foster assessment of learning outcomes as many departments and faculty are not sure how to do it well.

6. QP 3, Rec. 8: This recommendation is important and could benefit from more examples, e.g., personal development, life course planning, family planning and care, and civic engagement.

Quality Principle 4

1. QP 4, Rec. 2: Remove, “Teaching assignments need to take into account the needs of each campus” and include an overview sentence in the introduction about the diverse needs of various institutions. What is “academically prepared?” Perhaps this is a good point for us to talk about what makes a competent teacher. Administrators should provide education benefits to their long-term adjuncts as well as tenure-track faculty.
2. QP 4, Rec. 4: Remove the last sentence that begins with, “In many instances adjunct...” Again, administrators should provide education benefits to their long-term adjuncts as well as tenure-track faculty.
3. QP 4, Rec. 5: If the recommendation is that student evaluations not be used as the sole criteria for promotion and tenure, possibly provide examples of others such as teaching portfolios.

Quality Principle 5

QP 5, Rec. 1: As stated earlier, this recommendation has a great deal more detail than do others. Possibly this recommendation could be divided between one that focuses on the needs of psychologists to recognize aspects of psychological literacy for teaching and learning, and a second that addresses expectations for psychologically literate citizens in application to their lives.

Summary

The *Principles* complement the *APA Guidelines* by addressing issues beyond higher education including high school audiences and the public in general, and we support the adoption of this document. We believe that the strength of the *Principles* can be enhanced by emphasizing (1) the *Principles*’ rationale, (2) references to current best practice documents, (3) an overarching recommendation for teacher training, and (4) the adaptation of the *Principles* to individual

institutions in the introductory statement that just precedes the delineated Quality Principles. Several reviewers further recommend additional examples to specific recommendations. Overall, the *PQUEP* represents an important contribution to our goal of establishing a psychologically literate citizenry.

STP Working Group to Respond to the *Principles for
Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology*
Fall 2009

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Subject: Result of VOTE on PQUEP comments
From: Janet Carlson <jfcarlson57@AOL.COM>
Reply-To: STP Extended Executive Committee <TOPEC@LIST.KENNESAW.EDU>
Date: Tue, 1 Dec 2009 16:05:40 -0500

I will admit to being VERY pleased to report that the EC voted to endorse the comments drafted by the PQUEP Working Group. Comments are due today and Rita will be able to submit them on behalf of the entire EC rather than only from the [duly appointed] Workng Group.

Thanks to all who voted and for doing so on extremely short notice this time.

Sincerely,

Janet Carlson, 2009 President
Society for the Teaching of Psychology

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