



**\*Provost Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Required only in cases of proposals for new concentrations, new minors, or new majors that do not involve a new degree*

### Rationale

The department of Psychological Science plans to remove Psyc 421 (History of Psychology) as a required course in our major. We have been discussing the possibility of removing this course as a required part of our major for many years, including when we did our 10-year review about eight years ago and at a department retreat a few years ago that focused on our curriculum. The content of the course is important, but many faculty in the department cover the history of sub-areas in Psychology when they teach elective courses. For example, when teaching a course in Social Psychology, the faculty member usually starts the semester by talking about the history of Social Psychology. Since this is done in most of our courses, students will still get information on the history of Psychology even when we remove Psyc 421 as a required course. Clearly this is not the same as taking an entire course on the history of psychology, but we feel that students will still get the information they need about the history of psychology across the many courses they take in the major. Another reason we decided to no longer require History of Psychology is that many undergraduate psychology departments across the U.S. do not require students to take the course to graduate with a degree in Psychology. In 2016, Norcross, Hailstorks, Aiken, and Pfund published an article in the American Psychologist about courses required in the undergraduate psychology curriculum and only 45% of the 439 programs who participated in the study required a course on the History of Psychology. In Virginia, only five out of the 14 public colleges and universities (not including Mary Washington) require students to take History of Psychology. So removing this course as a required component of our major would not make us unusual compared to other programs.

Our department discussions about removing Psyc 421 as a major requirement gained momentum last academic year when one of the faculty members who teaches the course announced he would be retiring at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. We currently have two faculty members who teach the course and each year we offer four sections of the course during the normal academic year and lately we have offered one section of the course during the summer session. Teaching five sections of the course each year ensures we can get all of our majors through the course in time to graduate. We discussed at length whether we should hire someone to specifically teach this course, but ultimately we decided that we should not limit our pool of candidates based on the willingness/ability to teach this one course. The second faculty member who teaches this course has an administrative appointment that gives him two course releases each semester, meaning he teaches a total of four courses in our department over the academic year. Currently he teaches two sections of Psyc 421 during the normal academic year, leaving him only two other courses per year to teach as an elective in his area or as other service courses for the department. No other faculty member in the department has extensive training in the content that Psyc 421 covers and no one had an interest in picking up the course. Therefore, after much discussion over the past 10 years and in three different faculty meetings during the 2015-16 academic year, we voted unanimously to remove Psyc 421 as a requirement in the major.

### Impact Statement

Removing this course as a required part of the Psychological Science major should have no impact on the library, space, budget, technology or other areas of the University.

### Catalogue Copy: Current

#### Requirements for the Psychology Major

Thirty-seven (37) credits in Psychology (PSYC) courses, including 100, 261, 360, 362, and 421; and at least one course from each of the following four groupings: (1) 301, 311, 342; (2) 305\*, 372\*, 374, 394 (\*if this course is taken to fulfill 2, then it cannot count toward 3); (3) 305\*, 372\*, 373, 453 (\*if this course is taken to fulfill 3, then it cannot count toward 2); (4) 331, 332, 333; (5) 411, 412,

413, 414, 492\*\*; (6) six credits of other Psychology courses including one of the following Out-of-Class Experiences: 40 hours of Community Service Learning, 322, 491 and 492\*\*, 499. (\*\*Completion of PSYC 492 satisfies both 5 and 6.) The community service option requires at least 40 hours of volunteer work at an approved community service site or at least 20 hours at each of two sites, and attending one reflection session per site during each semester of service. Students completing their community service during their last semester must complete all requirements by March 15 (November 15 for those finishing in December).

Catalogue Copy: Revised

## Requirements for the Psychology Major

Thirty-seven (37) credits in Psychology (PSYC) courses, including 100, 261, 360, and 362; and at least one course from each of the following four groupings: (1) 301, 311, 342; (2) 305\*, 372\*, 374, 394 (\*if this course is taken to fulfill 2, then it cannot count toward 3); (3) 305\*, 372\*, 373, 453 (\*if this course is taken to fulfill 3, then it cannot count toward 2); (4) 331, 332, 333; (5) 411, 412, 413, 414, 492\*\*; (6) nine credits of other Psychology courses including one of the following Out-of-Class Experiences: 40 hours of Community Service Learning, 322, 491 and 492\*\*, 499. (\*\*Completion of PSYC 492 satisfies both 5 and 6.) The community service option requires at least 40 hours of volunteer work at an approved community service site or at least 20 hours at each of two sites, and attending one reflection session per site during each semester of service. Students completing their community service during their last semester must complete all requirements by March 15 (November 15 for those finishing in December).

## Transition Plan

All students who graduate after May, 2017 will no longer be required to take Psyc 421 to graduate with a degree in Psychological Science. Currently, students are required to take a minimum of 37 credits in Psychology in order to graduate with a degree in Psychological Science and that will not change. A survey of the 14 other public colleges and universities in Virginia indicates that 12 of them require 36 or more credits in the major to graduate with a degree in Psychology. The 2016 study by Norcross et. al. published in the American Psychologist found that the average number of credits needed for a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology was 39. So rather than lowering the total credits required for the Psychology major, we decided to keep the total number of credits needed at 37. Students will now be required to take 9 elective credits in Psychology rather than the current 6 elective credits in Psychology. Simply put, the three Psyc 421 credits will be replaced by three Psychology elective credits. Students who declared their major in Psychological Science prior to the 2017-18 Academic Catalogue year can substitute 3 Psychology elective credits in place of the 3 credits from the Psyc 421 course.