

Psychology Department Retention Standards

(Approved by the Department April 10, 2013;
Amendment 1 approved September 10, 2014
Amendment 2 approved February 14, 2018;
Retention standards updated Fall 2021)

Related TCNJ policy documents: Program Entrance, Retention, and Exit Standards; Repeating Courses; Withdrawing from a Course

The Psychology Department at TCNJ has developed these retention standards, which offer policy on minimum required grades and dismissing students from the major. The primary purpose of these retention standards is not to punish students; rather, it is to help students avoid continuing in a major that is not an appropriate fit for them.

This document also describes the policies of the Psychology Department that apply when students repeat and/or withdraw from the Psychology Department's courses. These policies apply to all Psychology majors and to courses taken at TCNJ as well as other colleges and universities that count toward the Psychology major.

Retention Standards

1. In accordance with TCNJ policy, students must achieve a minimum Psychology GPA of 2.0 in order to graduate with a Psychology major.
2. As the Department's designated performance standard, students must achieve a minimum grade of C- in all Psychology courses that count towards the major.

Repeating Courses

TCNJ policy on repeating courses states that "A student may repeat any course once. If a student desires to take a course more than twice, permission must be obtained from the chair of the department in which the student is majoring and the chair of the department offering the course." However, it is the Psychology Department's policy that the Chair will ***not*** offer permission for a student to take a course more than twice.

For PSY 101, 121, 203, and 299: If a student does not achieve the minimum grade requirement after two attempts at the same course (e.g., two grades of less than C- in PSY 203), the student is dismissed from and no longer eligible to pursue the major.

For all foundation courses (200-level courses other than 203 and 299): The department implements a "three strikes" policy for these courses. Upon the third instance of a grade less than C- in the foundation courses (e.g., less than C- two times in PSY 216 and one time in PSY 217; less than C- in three different foundation courses), that student is dismissed from and no longer eligible to pursue the major. Strikes cannot be erased by repeating a course and then achieving the minimum grade; the grade for the student's earlier attempt at the course is included in the strikes tally. The minimum grade policy only applies to courses the student plans to apply to the psychology major; thus, a student may count a foundation course with a grade less than C- towards a free elective (although it would still count as a strike).

Withdrawing from Courses

TCNJ policy on course withdrawal states that “When a student withdraws from a course, that enrollment falls under the course repeat policy. A student may repeat any course only once without permission, regardless of whether a grade or a W was earned.” However, with the exception of PSY 101, 121, 203, and 299 (see below), the Psychology Department does ***not*** count a course withdrawal as an attempt at that course. Psychology majors wishing to take a Psychology course for a third time due to one previous withdrawal from that course may request permission to take the course from the Department Chair or Associate Chair.

For PSY 101, 121, 203, and 299: If a student withdraws twice from the same course, that student is dismissed from and no longer eligible to pursue the major. For example, if a student withdraws from 203 one semester and then withdraws from 203 another semester, that student is dismissed from and no longer eligible to pursue the major. Medical withdrawals and involuntary withdrawals (e.g., financial withdrawals) are the exceptions to this policy.

Procedure for Student Notification of Unsatisfactory Grade

If students do not achieve the minimum grade required in PSY 101, 121, 203, 299, or foundation courses, or if they withdraw from PSY 101, 121, 203, or 299, they will receive an advising hold. Students will then receive an email from the department office (with their advisor cc’ed) reminding them of these retention standards policies and notifying them of the advisor hold, which will require them to schedule a meeting with their advisor. Students should meet with their advisors at the beginning of the subsequent semester to review their course history and these retention standards policies.

Procedure for Appeal

A student may appeal dismissal from the major, or argue for reinstatement into the major following dismissal, by arranging a meeting with the Psychology Department Chair and filing a formal appeal. The student bears the burden to support his or her appeal, which must be submitted to the Department Chair in writing. In the case of a successful appeal, the Department Chair may grant permission for the student to take a Psychology course for a third time. If the student believes the Department Chair has not handled the appeal fairly, the student has the right to file a complaint with the Psychology Department Ethics Committee.