The Psychology committee began its work by way of introductions that included each member stating the “beginner” courses students need to take to start their Psychology major program, and/or those courses required as prerequisites to take further courses in Psychology at their CUNY college. The most common beginner courses needed across the colleges are freshmen composition and introductory Psychology; five colleges have a course in the math department as a prerequisite. The discussion that ensued can be divided into two categories: content of the recommendations and the process involved in arriving at those recommendations.

Content focused on exactly what is meant by “beginner” courses and what route to take regarding making specific recommendations. It was agreed that introductory Psychology is the beginner course in the discipline. Beyond this, however, it was apparent that selecting one or two additional “required” lower division courses that students must take (as requested by the Pathways mission) is difficult since these vary across campuses in both the level offered (lower versus upper division) and whether the course is required for the major. What emerged is that there is a matrix of common courses: developmental, social, personality and abnormal. One option may be to recommend that students take the introductory course and any two of the others with the understanding that not every course is given on every two-year campus. In looking at prerequisite courses outside Psychology, the issue of whether to require a preliminary math course needs further analysis.

This variance among offerings and level leads into the process concerns. These include the need to collect data before drawing conclusions, the need to evaluate existing syllabi for courses seen as vital to a Psychology major to determine common learning outcomes, anxieties about the effects of the committee’s recommendations on the Psychology major at the colleges that may require curricular change, and the effect of changes on enrollment.

It was agreed that specific data be requested and syllabi collected before the next meeting, particularly regarding whether or nor there is a correlation between the grade taken by a preparatory math course and the grade attained in psychological statistics. The need to look more closely at the comparable learning outcomes across colleges associated with the developmental course (cited as one course in particular where articulation across colleges was seen as problematic) was also raised.
The tentative date for the next meeting is November 11, 2011 at BMCC, contingent on the committee receiving the requested data analyses; a backup meeting date of November 18, 2011. Members were asked to collect examples from their home colleges of course syllabi in introductory, developmental, social, personality and abnormal Psychology for electronic distribution prior to the next meeting to enable a determination of the comparability of these courses across colleges.