

Assessment of Program Student Learning Outcomes (PLSOs)

Assessment is the process by which units evaluate their own effectiveness and document efforts to improve operations. Assessment of academic units includes the systematic collection, review, and use of data to improve program-specific student learning outcomes (PSLOs; see Establishing PLSOs worksheet).

The purpose of assessing PLSOs is to:

- gauge the overall “health” of the program
- generate actionable data that can be used to inform change within the program
- encourage and document efforts to improve student learning by faculty
- provide feedback to students regarding their demonstrated knowledge, skills, and abilities

The Basics of Assessment

The assessment process can be summarized in four cyclical steps:

- **Plan** – set intended *outcomes* and develop *action plans, measures, and targets*
- **Do** – implement *action plans*, or strategies to achieve outcomes
- **Check** – collect and analyze data to determine whether outcomes were achieved
- **Reflect** – discuss *findings*, factors impacting *outcomes*, and opportunities to improve *outcomes*

The basic components and key assessment terms include:

- **Outcomes** – the (intended) result or (desired) impact of (planned) activity
- **Action Plan** – the strategies and objectives devised to achieve the intended outcome
- **Measures** – the tools used to collect data
- **Targets** – the specific level of performance used to indicate success
- **Findings** – the actual results

Developing Assessment Measures

Once an academic program has their PLSOs defined, they will then need to determine how the outcomes will be evaluated, which includes developing appropriate assessment measures. Measures should include the following information:

- Population(s) to be assessed (e.g., all entering first years/all graduating seniors, all students in a specific course, etc.)
- Description of measures including
 - Mode of assessment (e.g., entrance/exit exam, portfolio, essay, etc.)
 - Type of assessment
 - Direct – evaluation of student work products of performance
 - Indirect – evaluation of student perceptions of their abilities
 - Scoring system (e.g., 4 point rubric, 1=Emerging, 2=Approaching, 3=Proficient, etc.)
- Frequency/timing of assessment
- Parties responsible for data collection, analysis, and evaluation of data to inform next steps

Developing Targets

Targets delineate the specific level of performance at which point an outcome has been achieved.

Targets should be:

- specific to the measure used to assess the outcome
- rigorous, yet realistic
- clearly justifiable (based on internal or external metrics)

Ex. Our target for the ENGL 2113 essay assignment is an average rubric score of 3.2. Our data indicates a strong correlation (.72) between performance on this essay and later scores on the exit exam. If we can bring our scores up from a 2.8, we may have higher success on the exit exam.

Assessment Measures Worksheet

On this page, choose one to three PSLO's to begin brainstorming assessment measures and targets.

SLO 1:		
Description of Measure:		
Measure Type:	Courses/Populations:	Frequency of assessment:
Data collection and analysis:		Evaluation and next steps:
Target:		

SLO 2:		
Description of Measure:		
Measure Type:	Courses/Populations:	Frequency of assessment:
Data collection and analysis:		Evaluation and next steps:
Target:		

SLO 3:		
Description of Measure:		
Measure Type:	Courses/Populations:	Frequency of assessment:
Data collection and analysis:		Evaluation and next steps:
Target:		