

Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) are central to continuous assessment and evaluation of our institutional effectiveness and fulfillment of our mission. SLOs and PLOs are available on [CurriQunet Public Search](#) page.

Thank you in advance to all faculty and staff completing SLO and SAO (Service Area Outcomes) assessments in academic year 2019-2020! We are pleased to announce that stipend is available for part-time faculty completing SLO assessments. Please review the slides below for information on assessing SLOs on our new AMS (assessment management system), [CurriQunet META](#).

Additional instructions and forms are also available below:

- [Video instructions](#) prepared by Laney College's Rebecca Bailey
- [Written instructions for course SLO assessments](#) (credit: Rebecca Bailey)
- [Written instructions for service area outcome \(SAO\) assessments](#) (credit: Evan Schloss)
- Stipend request form for part-time faculty ([PDF](#), [Word](#))

For assistance with student learning outcomes and service area outcomes, contact one of the SLO Assessment Coordinators for the college (last updated for 2019-2020): Amanda Price (aprice@peralta.edu) for LS&LA Division, Andrew Park (bpark@peralta.edu) for STEAM Division, Olga Fish (ofish@peralta.edu) for CE Division, or Jamar Mears (jmears@peralta.edu) for Student Services. If you are not sure whom to contact, please feel free to contact everyone.

* permission was received from the Laney College's Learning Assessment Committee (3/08, Cheli Fossum, Co-Chair) to use their content on this site.

What are Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Student learning outcomes are statements of what students will be able to do after taking a particular class or completing a particular program. Student learning outcomes can be written for individual classes, entire programs, or for the institution as a whole. Student learning outcomes should be general in scope. They should be written using active verbs ([Blooms taxonomy](#)) that describe what the student will be able to DO and they should also indicate how the outcome will be measured or assessed (think rubric).

How Do Outcomes Differ From Objectives?

Objectives address the details in a course and are related to the specific course content that will be covered by the instructor. There will be many individual objectives for any class. This objectives list must be exhaustive enough to meet the requirements of equivalent classes at UC and CSU so that the course will articulate. Objectives tell students what supporting skills, knowledge, and attitudes they will learn during a course that lead to mastery of the course SLOs.

Whereas, SLOs (student learning outcomes) indicate what students will be ABLE TO DO after completing the course. Typically, there will be about three student learning outcomes for any particular course or program. An SLO also provides a context for learning and moves toward a means to evaluate the student's performance. The primary rule to be applied when formulating SLOs is that they must be assessable; there must be some way to measure student success in achieving those goals. Include within the SLO the criteria that must be met in order for students to demonstrate to you that they have achieved the desired outcome.

Below is an example of Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes for a Nutrition Course:

Nutrition Course Objectives:

**Discuss differences in nutritional requirements associated with sex, age, and activity.
Describe causes and consequences of nutritional problems.
Identify key factors involved in correcting nutritional behaviors.**

Nutrition Course Student Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this nutrition course, a student will be able to analyze a documented nutritional problem, determine a strategy to correct the problem, and write a draft nutritional policy addressing the broader scope of the problem.

What are the Accreditation Requirements Regarding SLOs for Courses, Programs, Certificates and Degrees

The accreditation standards require us to develop student learning outcomes (SLOs) for each course, program, certificate, and degree. Then we are expected to check to make sure that our curriculum is teaching these outcomes, develop an assessment plan to assess these outcomes, collect assessment data and use the results to improve the program. This must be done continuously as an on-going cycle. In addition, we will need to provide evidence that we are assessing SLOs and routinely examining our process for assessment.

What are the steps that COA Departments should take regarding SLOs and Assessment

Here are the things your department should be working on:

- **Develop SLOs for each course in the department.** Through collegial discussion, develop or update SLOs for your department's courses. All instructors teaching the same course must use the same SLOs. Please use these SLOs in the [curriculum update process](#).
- Make sure to **include the SLOs on all course syllabi.**

- **Develop PLOs for any programs, degrees or certificates your department offers.** Through collegial discussion, develop or update PLOs for degrees or certificates your department offers. Please use these PLOs in the [curriculum update process](#). Post these PLOs on your department page and in department brochures.
- **Assess your course SLOs and PLOs.** Please use our assessment management system (AMS) to assess your SLOs and PLOs. Please reach out to your division's SLOAC for any assistance.
- **Reflect on the results of your assessments.** As part of your assessment process, you will be prompted to reflect on the results and previous action plans. We hope this gives your department a starting place for a collegial discussion on improving effectiveness of our teaching practices.

How do faculty write SLOs for Programs, Certificates and Degrees

- Program/Degree/Certificate level Student Learning Outcomes are more general and describe what the student should be able to do after successfully completing the course or courses that make up that Program/Degree/Certificate.
- Meet with the SLO coordinator for your division for one-on-one help on how to get started.
- Here is a recommended sequence of steps for writing and assessing Certificates and Degree SLOs:
 - Identify the courses that define the program. Programs may include several courses or even courses from different disciplines.
 - Review course outlines and other course documents to determine possible degree/certificate learning outcomes. Program faculty should collaborate to develop outcomes.
 - Familiarize yourself with SLOs for your Dept./Prog./Certificate at other comparable institutions. May give you some ideas.
 - Focus on the outcomes that you intend to measure.
 - Decide on the outcomes to be measured, the method for measuring..
 - Determine an assessment point (or points) in the program and determine criteria for success.
 - Collect or gather the data from the students.
 - Analyze the data and determine what responses are needed.
 - Write up a Summary Report of the assessment methods and results for accreditation evidence. Input in Taskstream.
 - Repeat!

How do faculty write SLOs for Courses

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) describe what a student should be able to DO at the end of a course or program.

- 1. SLOs use action verbs from Blooms Taxonomy with an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. To get some ideas, view examples of course SLOs for other COA courses in Taskstream.**
- 2. There should be 3-8 SLOs for each class or program. When in doubt, fewer is better.**
- 3. SLOs should be included in course syllabi.**
- 4. SLOs should be the same for all sections of a course. However, each instructor may include on their course syllabi additional outcomes and/or course expectations.**
- 5. SLOs should be written in language that students (and those outside the field) are able to understand.**
- 6. SLOs are typically not content-specific.**
- 7. SLOs should focus on big-picture, overarching concepts, skills, or attitudes.**
- 8. SLOs ask students to apply what they have learned.**
- 9. SLOs must be assessable and should suggest or imply an assessment. If they do include the method of assessment, it should not be too specific – a given SLO for a course should be appropriate for anyone teaching the course.**
- 10. Avoid starting SLOs with the words such as “understand”, “learn”, “know”, etc. since these indicate internal mental processes for the students. (It might be possible to use words like this if the assessment method is indicated in the SLO.) Focus instead on what students will be able to do, produce, or demonstrate. Again, Blooms Taxonomy provides SLO friendly verbs.**
- 11. Ideally, each course or program should include SLOs from more than one domain (cognitive, psychomotor, and affective).**
- 12. When writing SLOs, think about how you will assess each one. They must be measurable.**
- 13. Next, write an Assessment Plan (what you will assess, how you will assess it and when you will assess it) in Taskstream.**
- 14. Finally, assess the learning outcomes and write up the results in Taskstream**
- 15. Use the results to improve your courses.**

You should have defined your SLOs before you begin assessing. Assessment is the process of collecting **evidence** to see if students are actually learning the outcomes. Part of assessment includes deciding what to assess and when (Assessment Plan), creating an assessment tool/method that measures the identified SLOs and creating a rubric to assist in gathering evidence that will be used to assess and improve courses/programs.

When getting started with assessment:

- Keep it simple and sustainable. Start small.
- You don't have to assess every outcome every year.
- Accrediting commissions aren't necessarily interested in the content of our assessment results. They want to know that we have processes in place that insure that assessment and improvement is occurring on our campus.

Assessment is supposed to be faculty-driven. So if we as faculty are supposed to decide how to do it, it would be a good idea for us to figure out what it is and the many things that can be done to assess student learning. The good news is that there are lots of possibilities, and nobody HAS to do it in any particular way. You can choose assessment methods that will work for you and that will give you information you can really use to improve student learning. Examples of assessment method/tools include: Published tests, Locally developed tests, Embedded assignments and course activities, Competence interviews, Portfolios of student work, Collective portfolios, Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups, Reflective Essays.

Assessment isn't the same as assigning grades. Grades alone do not give enough information on specific strengths and weaknesses of students. In addition, grading standards might be vague, while assessment information is very specific. How do you know that students are learning the outcomes that have been identified for the course? The assessment method/tool must measure the desired outcomes and the tools rubric must be specific enough to provide evidence regarding identified student learning outcomes. The rubric is an important piece of the assessment.

Rubrics:

A rubric lists the specific parts of the assignment – the types of things the instructor is looking for and evaluating to determine the overall grade. The rubric specifically lists acceptable and unacceptable qualities in the assignment. Rubrics can have many levels (exemplary, good, competent, below standards, unacceptable, etc.) and can be written to accommodate any assignment and any qualities you are looking for.

To make things perfectly clear to your students, rubrics should be handed out to your students when you explain the assignment, so that they can focus their energies on things that you have decided are most important for this assignment.

Benefits of using a rubric include:

- Expectations are clear to students, so it helps them focus.
- Rubrics make grading faster. (There's no need to write the same thing many times – just circle the appropriate statements on the rubric.)
- Since grading is easier, assignments should be returned more quickly, so students will receive prompt feedback that they can then use for improvement.
- Strengths and weaknesses are clearly delineated.
- Completed rubrics can be used evidence of assessment: how did your students do on each aspect of the assignment, (such as those aspects that are identified as course SLOs). You can focus your energies on improving what needs to be improved.
- Examples and instructions on using rubrics are widely available. Explore the following resources for more info. on rubrics:
 - [Rubistar](#)