

# **Assessment and Student Learning Outcomes at the Program and Course Level**

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## Why Assess?

Assessment results help us demonstrate what we do to external audiences

- Required
  - Accrediting bodies such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
  - Externally accredited programs in business, education, nursing, music, art, public health, chemistry
  - Program review for academic programs
- Other interested parties
  - Politicians
  - Parents
  - Improved student learning--Assessment helps us see how well students are learning what we are teaching giving us systematic information with which to fine tune programs and courses

## **The Assessment Process**

- Defining the program and expected learning outcomes
- Aligning your course with program goals and program SLOs
- Developing course SLOs
- Selecting and implementing assessment methods
- Using data to improve student learning

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## 1. Where do we start?

Define your program and expected learning outcomes

- A. Program Mission
- B. Program Goals
- C. Educational Objectives
- D. Learning Outcomes

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## A. Mission

- Values and philosophy of the program
- A vision of what the program is supposed to do
- Needs to be consistent with the institution's mission
- Answers: What is the overall unique purpose of this program?

## Examples

WP College of Education's mission: To prepare reflective practitioners who are effective in diverse, multicultural settings

The criminal justice BA views crime as a social problem and seeks to develop in its students the capacity to critically assess the normative structure of the existing criminal justice system with an aim to improving its condition and function  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

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## Examples

**Chemistry** <http://www.csu.edu/cas/chemistryphysicsengineering/ChemistryAssessment.htm>

The department of chemistry promotes excellence in chemistry education for undergraduate students through the American Chemical Society (ACS) approved baccalaureate of chemistry degree. Our program offers students a broad-based and rigorous chemistry education that provides them with the intellectual, experimental, and communication skills to participate effectively as scientific professionals.

## Spanish

The mission of the Spanish program is to enhance in its students, oral and written skills in the Spanish language, to foster a strong awareness of the multicultural and multiethnic Spanish-speaking world, and to promote critical and communicative skills applicable to diverse professional

***What is the mission of your program/department?***

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## **B. Goals**

- General statements about where a department is headed
- Aims or purposes of the program and its curriculum
- Provides a framework for more specific objectives and student learning outcomes
- Goals are broadly stated e.g.
  - Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
  - Conduct sound research
  - Understand and can apply fundamental concepts of the discipline

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## Examples

Again from the **John Jay Criminal Justice** program: Specifically, students should be able to:

- 1) Apply analytical, ethical, and critical reasoning skills to quantitatively, qualitatively and morally assess and evaluate the role and function of institutions engaged in the mission of crime control;
- 2) Articulate how institutions achieve social goals and understand and describe how to effectuate change within institutions;

**Communication Studies CSU Chico** <http://www.csuchico.edu/cmst/goals-slos.shtml>

- Goal 1: Students will communicate ethically, responsibly, and effectively as local, national, international, and global citizens and leaders

***What are some of the goals of your program?***



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## C. Objectives

- Interpretive statements of goals in concrete terms so that observable evidence of them having been reached can be determined
- Course objectives in the syllabus: what students will be learning

## Examples

The ability to construct an original research question, manifesting a familiarity with the existing literature, and an implementable research design

The ability to implement that research design through the collection and interpretation of data, and to articulate proposals for policy reform

**John Jay Criminal Justice program**

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## D. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Must be measurable
- Student focused-what students learn, not what the course covers
- Specific, observable behaviors evidenced by students
- SLOs are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Targeted to the learner
- Generally stated: *“Students will be able to: .....”*

Verbs to use:

- Knowledge Outcomes: define, describe, identify, list, label, count, recall, select
- Skills Outcomes: use, solve, calculate, produce, plan, design, explain, apply, prepare
- Attitudes and Values Outcomes: respect, believe, value,

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## SLOs

- Statements of actual performances expected of students as a result of the teaching/learning process
- SLOs take the goals and focus on how students can demonstrate the goals are being met
- Answers the questions:
  - What do we want students to know?
  - What do we want students to be able to do?
  - What dispositions we want them to exhibit?/What should they value?
- Program SLOs
- Course SLOs
  - At the course level focuses on what students learn, not what the course covers

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## Examples of Program SLOs

The criminal justice department has identified the following six measurable outcomes, which students should display at the conclusion of the BA program: **(learning outcomes)**

- 1. The capacity to critically evaluate ethical arguments regarding criminal justice policy decisions.
- 2. The capacity to critically evaluate the impact of race, gender, and ethnicity on criminal justice policy decisions

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

By the time of graduation, sociology majors should be able to:

1. Describe the role of culture and social structure in shaping individual lives and be able to provide and recognize examples of this process
2. Describe the nature of United States society along major institutional axes (family, education, religion, etc.) in a comparative global framework.
3. Explain the effects of race, class, gender and other forms of difference on life chances and be able to provide at least three significant examples of these effects. In addition, students should be able to recognize the effects of difference at individual, institutional, and cultural levels.

**University of Rhode Island**

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## Course SLOs--Where do we start?

- Program mission, goals and SLOs
- How does the course relate to the program SLOs?
- What are the course objectives?
- What should the students know, be able to do, and value at the end of the course?
- Is this a capstone course/a final project/or experience?

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## Examples of Course SLOs

- Candidates will be able to plan and teach inquiry-based lessons employing constructivist teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and multiple assessments
- Candidates will be able to include in their lessons precautions for safe practice and ethical treatment of organisms and the environment
- Candidates will be able to write thoughtful papers on the history and nature of science and society, scientific inquiry and conceptions of science teaching
- Candidates will be able to align their lessons with science education standards and common core standards

(Science Content Pedagogy & Colloquium)

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Giving it a try

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## 2. Align Program Components/Courses with Program SLOs

- Identify courses and experiences that meet program goals and SLOs
- Matrix
- Develop course SLOs



## 3. Selecting and Implementing Assessment Methods

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## How will we assess the SLOs?

- Determine the type of assessment method, instrument, or assignment: research paper, essay, oral presentation, project, demonstration, performance, test, portfolios

Direct assessment methods

Develop a rubric or scoring guide for the assessment

Indirect assessments

Surveys

Focus Groups

Exit Interviews

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- How can the course SLO's for the Science Content and Pedagogy be assessed?

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## 4. Using Evidence Gathered in Assessment