

**QUICK START GUIDE TO STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES
PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLANNING**

STEP 1 - ORGANIZE FOR ASSESSMENT

Before developing an assessment plan for your unit, we recommend that you identify key faculty members who will take the lead in designing and implementing assessment efforts. Drafting student learning outcomes (SLO) can be an involved process. It can be challenging to reach the level of specificity required for establishing a relevant, measurable student learning outcome (SLO). Having multiple faculty members participate in the development process can lead to richer results. Therefore, faculty members might want to plan a mini-retreat or set aside specific meetings that center solely on formulating the learning outcomes.

STEP 2 - REVISIT OR REAFFIRM THE MISSION & GENERAL GOALS FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Provide a clear description of the purpose of the program and reflect on how the program contributes to the education and careers of students graduating from the program. The mission of your department or program should be aligned with the College and University missions, but be specific to your program's unique identity. It is important that everyone in your department or program, including your students, is very clear about what you are collectively trying to achieve. The mission should state what you do and for whom you do it. This should guide you in the development of your student learning outcomes. By the same token, an SLO can help you determine if you are meeting your mission and can prompt focus on areas that require improvement. Note: Revision of your mission may be necessary as disciplines change over time, programs transition through new faculty & strategic plans are implemented.

STEP 3 - IDENTIFY THE 3-6 MOST IMPORTANT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

During Step 1 you should invite input from all stakeholders in your program, including staff, students, alumni and professionals in the community who will employ your graduates to create the most relevant learning outcomes possible. As a unit, agree on 3 to 6 key student learning outcomes that answer the question: "What will students who graduate from our program be able to DO intellectually, physically, and emotionally?" When determining undergraduate versus graduate student learning outcomes, there should also be some evidence that the graduate program SLOs represent a deeper or more complex understanding of the field.

STEP 4 - IDENTIFY ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

For each student learning outcome (SLO), your assessment plan must include the following:

- **Select reliable and valid assessment measures.** Direct assessment measures must be used to determine whether and to what extent students are learning the outcomes established by your program. This includes evaluating work(s) produced by students (e.g., assignments, tests, performances, senior theses, major projects, certification exams). Although not required, you are encouraged to complement this approach using indirect assessment measures that involves examining students' perceptions of their own learning using surveys, self-reflections, or focus groups. Program assessment plans with both direct and indirect assessment measures usually have a more comprehensive understanding of student learning. Note: be sure to identify who will evaluate student work; when and how faculty should submit copies of student work; to whom should they send artifacts; and whether the work will be submitted in hardcopy, on a flash drive, as an email attachment, or on the cloud.
- **Set specific, appropriate standards for students' collective performance.** Make sure to discuss and agree on the benchmarks and standards against which to evaluate students'

achievement of the SLOs you identified above. Rubrics are effective for tapping directly into the outcome you are assessing and determining what distinguishes excellent performance and good performance. Discuss and agree who will take responsibility for developing assessment rubrics. In addition to setting local standards, we encourage you to explore whether students are meeting standards set by others (i.e., accrediting bodies, peer colleges, peer institutions). When establishing these standards, you might further consider asking the following questions: What indicates whether students are improving? How will you know whether students perform as well as they can? Can you identify students' areas of strength and weakness? What level of work will you consider (un)acceptable for a graduate of your program?

- **Establish a timeline for assessment activities.** Plan when and how often student work will be assessed during the academic year. In particular, will you be assessing student performance only at the end of the spring semester? Or, will you be assessing students both at the beginning and end of the spring semester?
- **Know the setting and logistics of assessment activities.** Determine which courses or sections faculty will use this assessment strategy. If the assessment strategy will not be embedded into course work, how will you implement it? How and when will you contact faculty teaching those courses (or sections), explain what you're asking them to do, and seek their cooperation?
- **Describe the resources required for carrying out assessment activities.** Will you need any resources to conduct assessment activities? If so please specify whether you require support in terms of tools, trainings, personnel, time to plan and organize, etc.
- **Identify the persons responsible** for leading assessment activities, summarizing evaluations of student work, communicating the needs and outcomes to program faculty, and submitting plans and reports to the Office of Accreditation and Assessment (OAA).

STEP 5 - GOAL ALIGNMENT

Align your program SLOs to regional and professional accreditation standards (if applicable) as well as to any of the four institutional goals established for UTRGV.

STEP 6 - SUBMIT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

Ensure that you have access to Microsoft SharePoint and follow the instructions to submit your plan online. The Associate Dean for Assessment as well as the Dean of your college will have the discretion to review and comment on assessment plans.

STEP 7 - IMPLEMENT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

Now that you have developed a plan to assess student learning in your program, prepared a set of artifacts to measure student learning, developed an timeline for data collection/review, and assigned responsible parties you are ready to implement the assessment plan and review results.