

# Best Practices in General Education Curriculum Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Assessment

After students have been provided sufficient opportunity to develop each learning outcome (i.e., each learning outcome was introduced, reinforced/practiced, and mastered), evidence of student learning is collected. In order to determine if students have indeed gained the desired knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes, each learning outcome is measured using appropriate means of assessment.

## CHOOSE ASSIGNMENT TYPES THAT MATCH [BLOOM'S COGNITIVE LEARNING LEVELS](#):

- Students' knowledge and understanding of the basic discipline concepts and definitions (**lower-level cognitive skills**) may be best tested using closed-ended exam item format, which includes true-or-false, matching, and multiple-choice question types.
- Students' ability to apply knowledge to solve problems in real-world scenarios or to analyze validity of an argument (**mid-level cognitive skills**) may be best measured using constructed-response (aka open-ended) exam item format, which includes fill-in-the-blank, short-response and long-response/essay question types.
- Students' ability to evaluate and synthesize information and to create original work (**high-level cognitive skills**) may be best tested using open-ended, large-scale assignments such as research papers, design projects, reflective essays, or case studies.

## ALIGN SLOs WITH PARTIAL, SINGLE, OR MULTIPLE ASSIGNMENTS:

- The most straightforward approach to assessing SLOs is to use one assignment to assess one SLO (**1-to-1 alignment**). This approach lends simplicity to grading and recording outcomes, but instructors should be careful that the assignment only assesses the intended SLO and that the score does not include student performance in areas not related to the SLO.
- To obtain a more 'stable', accurate indicator of how well students mastered given content/skill, instructors can use multiple assignments (**1-to-many alignment**). For example, an instructor may assess a critical thinking SLO using total number of points a student received on three discussion board posts, or average grade student received on multiple essays, or average points for a section from a midterm and a section from a final exam.
- Finally, assessment of an SLO doesn't need to be based on an entire assignment; sometimes using a specific part of a larger assignment is more appropriate and sufficient (**1-to-part alignment**). For instance, if there are 50 total questions on a final exam covering multiple different content areas but only one or two of those areas fall under the target SLO, then the instructor should only use student responses to the exam items that specifically test student knowledge of those one or two content areas.

## USE CANVAS GRADEBOOKS TO RECORD DEMONSTRATED LEVELS OF LEARNING:

- If at all possible, use Canvas gradebooks to keep track of student performance on target SLO(s) assessed in your course(s). Recording student scores in Canvas makes it easy for the Office of Institutional Performance and Assessment (IPA) to pull necessary data and decreases the amount of time and effort instructors spend collecting, aggregating, and reporting student scores.
- When recording in Canvas gradebooks how well students demonstrated each SLO, instructors may use any number-based scoring system:
  - traditional percentages with 0% as minimum score and 100% as maximum score,

- designated number of points (e.g., 0 points as minimum score and 10 points as maximum score for a completed homework assignment or 0 points as minimum and 350 points maximum for a final paper),
- performance levels on a corresponding rubric criterion (e.g., score of 1 given for performing at the level of “Below Expectations”, score of 2 given for performing at the level of “Meets Expectations”, and score of 3 given for performing at the level of “Exceeds Expectations”),
- dichotomous scoring (e.g., score of 0 given for not participating in a discussion board assignment and score of 1 given for contributing at least one post to the discussion board).
- When recording in Canvas gradebooks how well students demonstrated each SLO, instructors should aim to enter scores for a single SLO into a single column in Canvas gradebook.
  - If a holistic score for an entire assignment is used to assess a single SLO, enter the score as normal and provide IPA with the name of the assignment exactly as it appears in the instructor’s Canvas gradebook. (Fillable templates requesting this information will be sent in early Fall term.)
  - If a partial score, whether extracted from a rubric or portion of a larger assignment, is used for a single SLO, enter a separate, unweighted column in the Canvas gradebook solely for the purpose of reporting on the SLO. This column can simply be titled ‘SLO 1’, or ‘Gen Ed Assessment’, or using some other similar title. (Fillable templates requesting this information will be sent in early Fall term.)
- Using Canvas gradebooks to collect SLO assessment data is an opt-out process. If instructor(s) of specific course(s) and/or course section(s) do not wish to use this centralized resource, they can indicate so in the fillable template and provide a description of the alternative approach to collecting and reporting SLO data. In this case, shortly after the grades are submitted, the instructors will need to send an excel spreadsheet to the Office of IPA containing the following information for each assessed SLO:
  - Course name,
  - Course section,
  - SLO Statement,
  - Student emplid and/or FSUID,
  - Assignment name,
  - Assignment maximum possible score,
  - Score achieved by the student.

Please contact FSU Office of Institutional Performance and Assessment at [ipa@fsu.edu](mailto:ipa@fsu.edu) with any questions about these best practices.

Please contact Lynn Hogan, Director of the FSU Office of Liberal Studies, at [lhogan@fsu.edu](mailto:lhogan@fsu.edu) with any questions about General Education curriculum and its learning outcomes.