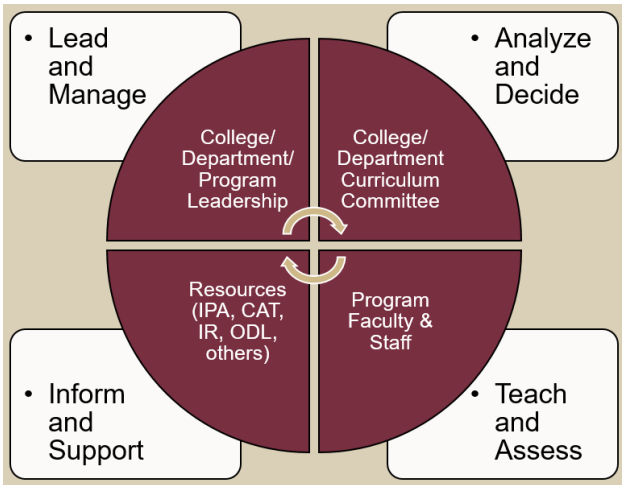
SELECTING OUTCOMES AND DESIGNING THEIR ASSESSMENT PLANS

GUIDE FOR NEW DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

As part of your proposal for a new degree or certificate program, you are asked to describe your plan for assessing student learning outcomes and program outcomes, as required by our institutional accreditor and university policy (in progress). The present document has multiple parts; the last part is a fillable template that should be used to document your program-level outcomes, assessment plans, and numeric targets. Reach out to Director of Institutional Performance and Assessment Galiya Tabulda (gtabulda@fsu.edu) with any questions and requests to review proposal drafts.

Step 1: Organize for Assessment

Assessment of outcomes is a shared responsibility between the program faculty, the program director(s), department chair(s), and the (associate/assistant) dean(s). Assessment and subsequent improvement of outcomes should be carried out in close coordination with curriculum committees. Generally, Department Chairs have the responsibility to ensure that program outcomes and student learning outcomes are regularly assessed, improved upon, and reported. Typically, there is one designated individual who coordinates the annual assessment and reporting process for a given degree or certificate program (e.g., program director, graduate studies director, associate chair).



Consider who the individuals are in each of the four areas in the visual; select the best representatives for each quadrant; you will eventually need to inform this group that their involvement in outcomes assessment will be needed.

Step 2: Define Program Mission

Every educational program should have an active and current mission, which is a broad statement of what the program is, what it does, and for whom it does it. The mission statement should provide a clear description of the purpose of the program and, in specific terms, reflect how the program contributes to the education and careers of students graduating from the program.

"The mission of [name of your program] is to [program's primary purpose] by providing [program's primary functions or activities] to [program's stakeholders]."

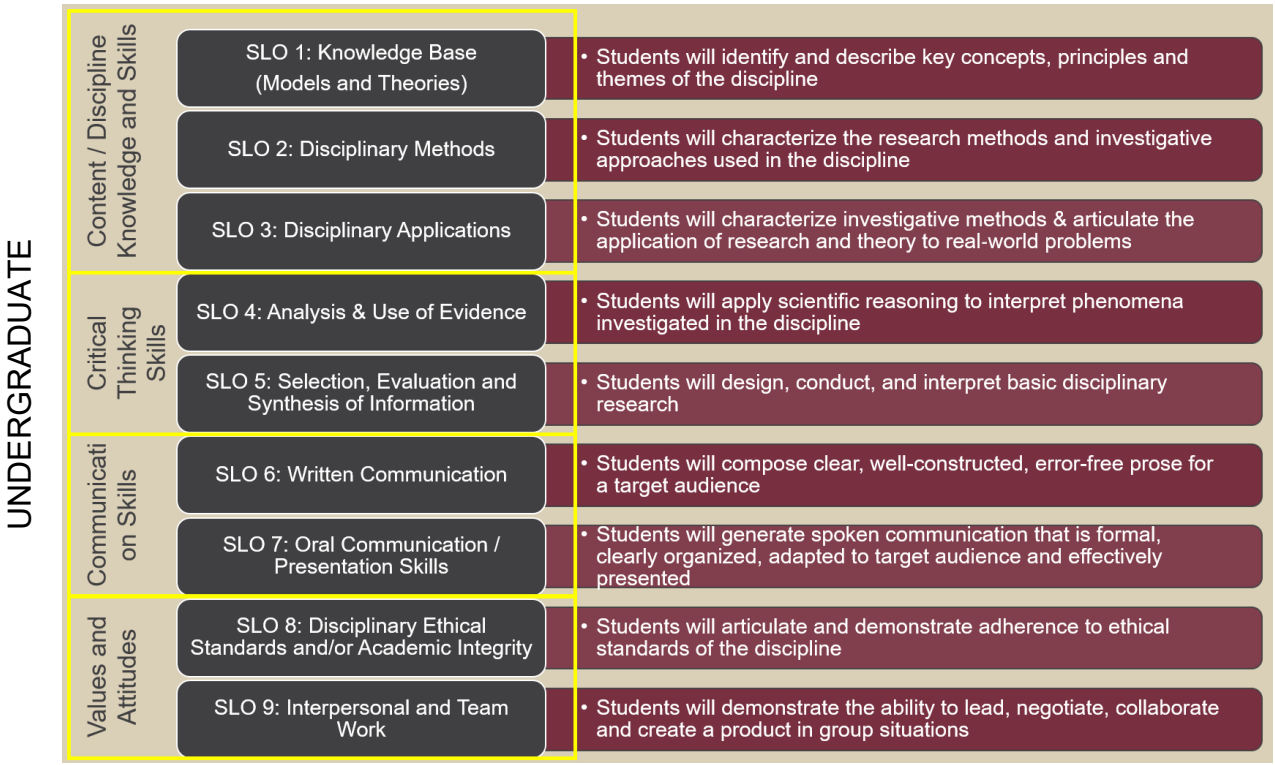
The mission of the Biology Bachelor's degree program is to prepare students for employment in various biology-related areas and/or for the pursuit of advanced degrees in biology or health-related processional schools by educating them in the fundamental concepts, knowledge, and laboratory/field techniques and skills of the life sciences."

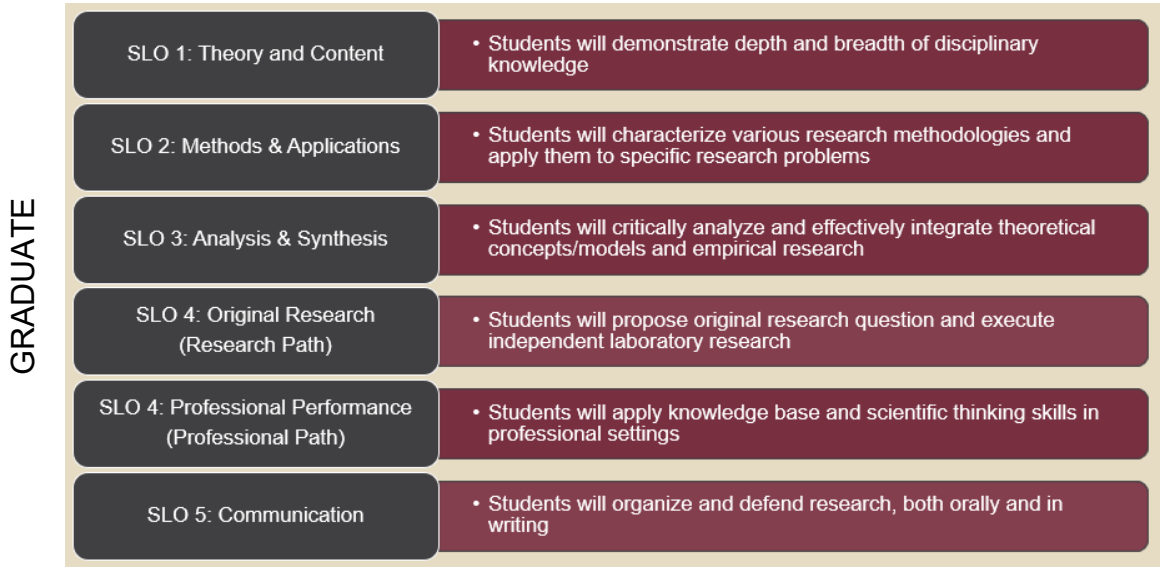
Meet with program faculty to discuss and jointly decide on the mission of your program; after that, it should become easier to engage in the next step of the process (selection of outcomes).

Step 3: Explore and Select Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) refer to knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes that students are expected to attain throughout their studies in a program and/or in specific courses. SLOs encapsulate what students will be able to know, do, and care about as a result of their learning experiences by the time they complete the program. Every bachelor's program needs to have at least 5 SLOs and every other program (graduate-level and certificates) needs to have at least 2 SLOs.

Because most learning goals are standard, you are encouraged to select appropriate ones from the lists below and adjust them to fit the specifics of your degree/certificate program. Please include the contribution of other faculty members and stakeholders (employers, students) in the process of identifying and/or selecting SLOs.





Step 4: Design Assessment Plans

Your assessment plan for each SLO should identify the exact points in program curriculum when students have the best opportunity to demonstrate to you that they have indeed acquired the target knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes. A strong assessment plan identifies the course(s) and learning experience(s) where an SLO will be assessed and the assessment instrument that will be used (e.g., a standardized or instructor-constructed quiz/test/exam, select items on a quiz/test/exam, a lab assignment, capstone project, juried performance, research paper, portfolio of work, thesis/dissertation and their defenses). For SLOs whose assessment is tied to large-scale culminating projects (capstone, paper, prelim/qualifying exam, prospectus, thesis/dissertation and their defense), it is best to design a rubric. Final course grades are not suitable for SLO assessment because they are overall measures of student performance and do not allow for evaluation of specific skills or knowledge sets.

Align intended SLOs with program curriculum and assignments in a curriculum map, which will visually represent what is taught to students, where and how, and when evidence of learning is collected for evaluation of program effectiveness.

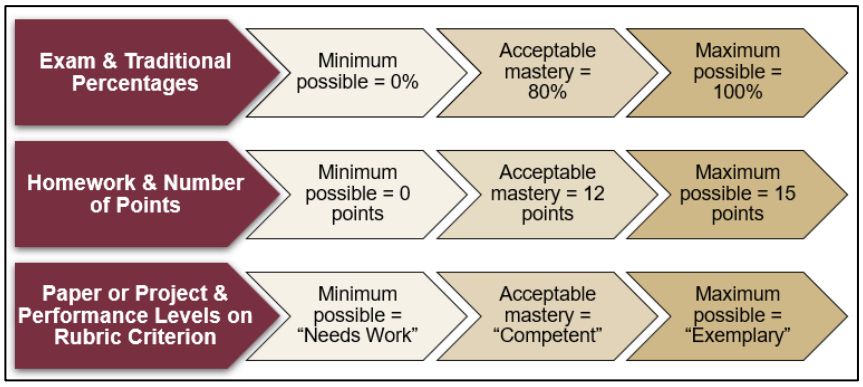
	Introductory Theory Course XXX2000	Research Methods Course XXX3000	Lab/ Practicum XXX3500	Advanced Content Course XXX4000	Capstone Course XXX4999
SLO #1: Models & Theories	I, R, M* * Assessed using two sections on final exam	R			M
SLO #2: Disciplinary Methods	I	I, R, M* * Assessed using final paper	R		M
SLO #3: Analysis & Use of Evidence		I		R, M* *Assessed using 15 out of 50 questions on final exam	
SLO #4: Oral Comm. & Presentation	I		R	R	M* *Assessed using capstone project with a rubric
SLO #5: Teamwork			I	R	M* *Assessed using capstone project with a rubric

I = Knowledge/Skill/Value is Introduced,
R = Knowledge/Skill/Value is Reinforced and Practiced,
M = Knowledge/Skill/Value is Mastered,
* = Knowledge/Skill/Value is Assessed for Program Effectiveness

Step 5: Establish Learning Target(s)

Each SLO needs a measurable standard that defines success in attainment of the learning goal at the program level. This standard must include the level of sought mastery, which is a minimally acceptable level of student performance on a measure of learning (e.g., minimum number of correct answers on a test, accumulated points on an exam, rating on a rubric criterion, etc.) and the threshold of acceptability, defined as the minimum percentage of students who must attain the mastery level on a measure of learning in order for the outcome to be considered successfully achieved by the students in the program (e.g., at least 80% of students will…, at least 90% of majors will…).

When setting an SLO's numeric target, answer the question "In order for you and your faculty to deem your educational program effective in helping students achieve the learning goal, how many of them need to demonstrate performance at what level?"



Step 6: Choose Program Outcome(s)

In addition to learning goals, each educational program at FSU is required to develop, track, and improve at least one Program Outcome (PO). As opposed to SLOs, which focus on the knowledge and skills that students should learn, POs are non-curricular goals of the academic unit (e.g., enrollment, retention, graduation, post-graduation outcomes). When choosing a PO, please select one from the recommended list. You may adapt it as is or adjust any part of the PO plan to meet your specific program's needs. You may also choose a PO outside of the recommended list as long as it reflects a priority for your program and is assessed in a reliable and valid manner.

EXAMPLES OF SLOS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT PLANS:

Undergraduate-Level Program:

SLO Name: *SLO – Application and Interpretation of Statistical Tests.*

SLO Statement: *Upon completion of Research Methods in Psychology (PSY 3213C), the students will choose the appropriate statistical analysis for a particular research design and interpret the results of common statistical tests.*

SLO Assessment Plan: *We will assess this outcome by testing students in all sections of PSY 3213C (Research Methods in Psychology) offered during the academic year (Fall and Spring). This is the core research methodology course for students who major in Psychology. To assess this learning outcome, we will use a final exam that was written and is curated by our program faculty. The entire final exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. 15 of these questions will be used to assess student's 'Application and Interpretation of Statistical Tests' for this outcome.*

SLO Numeric Target: *By the end of the Research Methods in Psychology course (PSY 3213C), at least 75% of students majoring in Psychology will achieve mastery on the SLO by correctly answering at least 10 out of the 15 (67%) final exam questions testing this learning outcome.*

Advanced Undergraduate/Early Graduate-Level Program:

SLO Name: *SLO – Critical Thinking.*

SLO Statement: *Upon completion of the program, students will objectively analyze and evaluate an issue and form a judgment supported by evidence.*

SLO Assessment Plan: *At the end of their program, master's students either write and defend a thesis (thesis-track) or prepare for and take a comprehensive exam (non-thesis track).*

For the thesis-track students, a committee of three faculty members evaluate student's critical thinking skills using a rubric. The rubric has 3 criteria, each corresponding to a separate SLO: SLO #1 Knowledge of Theory and Content, SLO #2 Methods and Applications, and SLO #3 Critical Thinking Skills. All criteria/SLOs are evaluated based on a 4-point scale: 1-Emerging, 2-Developing, 3-Proficient, 4-Advanced. At the end of each defense, committee members fill out the PDF rubric electronically and email it to the Graduate Program Director. The Director aggregates the results and shares them at the faculty meeting in August. Faculty members discuss the results and decide on any necessary changes to how the critical thinking skills are taught and assessed. The rubric is attached.

	1-Emerging	2-Developing	3-Proficient	4-Advanced	Your Evaluation
SLO #1: Knowledge of Theory and Content	Demonstrates limited understanding of key concepts and theories.	Demonstrates basic understanding of key concepts and theories but may have some misconceptions.	Demonstrates good understanding of key concepts and theories, with few misconceptions.	Demonstrates excellent understanding of key concepts and theories, with no misconceptions.	
SLO #2: Methods and Applications	Demonstrates limited ability to apply methods and techniques to solve problems.	Demonstrates basic ability to apply methods and techniques to solve problems but may struggle with more complex problems.	Demonstrates good ability to apply methods and techniques to solve problems, including more complex problems.	Demonstrates excellent ability to apply methods and techniques to solve problems, including the most complex problems.	
SLO #3: Critical Thinking Skills	Demonstrates limited ability to analyze and evaluate information and form judgments.	Demonstrates basic ability to analyze and evaluate information, and form judgments, but may struggle with more complex issues.	Demonstrates good ability to analyze and evaluate information, and form judgments, including on more complex issues.	Demonstrates excellent ability to analyze and evaluate information, and form judgments, including on the most complex issues.	
				TOTAL:	

For the non-thesis-track students, departmental faculty designed a comprehensive exam that has 10 questions in the long-answer format. SLO #1 Knowledge of Theory and Content is assessed using questions 1-4, SLO #2 Methods and Applications is assessed using questions 5-7, and SLO #3 Critical Thinking Skills is assessed using questions 8-10. Each question is worth 10 points. The Director of Graduate Studies aggregates the results and shares them at the faculty meeting in August. Faculty members discuss the results and decide on any necessary changes to how the critical thinking skills are taught and assessed.

SLO Numeric Target: *For the thesis-track group, at least 80% of students will achieve level of 3-Proficient or 4-Advanced on the Critical Thinking rubric criterion from all committee members. For the non-thesis-track group, at least 80% of students will score 20 points or higher (out of possible 30 points) on comprehensive exam questions 8, 9 and 10 (66%).*

Advanced Graduate-Level Program:

SLO Name: *SLO – Oral and Written Communication.*

SLO Statement: *Upon completion of the program, the students will effectively and clearly communicate their ideas and arguments through both oral and written forms of communication.*

SLO Assessment Plan: *Doctoral students produce and defend a dissertation. A committee of four professors and one external member evaluate student's oral and written communication skills according to a rubric. The rubric has 6 criteria that are used to assess 3 different SLOs: SLO #1 Review and Synthesis of Literature, SLO #2 Application of Research Methods and Interpretation of Findings, and SLO #3 Oral and Written Communication. SLO #3 is evaluated using the last two criteria in the rubric: "Student orally presents and defends problem, objectives, approach, and conclusions of dissertation" and "Student's writing is clear, organized and of professional quality". Both criteria are evaluated based on a 4-point scale: High Pass (3 Points), Pass (2 Points), Low Pass (1 Point), Fail (0 Points).*

Shortly after each dissertation defense, committee members will receive a link to the dissertation evaluation form and will be asked to complete it. The link to the form: https://forms.office.com/r/dCTryr5X0Q?origin=lprLink. At the end of each academic year (Summer, Fall, Spring), the Graduate Program Director will aggregate the assessment data and will present the report at the Graduate Committee meeting in August for further analysis and consideration of appropriate changes to support student learning.

SLO Numeric Target: *At least 80% of students will achieve level of 'High Pass' (3 points) or 'Pass' (2 points) on both rubric criteria under the Communication SLO from most committee members.*

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING RESOURCES:

Assessment Handbook: Contains detailed information about all steps listed above and provides guidelines for annual assessment and reporting of student learning and program outcomes.

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Portal User Guide: Contains step-by-step instructions to perform common tasks in the platform; is recommended for first-time users. Contact ipa@fsu.edu for access.

Curriculum Maps Info and Templates: Provides an overview of curriculum maps, their purpose, and how to use them; downloadable, fillable templates in excel are available for each degree level.

Assessment Seminars and IE Portal Training: Lists dates and times for the university-wide outcomes assessment seminars and IE Portal training sessions for FSU faculty and staff; registration links are also provided.

One-on-one consultations: Email Dr. Galiya Tabulda (Director of the Institutional Performance and Assessment Office) at gtabulda@fsu.edu to schedule an introductory session for your program proposal.