

## Student Learning Assessment Guidelines

### INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

In alignment with [SACSCOC](#) expectations, LSU demonstrates a commitment to the principles of continuous improvement based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution. The continuous improvement cycle includes the development of a plan, identification of expected outcomes and associated measures, assessment of the extent to which the outcome has been achieved, and evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the findings.

The following SACSCOC principle is addressed via the student learning assessment process:

SACSCOC Principle	Expectation	Related LSU Process	Required Participants
8.2	The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves those outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the following areas: <i>a. Student learning outcomes from each of its educational programs</i>	Student Learning Assessment	All academic degree programs and stand-alone certificates

### CAMPUS-WIDE STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

LSU requires all academic programs (i.e., degree programs, stand-alone certificates) to identify student learning outcomes, establish related measures, analyze assessment findings, and provide evidence of using these findings to seek improvements. This process is critical in fulfilling the following expectations:

- sustaining a systematic, on-going assessment of student learning process for all academic programs;
- demonstrating the use of assessment findings to seek opportunities for improvement in enhancing academic programs; and
- documenting overall evidence of student learning improvement and assessment for SACSCOC compliance (SACSCOC 8.2.a).

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: OVERVIEW

LSU’s student learning assessment cycle incorporates a comprehensive approach for each academic program, which includes the following steps:

- initial establishment of an assessment PLAN covering a specified multi-year period (updated every three years and as needed);
- annual reporting (Student Learning Assessment Report – SLAR) to document assessment of specified measures and use of findings to seek opportunities for improvements for a given academic year; and

- periodic reporting (Program Impact Report - PIR) to document the impact of assessment results and actions that have been implemented to improve teaching and learning, and any resulting changes to curriculum and/or pedagogy over a specified multi-year period.

LSU utilizes Watermark’s Planning & Self-Study (PSS) as the university’s system of record to document all facets of student learning assessment. A [P&SS QuickStart Guide for Program Assessment](#) is available to help navigate the process to complete the reporting requirements. The following sections are organized in a sequential manner consistent with the P&SS reporting environment.

**Develop Periodic Assessment Plan --- Due Date: November 15, 2024**

An assessment plan must be developed for all academic programs. This process is initiated during the program development process (see Faculty Senate Courses and Curriculum Committee Form D – Undergraduate and Graduate, and Form G - Certificate). As shown in Appendix A, the assessment plan includes:

- program-level mission statement;
- documentation of at least three student learning outcomes;
- indication of when each outcome will be assessed:
  - It is not necessary to assess student achievement of all expected learning outcomes every year. An assessment plan allows programs the flexibility to focus on a subset of learning outcomes each year. The plan identifies the specific year that each stated outcome will be assessed over a three-year period. Programs are expected to assess all stated student learning outcomes over a three-year cycle, and at least one outcome is required per year. If a program’s assessment plan is tied only to completers and if there are years where a program has no completers, then the assessment process needs to be revised. A program’s assessment plan should be well developed – meaningful, manageable, and sustainable – and provide opportunity for the program to seek improvement(s) tied to program student learning outcomes *each year*; and
- the direct and indirect measures used to assess student achievement of each learning outcome. At least one direct measure per outcome is required.

Current Assessment Plans will be uploaded in P&SS under the ‘Docs & Reports’ tab - Reference Documents.

Upcoming PLAN Due Dates:  
 November 15, 2024  
 November 15, 2027

Assessment Cycles Included:  
 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27  
 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30

**Annual Student Learning Assessment Report (SLAR) --- Due Date: September 30**

Each academic program must submit a Student Learning Assessment Report (SLAR) annually in alignment with the program’s assessment plan. If a degree program or stand-alone certificate offers both a face-to-face and a fully online equivalent, it is a requirement that the stated SLOs be identical. Additionally, findings must be compared across modalities within the SLAR (i.e., results, findings).

Programs complete the SLAR by identifying the student learning outcomes to be assessed for the given assessment cycle and completing the following sections with P&SS:

- **Assessment Measure(s) and Methodology - *Details of the Measure Activity*:** This requirement includes selecting the measure(s) used to assess student achievement of learning outcomes. Multiple measures per outcome are desirable, and the university requires, at a minimum, at least one direct measure per outcome. Examples of direct and indirect assessment methods are included Appendix B.

Each measure includes the following required fields: **Method, Course, Title, Target,** and **Description**. P&SS provides the option to attach supporting documentation (such as a sample rubric) after measure information has been submitted. The method is a drop-down menu; for information on selecting an appropriate method based on your SLO, please see the [Measure and Outcome Alignment](#) guidance sheet. The Course should be selected from your aligned courses, or if the assessment is not housed in a course, select “this is a non-course based measure”. The title should identify your measure to your programs and an external reviewer. Your target should be set based on your program and discipline; for help setting an appropriate target, please see the [Target Setting](#) guidance sheet. The description is a text entry field that should explain what the measure is, when and how the data will be collected - semester/course/sampling/population, etc. - and any additional information.

- **Results - Evaluation of the measure activity.** Enter the assessment results/findings (e.g., the data generated from implementation of assessment measures). There are two ways to do this in P&SS:
  - by uploading a file with data (please redact any identifying student information)
    - results should be specific and disaggregated and are usually presented in an Excel file or a visual representation (charts and graphs) that is easily understood by an external reviewer. For example, if a rubric was used to assess the student's work, break down the results by each achievement category and performance criterion. If a licensing or certification exam is used, the results must be disaggregated. For example, the results are broken down by demographics, content areas, or sections. Pass rates *should not* be the only results provided.
  - by entering the counts of students who exceeded, met, approached, and did not approach the target.

When entering the results as a file, you will also be asked to provide a summary of the findings and a narrative interpretation (i.e., analysis) of the data with respect to what the findings suggest about the degree of student learning. For programs with online full equivalents, the data can be submitted by uploading the raw data file disaggregated by modality and an aggregate descriptive summary, OR the aggregate data can be entered by counts and a disaggregated descriptive summary by modality.

- **Findings** - For each measure, the Findings section includes the following required fields: **Measure Status** and **Analysis**. The Measure Status should indicate whether the target for that measure was Met or Not Met. Assessment findings should be analyzed and compared to performance targets. The following questions should inform the narrative interpretation of the data: Have targets been met? How do the data compare over time? How do the data compare between modalities? Was the measure chosen appropriate? What strengths are revealed? Are there opportunities for improvement? *This last question is by far the most important, as the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.* Reviewing the [Learning Improvement](#) guidance sheet can assist programs in seeking improvement. If a degree program or stand-alone certificate is offered both face-to-face and fully online, you must compare the findings.
- **Action:** The Action links the assessment findings with improvement actions. Based on the assessment findings (the data generated from implementation of assessment

measures), you will always identify at least one area for improvement (even if your target is met). There are several areas for improvement that assessment findings may suggest. For example, if results suggest necessary revisions of course content, document this action by describing what specifically will be revised in the course and indicate the expected improvement that will result from this change in course content. For more examples, please see the [Actions](#) guidance sheet.

There is a dropdown of actions a program can select. Each action includes the following required fields: **Title**, **Description**, and **Recommended Due Date**. The action’s description should provide information about what your program plans to do and why the data lead to this decision. All due dates should be future-facing and prospective.

- Outcome Analysis:** The outcome analysis includes three fields: **Analysis**, **Status**, and **Action**. If more than one measure is utilized for a single outcome, an overall analysis of whether the measure was met or not in a narrative (Outcome Analysis) and drop-down (**Outcome Status**) format is required. If a single measure was utilized for a single outcome, an overall analysis is optional; however, the dropdown is required and will mirror the measure status entered under the ‘Findings’ section. As a rule of thumb, if less than 50% of the measures met their target, the outcome was probably not met; however, this must be decided on a departmental level. Whether single or multiple measures were used to assess the outcome, the **Outcome Action** is always optional. However, if a program chooses to enter an action at this point of the report, it must be different than what was entered at the measure level under the ‘Actions’ section.

**Develop Periodic Program Impact Report (PIR)**

A Program Impact Report (PIR) is required at the end of the assessment cycle to document the impact of the actions implemented to improve teaching and learning based on assessment findings and any resulting changes to curriculum and/or pedagogy over the specified multi-year period. Please note that it may be appropriate to include prior assessment cycles, in addition to those required, to adequately document long-term actions.

Upcoming PIR Due Dates:  
 September 30, 2024  
 September 30, 2027

Assessment Cycles Included:  
 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24  
 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27

The PIR is uploaded as an attachment under the “Docs & Reports” tab – Reference Documents of P&SS. A sample PIR is included in Appendix C.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Resources to support the assessment of student learning are available on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website ([www.lsu.edu/oie](http://www.lsu.edu/oie)), including the [Completing the Student Learning Assessment Report \(SLAR\)](#) guidance sheet, [SLAR QuickStart Guide](#), timelines, templates, etc. Workshop participation is available via registration at [training.lsu.edu](http://training.lsu.edu). Departmental or individualized sessions are available upon request.

**QUESTIONS?**

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**APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT PLAN TEMPLATE**

**LSU ASSESSMENT PLAN**

Multi-Year Period

[enter LSU’s current three-year period here]

**College:**

**Program:**

**Date Drafted:**

**Contact Person:**

**Mission Statement**

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)**

*[Note: At least 3 SLO’s should be developed for each program. Every SLO must complete all components of the Student Learning Assessment Reporting (SLAR) process at least once during the three-year period. At least one SLO must be reported on each year.]*

SLO 1:

SLO 2:

SLO 3:

**Reporting Cycle**

<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>20xx-20xx</b>	<b>20xx-20xx</b>	<b>20xx-20xx</b>	<b>Assessment Measures (At least one direct measure is required, indirect measures are optional but encouraged.)</b>
<b>SLO 1</b>				
<b>SLO 2</b>				
<b>SLO 3</b>				

**Appendices** are optional and may include a curriculum map and/or rubrics.

## APPENDIX B: DIRECT AND INDIRECT MEASURES

Measures	Description	Examples
<b>DIRECT</b>	<p>Prompt students to represent or demonstrate their learning or produce work</p> <p><i>NOTE: Direct measures assess student performance and provide the most accurate assessment of student learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standardized instruments</li> <li>• Student portfolios</li> <li>• Capstone projects</li> <li>• Performances, products, creations</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Course-embedded assessments</li> <li>• Performance assessments</li> <li>• Orals</li> <li>• Internship/Clinicals/Lab Observations</li> </ul>
<b>INDIRECT</b>	<p>Capture students' perceptions of their learning attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. May also include informal observation of student behavior, evaluation of retention rates, and analysis of program procedures that are linked to student learning.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Indirect methods alone do not provide adequate information about student learning outcomes. They must be supplemented with direct measures.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Student surveys and exit interviews</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Alumni surveys</li> <li>• National surveys (e.g., NSSE)</li> <li>• Self-Reports</li> <li>• Curriculum and syllabi analysis</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C: PROGRAM IMPACT REPORT TEMPLATE

### Student Learning Outcomes Program Impact Report (PIR)

Over the past three years, your academic program has identified student learning outcomes, assessed those outcomes, and used assessment evidence to improve teaching and learning. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness would like for you to consider the impact of assessment results and actions that have been implemented to improve teaching and learning, and any resulting changes to curriculum and/or pedagogy.

**College:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Degree Program/Stand Alone Certificate:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please list the Student Learning Outcomes assessed over the past three years.
2. Identify the direct methods used to assess the stated student learning outcomes (mark all that apply).

Artistic Performance  
Essay  
Lab Report  
Multiple Choice

Presentation  
Reflection Paper  
Short Answer  
Other

3. Are the direct measures and assignment(s)/activities appropriate? Do they need to be revised, tweaked, or changed?
4. Are the assessment findings being used to make a positive impact in the program/unit? How can you tell? What's different now compared to before? What were program faculty especially proud of?
5. Describe any changes or planned changes to the curriculum.
6. What types of pedagogies, teaching strategies, or techniques were implemented?
7. Please provide additional information that demonstrates and/or supports the program's assessment efforts. For example, indirect measures such as employer feedback, advisory boards, focus groups, graduate student and/or alumni satisfaction, teacher effectiveness, etc.