

Student Learning Assessment Policy

Introduction

SUNY Downstate academic program leaders and faculty conduct cyclical assessment of student learning to maintain the highest standards of education for students and to facilitate ongoing program enhancements. Non-academic programs and related administrative units engage in self-assessment of their services, aligning their efforts with strategic goals in accordance with the institutional strategic plan.

Policy

The faculty and leadership of each college, school, and program will hold primary responsibility for defining how best to teach and assess student learning.

The faculty and leadership within each School and College should develop and maintain plans to assess the effectiveness of their academic degree and certificate programs. Assessment plans should be reviewed and updated periodically to maintain effectiveness.

Each assessment plan should include the five basic elements of the Assessment Cycle Framework:

- Program Learning Objectives (PLO) to set expectations for what students will know or be able to achieve by completing an academic program.
- Details to indicate how and when the teaching and learning will occur for each PLO, and whether each PLO aligns with Institutional Learning Objectives (ILO). Details of teaching and learning activities are commonly summarized in a curriculum map or maps.
- Criteria or benchmarks for evaluating the effective delivery of each PLO. Benchmarks might be defined by program accrediting agencies.
- Methods and/or strategies to measure the level of achievement of each PLO including the frequency by which each strategy or method is applied. Details for assessment strategies and methods are commonly summarized in a curriculum map or maps.
- Methods and strategies for implementing changes based on the results of assessment.

Each College and School will share their assessment plans, as defined above, and periodic updates with the Outcomes Assessment Coordinating Committee (OACC) using the Downstate template or templates. Colleges and Schools that have existing assessment plans for their programs should share each plan, include the Downstate assessment plan template as a cover page, and cite the relevant pages from their existing plan to align with the Downstate assessment plan template.

Each College and School will identify a person who is currently responsible for assessment and accreditation activities in their respective College or School and who will serve as the liaison to the EOAA for assessment and accreditation activities.

Each College and School will share an annual Assessment Report with supporting analyses where appropriate using the approved Downstate template to the OACC.

Each College and School will share as needed copies of official accreditation documentation and communications with the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, including any required reports and

supporting documents submitted to the program accreditor, and communications of action and requests from program accreditors.

Deans, senior leaders, and their designees will use the results of assessment for the improvement of educational effectiveness including but not limited to changes in the academic programs and resources to enhance the educational experience. The results of academic assessment will not be used for evaluation of individual students, or of faculty or administrators in promotion, tenure, or appointment procedures.

The OACC does not have authority over the deans. Deans will continue to share assessment and accreditation information as appropriate to their roles within the University's organizational structure.

Common Terminology:

Academic Programs: curriculum of didactic and/or clinical study whose completion results in an academic award of a degree or advanced certificate.

Assessment: A systematic process for understanding and improving student learning, involving collecting, analyzing, and discourse on multiple data sets to make informed decisions about teaching and student progress.

Evaluation: The process of making judgments about the quality or value of something, such as an educational program, using various data sources including but not limited to student learning assessment data, administrative metrics such as financial position and enrollment trends, and discipline-specific measurements.

Analysis: The process of examining and interpreting data to understand trends, correlations, and patterns, often used within the context of assessment and evaluation.

Observation: A method of data collection where behaviors or processes are watched and recorded, often used to gather qualitative data in an educational setting.

Examination: A formal test measuring student knowledge or proficiency in a specific area, used as a direct method of assessment.

Measurement: quantification of the attributes or performance of students. Measurement is often a component of assessment and involves the use of tools or instruments (like tests, scales, or rubrics) to gather numerical data or scores that represent a student's level of achievement or proficiency in a specific area.

Program Goals: Broad, mission-derived statements outlining what the program aims to provide to students and achieve within the academic institution.

Student Learning Objectives: Specific, measurable statements of what students are expected to learn or be able to do by completing in a particular educational experience or activity. Objectives are prospective.

Student Learning Outcomes: The observable and measurable results of student learning, indicating the knowledge, skills, and competencies students have acquired or demonstrated. Outcomes are reflective.

Program Learning Objectives: Student Learning Objectives at the program-level.

Program Learning Outcomes: Student Learning Outcomes at the program-level.

Course Learning Objectives: Student Learning Objectives at the course-level.

Course Learning Outcomes: Student Learning Outcomes at the course-level.

While all the above terms are interrelated in the context of educational assessment, each serves a unique purpose.

- Assessment and evaluation involve broader processes that include planning, data collection, and decision-making.
- Analysis is a part of these processes, focusing on interpreting the data.
- Observation and examination are specific methods of data collection, with observation being more qualitative and examination being more formal and quantitative.
- Measurement is the act of quantifying attributes or performance, often feeding into the overall assessment or evaluation process.
- Objectives and outcomes are sometimes used interchangeably, but often objectives are prospective to indicate faculty expectations and outcomes are often reflective to indicate student achievements.

Assessment Cycle Framework

The Assessment Cycle Framework, also known as the Assessment Loop Process, is widely used in higher education and promoted by various institutions and authors in the field of assessment for program assessment and improvement.

The Assessment Cycle Framework involves a cyclical process of assessment that typically includes the following steps: setting learning objectives, designing assessment methods, collecting data, analyzing results, and using findings for improvement. This framework emphasizes the continuous nature of assessment and its role in program improvement.

At Downstate, the Assessment Cycle Framework is structured using five questions:

1. What do you want to do? (*learning objectives: expectations of knowledge and skills students will achieve by end of a program*)
2. How / When are you going to do it? (*curriculum maps: how/when to teach and to measure PLOs using direct and indirect measurements*).
3. How well are you doing it? (*assessment criteria, benchmarks, and/or program accreditation standards*).
4. How do you know? / what have you learned? (*observations and results of assessment at the level of Program Learning Objectives (PLO).*)
NB: employment and licensure rates show high-aggregate outcomes, but those outcomes might not be sufficient for what middle states is looking for at the level of individual program learning objectives in each academic program.
5. What are you going to do next? (*"closing the loop." Actual or planned use of assessment results for Continuous Quality Improvement*)

Review Process:

The Student Learning Assessment Policy will be reviewed at minimum every three years.

Endorsed unanimously by the OACC February 12, 2023

Approved by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and College and School Deans February 29, 2024

Student Learning Assessment Plan

Academic Program Assessment involves the systematic and periodic review of student learning to ensure that programs achieve their specified learning objectives, maintain quality standards, contribute effectively to student development, and use assessment results for continuous quality improvement. Academic program assessment includes analysis of both direct and indirect sources of data as well as discussion of the analyses to derive observations and plans of action. A widely used approach in higher education to demonstrate assessment activity is the Assessment Cycle Framework, which includes five steps to close the assessment loop.

Assessment Cycle Framework: Demonstrating assessment activity around five questions:

1. What do you want to do? (*learning objectives: expectations of knowledge and skills students will achieve by end of a program*)
2. How / When are you going to do it? (*curriculum maps: how/when to teach and to measure PLOs using direct and indirect measurements*).
3. How well are you doing it? (*assessment criteria, benchmarks, and/or program accreditation standards*).
4. How do you know? / what have you learned? (*observations and results of assessment at the level of Program Learning Objectives (PLO).*)
NB: employment and licensure rates show high-aggregate outcomes, but those outcomes might not be sufficient for what middle states is looking for at the level of individual program learning objectives in each academic program.
5. What are you going to do next? (*"closing the loop." Actual or planned use of assessment results for Continuous Quality Improvement*)

A. Please report the following information for each academic program:

School or College	Ex: School of Pharmacy (Hypothetical examples here and below)
Department (if relevant)	Ex: Pharmaceutical Sciences
Degree Program and award	Ex: Pharmacy PharmD (please include the official program name and award)
Program Accreditor (if any)	Ex: Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)
Program Goals (broadly) (1*)	A concise mission statement outlining what the program aims to offer students. Ex: The program aims to provide an immersive and comprehensive educational experience, preparing Pharmacy doctoral students for advanced careers and professional licensure in pharmaceutical practice.
Assessment Contact Info.	Names and contact info for the Program Director and Associate Dean who are responsible for program assessment

B. Please respond to the following for each Program Learning Objective (PLO): (pls duplicate table as needed for each PLO.) Programs with existing plans: attach your plan and cite the relevant page numbers in the table below.

Program Learning Objective: (1)	PLO #3: Specific, measurable statements defining the knowledge and skills students should acquire upon completing the program. "Upon completion of the degree, students should be able to..." Ex: Demonstrate proficiency in applying key principles of drug action, pharmacology, and medicinal chemistry to assess, recommend, and monitor drug therapy for diverse patient populations.
Location in Curriculum Map (2) (course or learning activity)	Ex: This PLO is delivered through a sequence of courses, Pharm 625, 725 and 825
Direct Assessment Method (2)	Faculty analyzed responses to a set of 30 questions from three unit exams in Pharm 625, 725 and 825
Indirect Assessment Method (2)	The department surveyed a representative sample of current students and alumni about their perceptions on and experience with the curriculum, instruction and services related to this PLO.
Timeline (when) (2)	Ex: measurements for this PLO will be collected in Fall 2022 and analysis will be completed in Spring 2023
Frequency (how often) (2)	Ex: we assess student performance on this PLO every other year.
Benchmark(s) (3)	A minimum threshold or performance expectation demonstrating sufficient learning. This might be defined by the program accreditor. Ex: We expect X% of students to score Y% or higher to demonstrate effectiveness of this PLO.
Prior Results/Findings (4)	If available. Ex: in Spring of 2018, A% of students scored B% or higher on the set of examination questions related to this PLO. Attach appropriate analyses.
Possible Actions/Improvements (5)	Ex: Based on intuition and prior results, the faculty anticipate (a) that a revision might be needed in how xxx is done (b) that we need to improve admissions screening for calculus proficiencies or (c) introduce focused tutoring

* Indicates alignment with the Assessment Cycle Framework to demonstrate assessment activity.

C. Please attach a curriculum map or maps that provides a crosswalk between the following:

(Please use the provided template or attach the existing curriculum map and include the following crosswalks.)

- PLOs and learning activities (didactic or appropriate clinical experiences)
- PLOs and the Institutional Learning Objectives
- PLOs and the Direct and Indirect Assessment Methods

Student Learning Assessment Report

Academic Program Assessment involves the systematic and periodic review of student learning to ensure that programs achieve their specified learning objectives, maintain quality standards, contribute effectively to student development, and use assessment results for continuous quality improvement. Academic program assessment includes analysis of both direct and indirect sources of data as well as discussion of the analyses to derive observations and plans of action. A widely used approach in higher education to demonstrate assessment activity is the Assessment Cycle Framework, which includes five steps to close the assessment loop.

Assessment Cycle Framework: Demonstrating assessment activity around five questions:

1. What do you want to do? (*learning objectives: expectations of knowledge and skills students will achieve by end of a program*)
2. How / When are you going to do it? (*curriculum maps: how/when to teach and to measure PLOs using direct and indirect measurements*).
3. How well are you doing it? (*assessment criteria, benchmarks, and/or program accreditation standards*).
4. How do you know? / what have you learned? (*observations and results of assessment at the level of Program Learning Objectives (PLO).*)
NB: employment and licensure rates show high-aggregate outcomes, but those outcomes might not be sufficient for what middle states is looking for at the level of individual program learning objectives in each academic program.
5. What are you going to do next? (*"closing the loop." Actual or planned use of assessment results for Continuous Quality Improvement*)

A. Please report the following information for each academic program for one annual cycle [e.g. AY 2022-23]

School or College	Ex: School of Pharmacy (Hypothetical examples here and below)
Department (if relevant)	Ex: Pharmaceutical Sciences
Degree Program and award	Ex: Pharmacy PharmD (please include the official program name and award)
Program Accreditor (if any)	Ex: Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)
Program Goals (broadly) (1*)	A concise mission statement outlining what the program aims to offer students. Ex: The program aims to provide an immersive and comprehensive educational experience, preparing Pharmacy doctoral students for advanced careers and professional licensure in pharmaceutical practice.
Assessment Contact Information	Names and contact info for the Program Director and Associate Dean who are responsible for program assessment
Accomplishments in [year] (3)	Ex: The program achieved a licensure pass rate of 99% this year, an increase of 2 points from last year. In addition, our 99% of this year's cohort of graduates were hired as professional Pharmacists.
Improvements in [year] (5)	Ex: in 2022-23, the faculty updated the curriculum sequence for Pharm 601-701-801
Evidence that Prompted Improvement in [year] (4)	Ex: Analysis of exams and clinical performance revealed that students needed additional reinforcements in 701 and 801 of concepts that were introduced in 601.

B. Please respond to the following for each Program Learning Objective (PLO) that is assessed in a given year:

Program Learning Objective: (1)	PLO #3: Specific, measurable statements defining the knowledge and skills students should acquire upon completing the program. "Upon completion of the degree, students should be able to...". Ex: Demonstrate proficiency in applying key principles of drug action, pharmacology, and medicinal chemistry to assess, recommend, and monitor drug therapy for diverse patient populations.
Location in Curriculum Map (2) (course or learning activity)	Ex: This PLO is delivered through a sequence of courses, Pharm 625, 725 and 825
Direct Assessment Method (2)	Faculty analyzed responses to a set of 30 questions from three unit exams in Pharm 625, 725 and 825
Indirect Assessment Method (2)	The department surveyed a representative sample of current students and alumni about their perceptions on and experience with the curriculum, instruction and services related to this PLO.
Timeline (when) (2)	Ex: measurements for this PLO was collected in Fall 2022 and analysis was completed in Spring 2023
Frequency (how often) (2)	Ex: we assess student performance on this PLO every other year.
Benchmark (3)	A minimum threshold or performance expectation demonstrating sufficient learning. This might be defined by the program accreditor. Ex: We expect X% of students to score Y% or higher to demonstrate effectiveness of this PLO.
Results/Findings (4)	Ex: A% of students scored B% or higher on the set of examination questions related to this PLO. Attach data tables where appropriate. Attach appropriate analyses.
Actions/Improvements (5)	Ex: Based on the results, the faculty have modified the didactic component of the medicinal chemistry course, Pharm 725. In addition, the program has worked with the library to update our subscription to drug therapy resources

* Indicates alignment with the Assessment Cycle Framework to demonstrate assessment activity.

INSTRUCTIONS						
A. Insert course and program learning objectives (PLO)	B. Insert expected knowledge or skill level of each course	C. Indicate how the objective is assessed in the course (Direct measurements)	D. Indicate Indirect Measurements	E. Use of Assessment Results	F. Indicate Instructional Activites	G. Alignment with ILOs
<p>1. Insert program learning objectives in the columns labeled "Program objectives #." Insert additional columns if needed.</p> <p>2. Insert an abbreviated course name, number, and credits in labeled rows. Insert additional rows if needed.</p> <p>Alternately, insert a course group if all courses in that group serve equivalent purpose in the curriculum, or if students take x of y courses. If selecting this option, enter the total credits required for the course group.</p> <p>It is helpful to insert course information in the sequence (from top to bottom) in which they are typically taught.</p>	<p>1. Determine which, if any, of the program objectives are addressed and/or assessed in each course.</p> <p>2. Identify whether students--after taking the course--are expected to demonstrate introductory knowledge or skill (e.g., recall or explain facts, concepts), to reinforce a knowledge or skill (e.g., apply a procedure or analyze how parts relate to or contrast from one another), or advanced (e.g., evaluate or make judgments based on criteria; create a novel approach, product, or artifact).</p> <p>Insert an "I" for introductory, an "R" for reinforced, or an "A" for advanced into the cell to represent the knowledge or skill level for each course.</p> <p>If a course does not align with a given program objective, leave the associated cell blank. Not all courses must deliver all objectives in a program.</p>	<p>1. State how faculty evaluate student knowledge or skills in each course, as aligned with the program-level objectives.</p> <p>"Direct" measurements" result when faculty directly evaluate student performance, usually within a course, or sometimes in faculty committee (e.g., a graduation committee, a graduate advancement committee or a dissertation committee).</p> <p>2. Insert potential evaluation activities into the appropriate cells.</p> <p>Below are frequently used evaluation activities. This list is not all-inclusive; use others as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-case study-client project-debate-exhibition of work-exam-group work-homework-lab-oral presentation-performance-project-problem sets-public review-quiz-service learning-studio-written work (including course assignments or milestone and culmination documents such as prospectuses or dissertations)	<p>Indirect measures ask students to reflect upon and report their perceptions of their gains in knowledge, skills, etc.</p> <p>Indirect measures may also ask others, e.g., employers, faculty, to infer and report their perceptions of student knowledge, skills, etc. or the curriculum.</p> <p>Examples of indirect measures include course evaluations, other student surveys, focus groups, graduating senior exit surveys, alumni surveys, college or school surveys, faculty surveys, and employer surveys.</p> <p>In the row "D. Indirect measures," indicate at least one type of indirect measure that the department will use to collect feedback on each learning objective.</p>	<p>The assessment process should result in actions to improve instruction and/or the curriculum.</p> <p>Assessment results -- analysis of direct and indirect measurements -- should support faculty discussions about curriculum and instruction and should inform decisions about curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>For each program Learning Objective, summarize in "E. Use of assessment results" how the faculty intend to use the assessment results to inform decisions to improve instruction or the curriculum.</p>	<p>Instructional activities occurring in and out of class reinforce learning objectives and prepare students for assessments.</p> <p>Frequently used instructional activities are listed below. (This list is not all-inclusive; faculty should insert any activities not found in this list.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-case study-client project-debate-discussion-exhibition of work-group work-lab-lecture (e.g., by faculty, guests)-oral presentation-performance-public review-recitation-service learning-studio-thesis-written work	<p>For each Program Learning Objective, indicate the alignment with one or more of the Institutional Learning Objectives (ILOs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demonstrate knowledge and skills relative to the respective discipline/profession- Demonstrate ethical and professional behaviors relative to the respective discipline/profession.- Practice effective collaboration and communication among diverse communities. <p>A Program learning objective might align with zero, one or more ILOs.</p>

adapted from Carnegie Mellon University
<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/assessprogram/index.html>

