

Assessment Guide for Self-Study

Developed by John F. Kennedy University Faculty

Academic Program Assessment is intended to focus on three main questions:

1. What do we want our students to learn in our program?
2. How well do they learn it?
3. How do we know?

Ongoing Assessment of Student Learning

The first step is to create an ongoing assessment plan of student learning identifying the student learning outcomes (SLOs) and which SLOs will be assessed each year and how you will carry this out. The assessment of student learning should occur across the five years of a program review cycle and should be a primary component of the department's program review. Explicit guidelines for the entire next cycle of program review are outlined and discussed at length in the *Sixth Cycle Program Review Handbook*.

1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
 - a. List the SLOs for your program.
 - b. Which SLOs will be assessed each of the 5 years?
 - c. What are the appropriate professional standards for each student learning outcome? Please explain how your student learning outcomes correspond to these standards. (If clear professional standards do not currently exist for benchmarking all of your program's student learning outcomes, how will you approach the task of establishing such benchmarks for evaluating levels of student achievement of your SLOs.)
2. Student Learning Outcomes alignment with overall program curriculum
 - a. Complete the curriculum alignment matrix to answer the following questions:

- How will your program curriculum teach each SLO (i.e. in which courses)?
 - Collectively, do your SLOs reflect the most important purposes of the Program? Please explain.
 - Upon completing your matrix, did your program faculty discover any significant insights about or needed improvements in your curriculum design in relation to your SLOs?
3. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
 - a. What criteria will be used to assess each SLO? You may want to create a matrix to answer this question.
 - b. What evidence will you collect to assess each SLO
 - c. Where is the evidence found?
 - d. At what intervals will it be collected?
 4. Implementation: evaluation of evidence and use of results
 - a. Who will be responsible for collecting the evidence?
 - b. Who will analyze the evidence? When? How Often?
 - c. How will evidence be analyzed?
 - d. Who will reflect on the results and make recommendations and decisions? When?
 - e. How will results and implications be documented and archived?
 5. Identify resources
 - a. What are the existing resources that are already utilized?
 - b. What existing resources can be reallocated/reassigned and utilized?
 - c. What new resources are needed?
 - d. What is the rationale of your resource plan?

Assessing Program Quality

The purpose of program assessment is to help you in assessing the quality of your program. The following questions are intended to walk you through this process.

1. Student Learning Outcomes for your program

List your student learning outcomes and then answer the questions below.

Central Questions:

Do your student learning outcomes represent the scope and depth of student learning appropriate to the degree/certificate program offered? Please describe the degree to which this is true. Did you discover any need to revise your set of student learning outcomes to bring in greater scope or depth? Please describe your reasoning. What changes do you propose?

Guiding Questions:

- A. Are your SLOs focused clearly on the **types of learning** (knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, person growth) students will acquire or develop while working toward a degree/certificate in this discipline and at this level (undergraduate, master's, doctoral)?
- B. Do your SLOs describe learning outcomes in terms of **assessable** student knowledge, attitudes, skills, values and/or personal growth?
- C. How does achievement of the SLOs prepare students for graduate school, societal service, and/or employment opportunities articulated by the program?

2. Availability and Use of Student Learning Outcomes

Central Question:

Are Student Learning Outcomes known to all those involved in your program? Is achievement of Student Learning Outcomes the clear and consistent focus in all program activities?

Guiding Questions:

- A. How are the SLOs made available to students, staff and faculty (including adjunct faculty)? Could they be made more widely available and/or available through more than one channel of communication?
- B. How well are the SLOs cited and used by faculty, advisors, and students?
- C. What are some of the ways your SLOs might be more in the forefront of your program activities, for example in publicity material, reflected in syllabi, part of advising, and used in recruitment?

3. Academic Curriculum

Central Question:

How does each element in the curriculum contribute to achieving your Student Learning Outcomes? Did you discover any needed improvements in your curriculum, content, structure, or scheduling to better achieve the SLOs? What changes do you propose, and why?

Guiding Questions:

- A. Is the program's curriculum broad enough and deep enough to produce student learning that matches:
 - Expectations articulated in the Student Learning Outcomes?
 - Relevant disciplinary and professional knowledge, skills, competencies, etc. (at relevant beginning, intermediate and advanced levels)?
 - The type and level of degree/certificate conferred?

- B. How do all parts of the curriculum work together? Examine for these:
 - Coherence and integration among all the parts;
 - Close alignment between courses and Student Learning Outcomes
 - Scaffolding (all parts build on each other in a progressive, intentional way)
 - Scheduling of courses so that students can follow the best sequence.

4. Assessment Procedures for Student Learning Objectives

Central Question:

What methods did you use to assess SLOs? Are your methods/procedures for assessing each of the selected SLOs giving you the amount and kind of information you need for determining how much and how well your students are learning? Based on this analysis what improvements are needed in your assessment methods/ procedures?

Guiding Questions:

- A. How do you evaluate success in achieving selected SLOs? What methods are you using to evaluate each SLO?
- B. How do your assessment methods cover learning taught throughout the program's curriculum (not limited to a single course or sub-field) and cover a variety of types of learning (knowledge, skills, values, etc.) necessary for the degree? Are you getting the kind of information needed to effectively measure student learning (related to selected SLOs)?
- C. How do these methods assess all kind of student performance (not just measured by course grades and licensure rates but in employability or promotion opportunities, certification or professional membership opportunities, etc.?) Are you looking into achievement not only at the end of the program but at other points, such as the beginning, the middle, and after graduation?
- D. Are you getting helpful, valid, and reliable information? Should you be doing anything else? Would be useful to use more than one method of assessment?
- E. Do you make clearly articulated criteria and standards for assessing achievement of selected SLOs widely available? How? Should you be doing more?

5. Student Responsibility for Achievement of SLOs

Central Questions:

Are students aware of the effort required to achieve the SLOs? To what extent do students exert the effort required to achieve the SLOs?

Guiding Questions:

- A. Have faculty determined in specific terms the effort required to achieve the SLOs?
- B. Do syllabi contain specific requirements for study time?
- C. Do syllabi contain specific requirements for assignment and course grades (A,B,C, etc.or points)?
- D. Do advisers make students aware of the SLOs?
- E. Do advisers and faculty make students aware of the connection between the SLOs and their long-term goals?
- F. How do advisers and faculty make students aware of the time and effort required to achieve the SLOs?
- G. Do students exert the time and effort that should be required to achieve the SLOs? (This could be included in annual student opinion surveys)
- H. If students do not spend the time that faculty expect for achieving the SLOs, what reasons do they give?

6. Student Learning Effectiveness

Central Questions:

To what extent are students achieving the expected knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills stated in the selected Student Learning Outcomes? How do you know (what evidence do you use to draw your conclusions)? You should archive student work samples and other evidence you use to draw your conclusions.

Guiding Questions:

- A. What does your evidence tell you about how well (at what levels – unsatisfactory, novice, competent, exemplary?) your students are achieving the selected student learning outcomes? What are the demographic patterns of student achievement (i.e., which students are learning at what levels)?
- B. Are students learning more effectively in one or more of the areas than in others? What do you think accounts for this? What improvements could you make that might result in better and more consistent learning outcomes in all of the areas examined?
- C. How does your program's advising process contribute to successful learning outcomes?
- D. How do other student support services contribute to your students' success in achieving the SLOs (e.g. Academic Support Center, libraries, Office of Disability Services, etc.)?
- E. What are the program practices/procedures for ongoing use of the evidence of student learning to assess and improve program effectiveness?
- F. Does the faculty take collective responsibility for reviewing attainment of the program learning outcomes and implementing improvements as needed? How is this done? How often?
- G. What changes do you propose for improving student achievement of selected SLOs, and why?

7. Student Satisfaction with Achievement of Student Learning Outcomes

Central Question:

How satisfied are students with the learning they have achieved in your program and with the program overall? What is the program doing well that you plan to continue or to strengthen? What improvements does your evidence suggest, and how will you address these?

How is evidence of student satisfaction with their learning collected and assessed? Are those methods bringing you the data you need to improve the program? If not, what do you plan to do differently?

Guiding Questions:

- A. What evidence are you using and what elements are you examining to determine student satisfaction with both the learning in particular courses and in the program overall?
- B. How satisfied are your program's students with all of these:
 - 1. Overall quality of their education?
 - 2. Ability to participate in program development?
 - 3. Access to information related to student learning outcomes?
 - 4. Congruence of student learning outcomes with students' own goals?
 - 5. Course offerings (number, levels, developmental sequence, options)?
 - 6. Academic and professional advising?
 - 7. Scheduling and availability of the courses?
 - 8. Ability to finish program in a reasonable amount of time?
 - 9. Quality of classroom instruction?
 - 10. Diversity of student body and faculty?
 - 11. Attention to diversity/multicultural issues in the curriculum?
 - 12. Degree and quality of academic support services?

8. Graduates' Success

Central Questions:

How do your graduates demonstrate your program's success? What evidence do you use; how is it collected, and is it sufficient to draw your conclusions? Do you include evidence from employers, graduate schools, licensure exams, other external sources to assess graduates' degree of success? What is your program doing particularly well in helping graduates to be successful, and could this be done even better? How do you plan to use the evidence to improve student learning in the program and success after graduation?

Guiding Questions:

- A. How much do graduates of the program believe that the program has helped them to achieve their personal and professional goals?
- B. To what extent are graduates engaged in relevant and appropriate jobs and/or graduate programs?
- C. What other kinds of achievements do you track or could you track to effectively measure graduates' success?
- D. How long do you track graduates?
- E. Could you add additional methods of determining graduate success to enrich your understanding? What additional resources would make this possible?

9. Proposed Plan for Academic Excellence

Central Questions:

1. What did you learn about your students learning from this year's assessment?
2. What is your plan for building upon your strengths and improving areas that need improvement?
3. On what evidence do you base your conclusions?
4. Does the plan prioritize the most important features that will contribute to improving students learning results?
5. Does it contain concrete steps for improving student learning and methods for evaluating the success of the program?
6. Does it celebrate your successes and suggest ways to publicize them, build upon them, and share this knowledge with students and colleagues?
7. Does the plan include a timeline?
8. Is the plan manageable and realistic? Are the resources adequate (time, labor, skills, institutional support, etc.)?
9. What resources do you need to carry out your plan?