



Office of

# Institutional Effectiveness

## LSU Guidelines for Assessment of Degree Programs and Stand-Alone Certificates

LSU requires all degree programs and stand-alone certificates to adhere to the following guidelines for meeting the SACSCOC compliance requirements for the assessment of student learning outcomes and the improvement of learning based on the results of assessment.

Each academic program must submit a Student Learning Assessment Report (SLAR) on an annual basis and a Program Impact Report (PIR) every two-three years. Programs accomplish the SLAR by identifying the student learning outcomes to be assessed and completing the Assessment Methodology, Findings & Analysis, and the Action Plan (Use of Findings for Improvement) components of the reporting template in Taskstream. The report describes the results of student learning outcomes (SLOs) assessment activities and strategies for seeking improvement. **NOTE: If a degree program or stand-alone certificate offers a fully online equivalent; it is a requirement that the stated SLOs be identical, in addition to comparing the findings within your SLAR, between the two modalities.**

The SLAR template in Taskstream allows programs to document findings per measure assessed. Accordingly, the process of developing a SLAR entails, for each learning outcome assessed, describing the methods, performance targets, results, and improvement strategies to be enacted based on the findings.

All data used to assess student achievement of learning outcomes is maintained within Taskstream by Watermark, the university's system of record for all student learning assessment, strategic planning, and institutional improvement initiatives. All degree programs and stand-alone certificates are enrolled in workspaces in Taskstream. A workspace refers to the data silos where users enter assessment data. Each program's workspace within Taskstream is divided into three main parts: **General Information**, **Standing Requirements** and **Cyclical (Ongoing) Requirements**.

**General Information** is an area that can be used for archiving files, work, or text that you wish to add. The only requirement for this part is that each degree program and stand-alone certificate upload 'as an attachment' the Program Impact Report (PIR) during the years it is due. The PIR allows your degree program or stand-alone certificate 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 over the past few years. Upcoming PIR due dates: November 15, 2019 (covering SLAR cycles 16-17, 17-18, 18-19) and November 15, 2021 (covering cycles 18-19, 19-20, and 2021). For questions regarding PIR, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

### **Standing Requirements**

Standing Requirements are those core elements of your program that remain relatively static over time; they are not expected to change from year to year. These include *Program Mission, Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Map, and Assessment Plan*.

**Program Mission:** A concise statement that defines the purpose of the program and includes general values and guiding principles. Each program is expected to formulate a mission statement. Student Learning outcomes derive from a program's mission.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Statements that describe the measurable and/or observable knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of a degree program. At minimum, all degree programs and stand-alone certificates must articulate at least three student learning outcomes.

**Curriculum Map:** A visual representation of the structure of the curriculum, with a listing of expected student learning outcomes on one axis and a program's courses on the other. Ideally, each course should have a set of learning objectives that align with the degree program level SLOs. Mapping provides clarity regarding where specific outcomes are addressed and developed across the curriculum.

**Assessment Plan:** Each degree program and stand-alone certificate is expected to develop and implement an assessment plan. 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 learning outcomes over a three-year cycle.

### **Cyclical Requirements**

Cyclical Requirements are those elements of your program that change from year to year and appear under the heading "Assessment Cycle." These include *Assessment Methodology, Findings & Analysis, Action Plan (Use of Findings for Improvement), and Follow-Up Report (optional)*.

**Assessment Methodology:** *The direct and indirect measures used to assess student achievement of learning outcomes.* Multiple measures per outcome are desirable. The university requires, at a minimum, at least one direct measure per outcome. The Assessment Methodology component in the template copies over the learning outcomes articulated under the Standing Requirements category. Taskstream provides the option to "Copy Existing Plan as a Starting Point" or "Create a New Plan." Selecting the "Copy Existing Plan" option copies over the outcomes and measures implemented during the previous cycle. You can then make changes to the template as appropriate. Selecting the "Create New Plan" option allows you to select a subset of the outcomes to be assessed during the given cycle and to input the corresponding measures. In each case, carefully describe the measures for each outcome to be assessed along with performance targets. Each measure under the Assessment Methodology tab includes the following fields: Measure Title, Measure Type, Measure Level, Details/Description, Acceptable Target, Ideal Target, Implementation Plan (timeline), Key/Responsible Personnel, and supporting attachments.

**Findings & Analysis:** *The results of assessment activities.* These include the data generated from implementation of assessment methods and the narrative interpretation of the data with respect to what they suggest about the degree of student learning. Assessment results should be analyzed and compared to performance targets. The following questions should inform the narrative interpretation of the data: Have targets been achieved? How do the results compare over time? 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. The data and interpretation constitute substantiating evidence for the Action Plan you will describe and implement for the purpose of improving student achievement of a given outcome. Keep in mind that assessment results and findings are reported per measure. Accordingly, each Measure, under the Findings & Analysis tab, includes the following fields: Summary of Findings, Results of Target Achievement, Analysis of Findings (Interpretation), and supporting attachments. Taskstream provides the option to attach supporting documentation after findings for the applicable measure have been submitted. Lastly, the Findings & Analysis component of the template provides space to enter Overall Recommendations (for all measures assessed). \*Remember, if a degree program or stand-alone certificate is offered fully online, please compare the findings.

**Action Plan (Use of Findings for Improvement):** *The specific steps to be taken, in response to assessment findings, to improve student learning.* The Action Plan links your assessment results with improvement actions. In that regard, an Action Plan should be developed for each outcome in which a need for improvement was identified in the assessment findings. There are several problems that assessment findings might 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. This information is to be provided in the Action Plan template in Taskstream. Elements of the Action Plan include Action Item Title, Action Details, Timeline, Key/Responsible Personnel, Budget Needs (optional), and supporting attachments.

**Follow-Up Report (Optional):** *Provides periodic status updates on the ongoing improvement actions described in the Action Plan.* Note that the Follow-Up Report is organized by Actions copied over from the Action Plan. For example, if assessment results lead to revisions of course content, the Follow-Up Report provides a summary of the progress related to this improvement action. This information can be as basic as a statement that these action steps were implemented at a certain point in time and as significant as a statement of what the data show upon a re-implementation of the assessment method after a reasonable period of time. To allow time for implementation of planned changes (described in the Action Plan), the Follow-Up Report could be completed a year after the submission of the SLAR. For example, Follow-Up Reports for the 2017-2018 cycle could be entered September 30, 2019. In cases where planned changes are implemented over a period of multiple years, the Follow-Up Report documents the current status of an ongoing action, particularly with respect to whether or not the action seems to have led to an improvement in student learning. Elements, for each action, of the Follow-Up

Report include Current Status, Next Steps, and supporting attachments. Lastly, the Follow-Up Report component of the template provides space to enter a Summary Status and a Summary of Next Steps (for all actions).

Note that some elements of the Assessment Cycle must be repeated annually as consistent with the program assessment plan. The deadline to complete all requirements of the assessment cycle for the prior academic year is **September 30**.

### Critical Points in the Student Learning Assessment Reporting Process

DUE DATE	REQUIREMENTS
<b>May 31</b>	<p align="center"><b>Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report – Step 1</b></p> <p>Target completion date for degree program SLOs, Assessment Methodology, and Findings components of the SLAR in Taskstream; this includes the uploading of data collection/files generated from assessment for fall and spring semesters.</p>
<b>September 30</b>	<p align="center"><b>Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report – Step 2</b></p> <p>Finalize the SLAR by completing the Analysis (Interpretation) and Action Plan (Use of Findings for Improvement) components. This is the final date to have all reporting requirements completed in Taskstream (Program Mission, SLOs, Assessment Methodology, Findings &amp; Analysis, and Action Plan).</p>
<b>November 15</b>	<p align="center"><b>Program Impact Report – Step 3</b></p> <p>Submit a student learning Program Impact Report (PIR) covering three years' worth of SLAR Information.</p> <p>Upcoming: 2019 PIR will cover SLAR cycles from 16-17, 17-18, and 18-19.</p>
<b>November/March</b>	<p align="center"><b>URAC Review of Student Learning Outcomes Reports</b></p> <p>Occurring every November and March the University Assessment Review Council will review selected SLARs and provide feedback to programs.</p>

# LSU Student Learning Assessment Reporting Process

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORTING (SLAR) PROCESS

### 1 Due May 31

Target completion date for degree program SLOs, Assessment Methodology, and Findings components of the SLAR in Taskstream; this includes the uploading of data collection/files generated from assessment for fall and spring semesters.

### 2 Due September 30

Finalize the SLAR by completing the Analysis (Interpretation) and Action Plan (Use of Findings for Improvement) components. This is the final date to have all reporting requirements completed in Taskstream (Program Mission, SLOs, Assessment Methodology, Findings & Analysis, and Action Plan).

### 3 November 15

Submit a student learning Program Impact Report (PIR) covering three years' worth of SLAR Information.

Upcoming: 2019 PIR will cover SLAR cycles from 16-17, 17-18, and 18-19.

### 4 November / March

Occurring every November and March the University Assessment Review Council will review selected SLARs and provide feedback to programs.

## SAMPLE ASSESSMENT PLAN

### Three-Year Assessment Cycle

College:

Program:

Contact Person for the Assessment Plan:

Date:

Mission Statement:

**Student Learning Outcomes**

SLO 1:

SLO 2:

SLO 3:

SLO 4:

Program Learning Outcomes	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Assessment Measures
Outcome 1	X			
Outcome 2			X	
Outcome 3		X		
Outcome 3	X			
Outcome 4		X		
Outcome 5			X	
Outcome 6	X			

## SAMPLE CURRICULUM MAP

### Courses and Activities Mapped to Degree Program

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5	Outcome 6
<b>Courses and Learning Activities</b>						
COUR 1001 Course Title	I			M		M
COUR 2000 Course Title		I		M		M
COUR 3040 Course Title	I		I	R		R
COUR 4015 Course Title				R	R	I
<b>Legend:</b>	I	Introduced	R	Reinforced	M	Mastered

created with  taskstream

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

### Direct Versus Indirect Measures

Measures	Description	Examples
<b>DIRECT</b>	<p>Prompt students to represent or demonstrate their learning or produce work</p> <p><b><i>NOTE: Direct measures assess student performance and provide the most accurate assessment of student learning.</i></b></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><b><i>NOTE: Indirect methods alone do not provide adequate information about student learning outcomes. They must be supplemented with direct measures.</i></b></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>

### Descriptions of Direct Assessment Methods

Assessment Method	Description
<b>Capstone Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culminating research projects that provide information about how students integrate, synthesize and transfer learning</li> <li>• Assess competence in several areas</li> <li>• May be independent or collaborative</li> <li>• Focus on higher order thinking</li> <li>• Are useful for program-level assessment</li> <li>• Examples: exams, integrative papers, projects, oral reports, performances</li> <li>• Typically disciplined based and may be designated as a "senior seminar"</li> <li>• Scoring Method: Pre-Specified rubrics</li> </ul>
<b>Course-Embedded Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment procedures that are embedded into a course's curriculum</li> <li>• May include test items or projects</li> <li>• May be take-home or in-class</li> <li>• Usually locally developed</li> <li>• Can be used to assess discipline-specific knowledge</li> <li>• Scoring methods: Raw scores or pre-specified rubrics</li> </ul>



Assessment Method	Description
<b>Performance Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use student activities to assess skills and knowledge</li> <li>• Assess what students can demonstrate or produce</li> <li>• Allow for the evaluation of both process and product</li> <li>• Focus on higher order thinking</li> <li>• Examples: Essay tests, artistic productions, experiments, projects, oral presentations, papers, essays, reflection papers, lab reports.</li> <li>• Scoring Methods: Pre-Specified rubrics</li> </ul>
<b>Portfolio Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of student work over time that is used to demonstrate growth and achievement</li> <li>• Usually allows student to self-reflect on incorporated work</li> <li>• May include written assignments, works of art, collection of projects, programs, exams, computational exercises, video or other electric media, etc.</li> <li>• Focus on higher-order thinking</li> <li>• Scoring Methods: Pre-Specified rubrics</li> </ul>
<b>Standardized Instruments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruments developed outside the institution with standardized administration and scoring procedures and frequently with time restrictions</li> <li>• Psychometrically tested based on norming group</li> <li>• Sometimes allow for national comparisons</li> <li>• Caution: Content may not link to local curriculum and so may not pinpoint where to improve; normative comparisons may be inappropriate; do not allow for examination of processes of learning;</li> <li>• Scoring Methods: Answer key, scored by testing company</li> </ul>
<b>Localized Instruments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruments within the university usually developed within the department for internal use only</li> <li>• Content may be tailored to match outcomes exactly</li> <li>• Caution: Not as psychometrically sound as standardized instrument unless validated internally</li> <li>• Scoring Methods: Answer key, scored internally</li> </ul>

**Source Adapted from:** Stanford University.

Available at [Stanford University's website.](#)