# SECTION THREE:
ASSSESSMENT PLANNING &IMPLEMENTATION (INSTRUCTION)

OVERVIEW

This section describes Skyline College's approach to instructional student learning outcomes assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels. You will learn about activities and assignments that measure student learning which can be applied at each of those levels. Special emphasis is given to developing a three-year assessment calendar, and using Tracdat/Improve to create an assessment plan, record your results and action plans, and generate assessment reports.
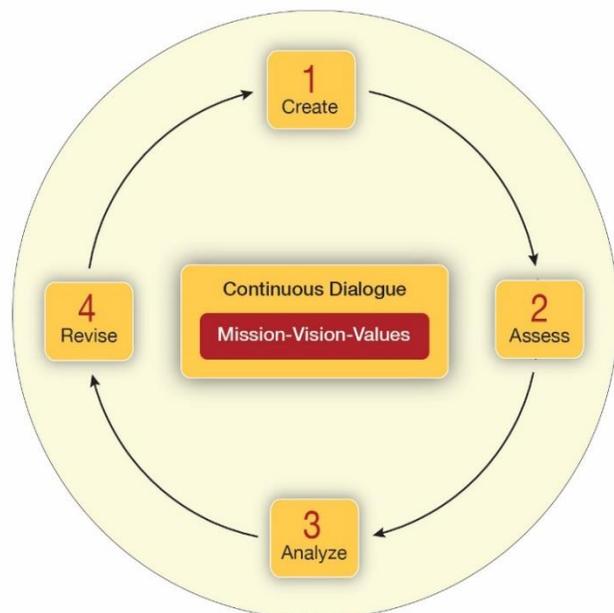
WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

By assessment we mean "The ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within our institutional system, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (Angelo, AAHE Bulletin, November 1995, p.7). To achieve these goals, assessment must be an ongoing, cyclical process requiring planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring on a minimum of four levels: course, instructional program, student services program, and institutional. For a more extensive explanation of Skyline College's guiding principles of assessment, see Appendix O.

WHO WILL DO ASSESSMENT?

Skyline College's faculty and staff, in consultation with the entire college community, will create and design assessment activities and identify the core knowledge, skills, and attitudinal dispositions that students need to master. The faculty and staff will likewise develop benchmarks by which student progress can be evaluated. These will be ongoing processes, open to modification and improvement.

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS THAT MEASURE STUDENT LEARNING

Student learning can be measured directly or indirectly. Balanced assessment can include both direct and indirect measures, depending on capacity.

- Direct measures are methods of collecting information about student learning that require students to directly display their knowledge, skills, and/or abilities. Direct measures usually employ a systematic scoring system, such as a rubric or checklist.

- Indirect measures are methods of collecting information about student learning that ask students to reflect on their learning rather than demonstrate it. Indirect measures often involve collecting opinions and perceptions from surveys and/or focus groups, as well as gathering pertinent statistics from department or college records.

Direct measures require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes whereas indirect

measures imply learning but do not directly indicate what the student actually learned. As such, direct measures provide insight about actual student learning. However, a direct measure is only as good as the assessment method used to measure it. First, the work that is evaluated should enable students to demonstrate the competencies expressed in the outcomes. And secondly, criteria by which the student work will be evaluated should be articulated and ideally arrived at by consensus. A rubric best captures these elements.

Below is a table that provides samples of direct and indirect methods of assessment often used at the course level and possible assessment methods. Both are data entry fields required in Tracdat/ Improve.

SAMPLES OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT ASSESSMENT METHODS
AT THE COURSE LEVEL

Direct or Indirect	Assessment Method Category (i.e. major assignment or activity)	Possible Assessment Method (i.e. scoring system applied to the major assignment or activity)
D	Essay/ Research Paper	3 or 4 Point Analytic Rubric
D	Presentation or Debate	3 or 4 Point Analytic Rubric
D	Project	3 or 4 Point Analytic Rubric
D	Performance	4 Point Holistic Rubric
I	Self-Reflective Survey	3+ items per SLO with a 5 point Likert Scale
D/I	Group-work	Observation of group dynamics using a 3 Point Holistic Rubric or 10 point Checklist
I	Learning Center or Lab Hours	Total Number of Hours Attended in a Semester
D	Portfolio	3 or 4 Point Holistic Rubric

D	Major Homework Assignment	8 Point Checklist
D	Quiz/Exam/Final	3 questions per SLO and/or short essay/ case study analysis
I	Focus Groups	Extract recurring themes that emerge from responses
D or I	Outside-of-class activity	5 Point Checklist

In the appendix to this section, you'll find two additional tables. The first table highlights the pros and cons of a variety of direct and indirect measures that can be used at one or more levels (Appendix G). The second table provides a list of possible choices of direct and indirect measures of student learning at the course, program, student services, and institutional levels (Appendix H). These tables suggest a wide variety of student activities and assignments but are not exhaustive lists.

ASSESSING AT THE COURSE LEVEL

1) CREATING A THREE-YEAR ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

All active courses should be assessed at regular intervals. Each instructional department should arrange all active courses on a three-year assessment cycle using the template on the SLOAC website. In essence, 1/3 of all departmental courses should be assessed each year. Your dean will work with you to identify courses that aren't offered every semester, as well as courses you may want to bank or delete. Your three-year calendar should be submitted to participating department faculty members, your Dean, and the Office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness. The schedule will be posted on the SLOAC website for easy accessibility.

Please note that the template includes a schedule of ISLO assessment in the bottom row. If one of your courses maps up to a given ISLO, schedule its assessment the same semester as the ISLO assessment since you may be asked to participate in its assessment. Thus in one fell swoop, you'll be able to concurrently conduct a course level and ISLO assessment.

2) USING TRACDAT/IMPROVE TO DEVELOP A COURSE LEVEL ASSESSMENT PLAN AND DOCUMENT RESULTS

Now that you have created a three-year assessment calendar and established SLOs for all active courses, you'll need to create an assessment plan for each course. An assessment plan lists your SLOs and identifies your assessment methods, scoring methods, and minimum acceptable performance for each SLO. Ideally the student work that is assessed counts toward the final grade and aligns with one of more of the SLOs. For more efficient assessment, you may want to identify, revise or create a major assignment that enables you to assess all of the SLOs; this approach is recommended but not required.

Your assessment plan is created by entering information in an online platform called Tracdat/Improve. Tracdat/Improve was purchased by the District in 2010 and serves as the central repository for all the assessment plans and assessment results. It is designed to facilitate and manage all the phases of the assessment cycle. Each department has <u>a representative specially trained on Tracdat/Improve</u> who can help you create your assessment plan. You'll also find a link to a Tracdat/Improve user guides on the Skyline College SLOAC website.

Shown below are the six core elements of a course level assessment plan that you'll be asked to complete on Tracdat/Improve. Answering these core questions in advance will help you move through the process of creating an assessment plan:

1. **Course Outcome Name**

    * a short-hand title for the student learning outcome

2. **Course Outcome**

    * what the student is expected to do and/or know at the end of the course

3. **Assessment Method Category**

    * the type of major assignment or activity that will be used for assessment (e.g. essay, exam, performance, portfolio, presentation, etc.)

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4. **Assessment Method**

> * a description of the assignment or activity as well as the scoring method that will be applied and used to gather data (e.g. a rubric, check list, Likert scale, etc.)-- Only a brief description fits directly in Tracdat/Improve, but any details, a copy of the assignment or rubric as the students would see it, may be loaded into the document repository. Uploaded documents will be available as hyperlinks on the assessment report.
>
> If using an exam or survey, identify which questions apply to which SLOs. Similarly, if you are using a rubric, indicate which parts of the rubric apply to which SLOs.
>
> If sampling, determine procedures in advance to ensure a sufficient random sample.
>
> EXAMPLE:
>
> *Final essay scored with analytic rubric, specifically in the areas of critical thinking and development.*

5. **Success Criterion**

> * the benchmark level of student achievement that is desired-- What are the performance standards that determine whether or not a student has achieved a given level of knowledge or skill proficiency. How do you know when a student has achieved the knowledge, skill, or attitude the SLO seeks to impart?
>
> These questions can be addressed by writing a performance criteria statement that specifies a minimum score expected or accepted for the intended SLO. Note that this statement may specify proficiency levels for the individual student (for grading purposes) as well as for the assessment sample as a whole.
>
> EXAMPLES:
>
> *Using a five point analytic rubric, at least 75% of students will earn a minimum of 20 points on the final essay.*
>
> *Using a four point analytic rubric, the class will average 2.5 or greater in each category.*

Using a four point analytic rubric, at least 75% of students will score at least "adequate" on the thesis, organization, development, and grammar parts of the rubric.

At least 70% of the class will correctly answer the three common multiple choice questions that are embedded in every section's final exam.

6. **Schedule (optional)**

    * which semester and year this course will be assessed

The semester before the scheduled assessment, you may want to run a report that compiles all this information into a single assessment plan to distribute to colleagues teaching different sections of the course. Your colleagues will be able to plan their courses accordingly, embedding assessment assignments into their courses so that they also can be used for grading purposes.

With your assessment plan written and stored on Tracdat/Improve, you are now ready to apply your assessments in the classroom, gather the results, and record them on Tracdat/Improve.   Your department Tracdat/Improve representative can help you record your results.

3) COMPLETING AN ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Drafting SLOs and assessing are only the beginning; the substance in assessing lies primarily in analyzing the data and crafting an action plan, should students fall below the benchmark established in the success criteria.

Thus, to complete the assessment cycle, first analyze the data with your colleagues, considering the following questions.

- In which areas did students excel?
- What issues and needs were revealed?
- How do the results compare to any baseline or benchmark data previously collected?
- What additional insights can you gain from the results?
- Did the assessment work, and if not, what needs to be revised?

See Appendix J for tips on configuring and analyzing assessment data for rubrics, pre/post tests, surveys, and focus groups. This data should be distributed to faculty for discussions during departmental meetings. The analysis should be entered in to Tracdat/ Improve; the data also can be uploaded and configured in to a four-column report for future reference.

Based on your analysis of the assessment results, craft an "action plan" with your colleagues: what changes to pedagogy or assessment are warranted, and/or what additional resources are needed to implement these changes and others. See Appendix I for a useful rubric to assess your assessment cycle.

An effective action plan should:

- Address assessment results;
  - specific actions plans are connected to specific SLOs and assessment results
- Provide specifics so that it is clear what will take place;
  - a plan includes who, what, when & how
- Inform the next cycle of assessment;
  - your next assessment might measure the effectiveness of your action plan to impact student learning

See Appendix K for action plan examples.

Tracdat/Improve offers action plan options, though the list is hardly exhaustive. Among the possibilities are:

- Use new or revised teaching methods;
- Engage in professional development/ consult with the CTTL;
- Reconfigure student support service;
- Conduct further assessment;
- Develop new evaluation/ assessment methods;
- Request purchase of new equipment or supplies;
- Make staffing changes;
- Revise course sequence or prerequisites;
- Review course outline of record or syllabus.

Any proposed changes in assessment, pedagogy, or plans to request additional resources should be recorded on Tracdat/Improve under "Action Plan," and the annual program planning document or the comprehensive program review.

The outcomes assessment model is based on continuous dialogue among faculty to ensure a systematic, ongoing cycle of assessment. One stage of the cycle is only "complete" after the results are documented, analyzed, and potential changes are discussed, recorded, and followed up on. The next stage then begins to ensure an ongoing process of strengthening student learning. Ideally assessments will be repeated to compare one year's results to another, but a completely different assessment method may be used if it's in need of improvement.

4) USING TRACDAT/IMPROVE TO GENERATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS REPORTS

Tracdat/Improve has the ability to generate a variety of reports, including assessment results reports for a particular course, several courses, or an entire department. (Departments are called "Units" on Tracdat/Improve.) These reports display SLOs along with a summary of assessments results and any proposed action plans. Having a summary view of assessment results is extremely useful for record keeping, comparing results over time, and facilitating discussion with your colleagues. Complete directions for running reports can be found on the College SLOAC Tracdat/Improve website.

ASSESSING AT THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM LEVEL

All degree and certificate bearing academic programs at Skyline College have established Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs), which are recorded on Tracdat/Improve and published in the College Catalog and on the departmental website. PSLOs are statements (typically four or fewer) that summarize the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes that a student gains after completing the program. PSLOs can be assessed multiple ways, but the most common at Skyline College is by analyzing course level assessment result patterns.

To examine how course level SLOs help students fulfill the PSLOs, align and then apply course level assessment data to the PSLOs. This process is known as "rolling up" course level assessment to program level assessment. For this "rolling up" to happen, faculty and staff need to have "mapped" course level SLOs to PSLOs on Tracdat/Improve. This mapping identifies which course level SLOs are central for students to achieve the PSLOs. Reports can be run with assessment results from all course SLOs that map up to the PSLOs.

Filters can be used to narrow the focus, decreasing the length of the report. For example, when a concerted effort was taken to map curriculum to indicate in which courses PSLOs are "introduced," provided opportunities to "practice," or demonstrate "mastery," then departmental faculty may opt to narrow the focus to a few courses in which they can ascertain how students fare in introductory versus higher level courses in which they are expected to demonstrate mastery. Having a common rubric to assess student work in these courses can provide a common point of comparison. (For more information on curriculum mapping, see Section Two.)

Programs have the option of conducting other types of program level assessment instead of, or in addition to, the rolling up process. Among the options, programs may wish to administer an exit survey; facilitate a focus group with graduates or certificate recipients; evaluate a culminating experience such as a capstone project, performance, or portfolio; tabulate the percentage of students who pass their boards/ industry certifications; tabulate the percentage of students who are placed in the field for which they received a degree/certificate, etc.

After faculty analyze and discuss the results, important findings and any needed action plans are recorded on Tracdat/Improve, thus completing the PSLO assessment cycle. If analyzing course level assessment results that roll up to the PSLO, analysis should center on any patterns that emerge regarding how well the course curriculum contributes to student success at the program level. Submit this PSLO report as an attachment to the Comprehensive Program Review.

For more examples of program level assessment methods, consult Appendix H.

ASSESSING AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT
LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graphic designed by Skyline College student Livius Darmawan

Skyline College shaped, adopted, and published in the College Catalog five ISLOs, which are derived from the AA/AS degree requirements: Citizenship, Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Information Literacy, and Lifelong Wellness.

The ISLOs are assessed with a direct and indirect measure. The direct measure involves the use of a common rubric, which enables faculty to have a common language and criteria around assessment. Each of the ISLOs is scheduled to be assessed on a given semester, with one to two per academic year, until each of the five is assessed by faculty across the disciplines. Select faculty whose courses map up to the ISLO that is scheduled to be assessed that semester use the common rubric to evaluate students' work within their disciplinary framework. The data resulting from the assessment is then analyzed and discussed by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and departments as they complete their program review. A campus-wide forum is also held on an annual basis to discuss ISLO assessment results.

The indirect measure is through the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The CCSSE is a tool used to measure how students perform on standards relative to student engagement. The data resulting from this assessment is analyzed and discussed by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and various participatory governance committees.