**Notes about Assessment Measures, Targets, and Use of Results**

Assessment is not about justifying a program or proving evidence that students are meeting baseline learning expectations. Assessment is meant to be a process of seeking improvement and adapting to the changing needs of our students as well as other internal or external factors. Assessment should help programs coordinate a more unified approach to support student learning across courses and years within a major or minor rather than in individual courses.

Direct assessment and indirect assessment measures provide supporting information to be used along with other observations to help programs identify changes likely to improve student success. Although measures also provide evidence of student learning, this is seen as secondary by SACS. SACS knows it is possible to design SLOs, measures, and targets that show students continually meet learning goals and targets while many students struggle and programs stagnate or fragment. This is why SACS expectations for assessment are focused on programs demonstrating they are continually seeking improvement in student learning at the program level.

SACS dictates that each SLO have two measures. This is because measuring student learning is innately challenging. Multiple measurements are used to provide different ways of knowing the levels of our student attainment and to identify possible curricular changes to seek improvement in student learning. This also allows us to revisit SLOs after a change and measure potential improvement in student learning.

Measures can be **direct** or **indirect.**  All SLOs should have at least one direct measure.

**Direct measures** are based on samples of student work that demonstrate student knowledge, skill, or ability. Generally, this work should come from upper-level coursework and/or senior capstone experiences. Although student artifacts are limited snap-shots of student learning, they are still useful in building an understanding of how the program is helping students reach the stated program learning goals and in suggesting areas that could benefit from program-level coordination.   
*Direct measures use experts to determine the level of student success*.  
  
Direct measures of student work could include:

* Papers, essays, or reports
  + A rubric targeted to the SLO should be used rather than an overall assignment grade if the assignment includes “points” for things other than the SLO. This rubric could be part of assigning the overall grade.
* A subset of targeted exam questions
* Standardized exams
* Presentations, exhibits, or performances

**Indirect measures** ask students to reflect on their knowledge, skill, or ability concerning the learning outcome. Indirect measures often also request students make suggestions on how academic instruction, delivery, or support could be improved. Indirect measures should ask students to rate their attainment in the SLO rather than only suggesting improvements.   
*Indirect measures recognize students are the experiencers of our programs and can be valuable partners in assessing the program.*  
Indirect measures could include:

* Senior exit interviews
* Surveys (out-of-class, in-class, attached to an exam, etc.)
* Focus groups

**Targets** are clear goals for student success. They should include a stated percentage of students expected to meet a clear and appropriate level of attainment. Both direct and indirect measures should be designed such that a clear target can be written.

Generally, these include the following form as part of the target:

* X% of students will earn a Y out of Z.

Targets help drive programmatic improvement.

1. Fosters discussion within programs to coordinate priorities for student instruction and development.
2. Allows for comparison of results to the target, motivating change when targets are not met.
3. Provides a tool to see if previous changes are having a positive effect on student learning.

**Underwater Basket Weaving - SLO and Measure Examples:**  
*SLO: Students can identify classical forms of underwater basket weaving.*

*Example Direct Measures with Targets*

* Four questions on the final for the capstone course ask students to identify forms.
  + 80% of students should earn a 7/10 or higher on these questions
* A final paper reviewing a movie that features underwater basket weaving is rubric-assessed with 40 points associated with proper identification of styles present in the movie.
  + 70% of students should earn a 30 out of 40 using the rubric for this part of the paper.   
    [rubric attached]
* In the final week of class, students are shown ten classical forms of basket weaving as a final in-class quiz and asked to identify them.
  + 75% of students should be able to identify 8/10 of the classic forms.

*Example Indirect Measure with Targets*

* As part of the last day of class, students fill out a survey that asks them to self-rate their ability to identify classical forms of basket weaving on a four-point scale (1-Not confident, 2- somewhat confident, 3-Very confident, 4-Extremely confident).
  + 75% of students should rate themselves a 3 out of 4 or higher.
* As part of a senior exit interview, students will be asked to self-rate their ability to identify classical forms of basket weaving on a four-point scale (1-Not confident, 2- somewhat confident, 3-Very confident, 4-Extremely confident).
  + 75% of students should rate themselves a 3 out of 4 or higher.
* The department will invite a sampling of majors and minors to attend a focus group. During the focus group, students will be asked to give feedback on instruction related to identifying classical forms of basket weaving and self-rate their ability to identify classical forms of basket weaving on a four-point scale (1-Not confident, 2- somewhat confident, 3-Very confident, 4-Extremely confident).
  + Target: 75% of students will self-rate at a 3 or higher. Additional comments will be recorded and discussed by the department.

**Notes of Results, Use of Results, and Closing the Loop.**

The program should have a plan for when results are collected, who analyzes and interprets them, and when the program/department will discuss them.

The **Results** section records the results and identifies any trends in the data. The results section should state whether the targets are not met, partially met, or met.

Some useful ways to report results

* + **Number/percent of students reaching target**
  + Average student result
  + Average result of students reaching target
  + Average result of students missing target
  + Number/percent of students significantly missing target
  + Potential disaggregated results
  + Summarized student comments and/or quotes

Departments should meet to discuss the results at the end of the year or in the first month of the next year.

The goal of the discussion should be to draft a **Use of Results** or **Closing the Loop** section.

After an **initial assessment,** the program should **use the results**.

* Identify an area of potential improvement informed by the results
  + Linked to the SLO measured
  + Could be for general students or targeted to a sub-population in need
* Plan a change to seek improvement in student success at the program level  
  Examples:
  + altered course requirements or options for the major/minor, addition or alteration of capstone course/experience, changes in homework, a new textbook, more active learning, additional papers or oral presentations, additional readings, reflection assignment on how the material in class A impacts understanding of class B, etc.

After a **follow-up assessment,** the program will **close the loop** by determining if the change was meaningful

* Compare both direct and indirect measures from initial and follow-up assessments
* Conclude if the evidence *does not support, partially supports*, or *strongly supports* an increase in student success after the change
* Determine if the change should continue, stop, or be revised.

**Key Accreditation Points**

* SACS knows we could design SLOs, measures, and targets that we hit every time. This is why that part of the assessment is not strongly considered.
* It is also not required that we prove that the changes are all positive, meaningful, and impactful to students.
* What is important is that they see clear evidence that we are seeking to improve our programs for our students.

**Notes of Buildings an Assessment Plan**

The goal of developing a multi-year assessment plan is to make the assessment process more intentional and meaningful. Templates for an assessment plan are at the end of this document.

* Assessment plans will identify when each SLO is measured.
* Plans will identify each measure used, what coursework could be used as an artifact or survey source, and when the measure is expected to be collected (Fall or Spring).
* Each SLO will be measured and analyzed twice across the five years.
  + An initial measurement will provide an opportunity to discuss and identify possible improvements.
  + A follow-up measurement will be used to determine if there is evidence the change is beneficial.

The time between the initial and follow-up measurements allows for the implementation of the change and the time for the change to alter student learning.

* + - When desired this could also allow measurements to continue each year, yielding additional data. This may be beneficial in some situations or for some programs.
    - Data would be collected but only analyzed when the follow-up measure is scheduled.
* Many programs will only collect and interpret two SLOs per year.
* Stand-alone minors with low enrollment may elect to assess only three of your five SLOs in the five-year cycle.
  + This will allow the collection of more data to suggest more meaningful improvements to the program.
    - These programs would submit their assessment plan such that years 1-2 would collect data for all three SLOs.
    - All three SLOs would be analyzed and improvements identified after year 2.
    - Years 3-5 would allow for the collection of measurements for all three SLOs to look for evidence of improvement.
    - After year five, these data would be analyzed to determine if there is evidence these changes were effective and to suggest any additional changes.
* Departments with multiple related programs can collect and interpret data for shared SLOs together to improve efficiency and reduce duplication of work.
  + A tentative revised assessment report form is available for departments wishing to submit a single combined assessment report. The IE committee seeks feedback on the format and usability of this form.
  + These report forms will be used after FY23-24, not for the reports due in F23 for this past year’s assessment cycle.