Assessment at LMC: A Quick and Dirty Guide to Assessing your Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes

All About CSLOs

CSLOs, or Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes, are descriptive statements of what a student should learn as a result of participating in a course. CSLO assessment can provide insight into how well students are learning material and what teaching practices are best serving our students’ learning. CSLOs can be found in the Program Review Submission Tool (PRST) and in the Course Outline of Record (COOR). Current COORs can be found on the P Drive. The P Drive can be accessed from your campus computer or remotely using http://remote.losmedanos.edu. Log in with your Insite user name and password.

CSLOs are assessed once every 5 years at Los Medanos College in order to improve instruction and student support services. Courses must assess all CSLOs at least once in the 5-year assessment cycle; the timing is determined by which cohort the course is assigned to. Cohort and timing information can be found in the PRST (see Step 5 below for instructions on signing into the PRST).

For more information on assessment background and timing at Los Medanos College, see The Teaching and Learning Committee’s documents and resources: http://www.losmedanos.edu/intra-out/tlp/resources.asp

How to Assess Your CSLOs

Step 1: Identify how you will assess each of your CSLOs.

The assessment tool you choose depends on the CSLO you are assessing. To what extent will the assessment tool you use offer authentic and meaningful data about the desired outcome?

Below are some examples of assessment tools that may be used to directly and/or indirectly monitor achievement of a particular outcome. Pairing a direct with an indirect tool will give you a deeper look into student learning.

Direct Assessment of Student Work

- Two-tiered questions: Multiple choice + rationale for choice
- Multiple response: Select one or more responses
- Essays
- Comic with prompt
- Concept maps
- Drawings/diagrams
- Article analysis
- Term papers
- Oral presentations
- Collages/portfolios

Indirect Assessment of Student Work

- Lab reports
- Case studies
- Debates
- Performances/demonstrations
- Surveys: Perception or satisfaction
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Reflective writing

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Step 2: Plan and administer the assessment.

Decide when you will administer the assessment and how you will frame the assessment. Encouraging students to embrace and overcome challenges, providing opportunities for self-affirmation, and outlining clear expectations will enhance the effectiveness and equitable nature of the assessment.

Step 3: Analyze your results.

Now that you have data on your students’ learning, how will you analyze the data? Talk with other instructors who are participating in the assessment with you, if applicable, to get on the same page. Decide on benchmarks. Which level of work falls below expectations? Which meets expectations? Which exceeds expectations?

Below are examples of how you might systematically analyze your data:

- Rubrics – Outline performance criteria and levels of achievement/proficiency
- Pile sorting – Sort student work into piles based on prevalence of concept/term or level of achievement

Step 4: Discuss your results with your course team (or other thought group).

What do your results tell you? What trends do you see? What questions do you wonder about as you look at your data? Generate findings, discuss trends, and record highlights of the discussion. How will the results of this assessment be used to improve student learning in the course? What is your plan of action? Craft action items for teaching this concept or framing the assessment task differently next time.

If you are the only person teaching a section of this course and participating in CSLO assessment, consider using part of a department meeting or another venue to meet with instructors who teach similar courses in order to share and discuss your results. For instance, in English, literature analysis course instructors might share their CSLO findings with one another, workshop solutions, and devise an action plan together. If you have questions about whom you might collaborate with, check with your dean.

Step 5: Report your results.

Using the assessment reporting template (found on the TLC website under Documents and Resources), document your CSLOs, assessment methods, major findings, discussion highlights, and action items. You do not have to use the provided assessment template for reporting purposes; you may use another of your choosing. For example, a written narrative report integrating the required information or a chart are both acceptable formats, as long as your report includes the required elements: PSLOs assessed, a description of your assessment method/tool, criteria for “High Proficiency” and “Meets Proficiency,” the number of students at each proficiency level, major findings from the assessment, and an improvement plan, if needed, based on these findings.

Once you have prepared your report, submit your completed form to the PRST (Program Review Submission Tool) Data Repository in the year of your assessment cohort (http://www.losmedanos.edu/planning/programreview.asp). Let your chair or dean know if you cannot access the PRST. To upload your report:

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1. Log into the PRST.
2. Choose the appropriate categories from the drop-down menus for your course and cohort year. For instance, “Instructional,” “Physical Education,” and “2013-2014.”
3. Click on “Assessment” on the left-hand menu and make sure the “Course” tab is selected on your main screen.
4. Click on the up arrow next to the appropriate course to upload your report.
5. Make sure after you upload that the report shows up in the Data Repository. You can toggle to this screen by clicking on “Data Repository” on left-hand side of page and check for your recently uploaded file under “File Explorer.”
6. Notify your dean once you have successfully submitted your report.

See below screen shots for visual instructions.
Step 6: Revise your CSLOs.

Now that these findings are fresh in your mind, revise your CSLOs with your team. To what extent do these CSLOs still reflect what you wish students to learn in your course? How might you design assignments that prepare students for successful achievement of your CSLOs?

Step 7: Revise your COOR.

Incorporate your CSLO revisions to your COOR (Course Outline of Record) and submit your revised COOR to Curriculum Committee.

Step 8: Congratulate yourself!

Now, give yourself a big pat on the back! Reflecting on teaching and learning is not easy, yet provides such a valuable opportunity to think deeply about how to best serve our students.