
Building Common Ground



Module Description

In this module we have supporting materials that can help us find common ground among our varied experience with the SLO process. Some of you may have been in charge of managing the SLO process at Foothill or another campus. Others may have been the one to enter information in Trac Dat and write reports about SLOs for your division. A few of you are new to teaching and are ready to expand your knowledge of how Student Learning Outcomes are crafted, modified, assessed and used as a tool for teaching and learning.

As we move forward with these short modules, we ask that you are both generous with your institutional knowledge as you engage with conversations in your pod and open to moving in a new and more collaborative direction. We all want this new SLO process to be effective and meaningful, and we need your support and guidance to make that happen.



Module Goals

The material in this module is intended to support department/pod conversations that:

- create common ground for building an SLO process at Foothill College;
- share ideas for fostering an SLO assessment cycle that focuses on continuous improvement;
- apply your local knowledge and expertise to begin to customize the SLO assessment cycle.

Moving Towards Continual Improvement



Opportunities for Growth

Restarting our SLO Assessment process allows us to develop a process that supports our faculty community. We began the development of the draft process by looking carefully at criticisms of our prior SLO Assessment process.

In the past the Foothill College SLO process:

- was compliance-based and centered solely on quantitative analysis;
- lacked opportunities for collegial conversations;
- made sharing results and having meaningful campus-wide conversations challenging;
- fell on the shoulders of a few faculty in each division; and
- lacked the structure or support to align with Foothill College's evolution, including a new Mission and Equity initiatives.



Moving to Continual Improvement

While Foothill College has been without a campus-side SLO assessment process for a few years, faculty are now making a conscious choice to improve the SLO process, with a focus on authentic reflection, student learning, and equity.

Benefits of moving towards a Continual Improvement model include:

- opportunities to create meaningful process with a focus on collaboration and less "box checking";
- regular conversations for faculty to support one another and to keep up with pedagogical changes and evolution in their respective field;
- improved part-time faculty engagement, collegiality, transparency, consistency, and disciplinary & teaching expertise;
- alignment of the SLO assessment cycle with the Title 5 cycle, improving distribution of workload and creating a predictable cycle around curriculum work; and
- data-driven opportunities to adjust our SLOs to reflect the cognitive complexity required of the course level and/or to respond to shifts in the discipline.

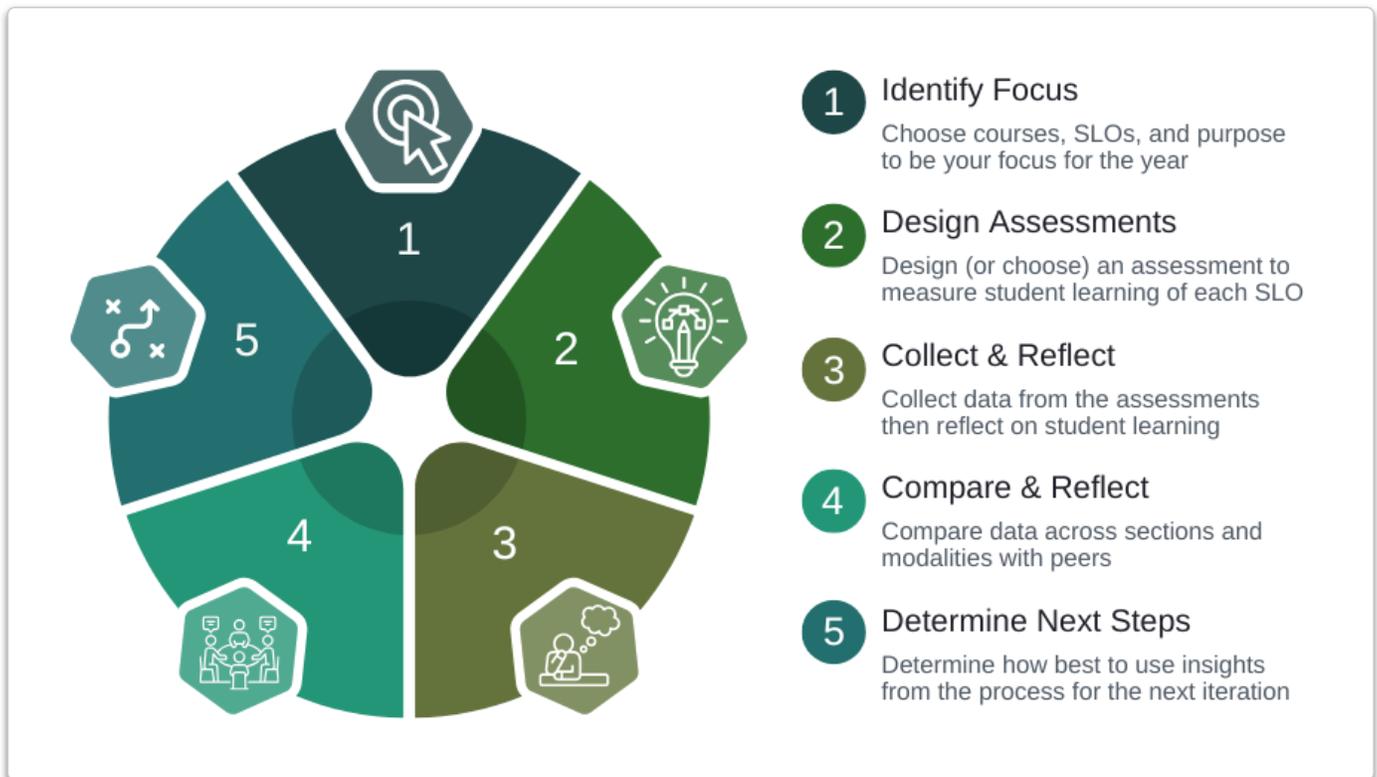
What is an SLO Assessment Cycle?

“Assessment cycle” refers to the process of collecting data from assessment, using that data to develop or modify curriculum, and then assessing the new or modified curriculum to collect data for ongoing modification or development. As with any cycle, it has no beginning, and no end. The dynamic nature of curriculum includes matters such as curricular development, measurement of success, and modifications based on assessment leading to modifications of curriculum.

[Student Learning Outcomes](https://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/SLOs.pdf) ↗ (<https://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/SLOs.pdf>), ASCCC (2019)



SLO Assessment Cycle



Steps of the SLO Assessment Cycle

The steps for Foothill's SLO Assessment Cycle are recursive and not necessarily linear.

Identify Focus: In this step each department or division will choose the course(s) that are going to have their SLOs assessed. Some factors that may influence course choice include the course's role in the curriculum, the number of students who take the course, student outcome disparities that need to be addressed or recent changes to policies or pedagogy that impact the course.

Design Assessments: Once the course(s) and SLOs have been identified, a department or division will choose, modify, or design an assessment to be used for gathering student learning outcome data. Common assessments include capstone projects, written assignments, labs, presentations, or group projects. Some departments and divisions may choose one assessment, whereas others might choose to review multiple assessments.

Collect & Reflect: Next, a department or division will collect data. The data may be the number of students who achieved a particular outcome on the assessment, survey or questionnaire results regarding an assessment, or another form of evidence decided on by the department or division. Then, faculty will have conversations regarding the results to understand the student learning for the course and the associated SLOs.

Compare & Reflect: If the course is taught in multiple modalities and by many instructors, conversations will allow for comparison of these variations to identify salient gaps, patterns, or trends.

Determine Next Steps: Once the results have been reviewed and discussed, departments or divisions will make necessary adjustments, which may include altering curriculum, teaching methods, or improving assessment strategies.

Assessments (and Assessment of Assessments)



Why do we assess student learning?

Gauging our students' learning is a foundation of higher education. Assessment measures student learning, providing us with information about what students know as a result of what and how we teach.

This information is data we can use to guide our instruction. It both lets us know what is working and helps us identify where students are struggling so that we might adjust our teaching strategies and provide targeted or just-in-time support.

We can use assessment to provide a window into student learning. Formative assessments, in particular, allow us to support student learning in real-time, creating opportunities for discussion with students through substantive interaction. Both formative and summative assessments can serve as opportunities for students to improve and overcome learning challenges within a course.



Why do we assess how we assess student learning?

Assessing our assessments keeps our teaching effective, helps us update curriculum, informs our allocation of resources, and most importantly allows us to assess student learning achievements and challenges.

We can determine what needs to be modified in our teaching, curriculum or resources to ensure that learning is taking place, as well as ensure that our assessments in fact align with course objectives and student learning outcomes.

Our assessments should reflect our values and our own relationship to what we teach. Assessing how we assess enables us to be intentional in our course design, to be able to articulate the "why" of the activities we have students complete.

In some fields, for example, students are required to take certification tests. In these instances, it makes sense for instructors to "teach to the test." In other fields, traditional exams do not necessarily reflect authentic applications of what students learn in a course and how they might apply it in real-world contexts.

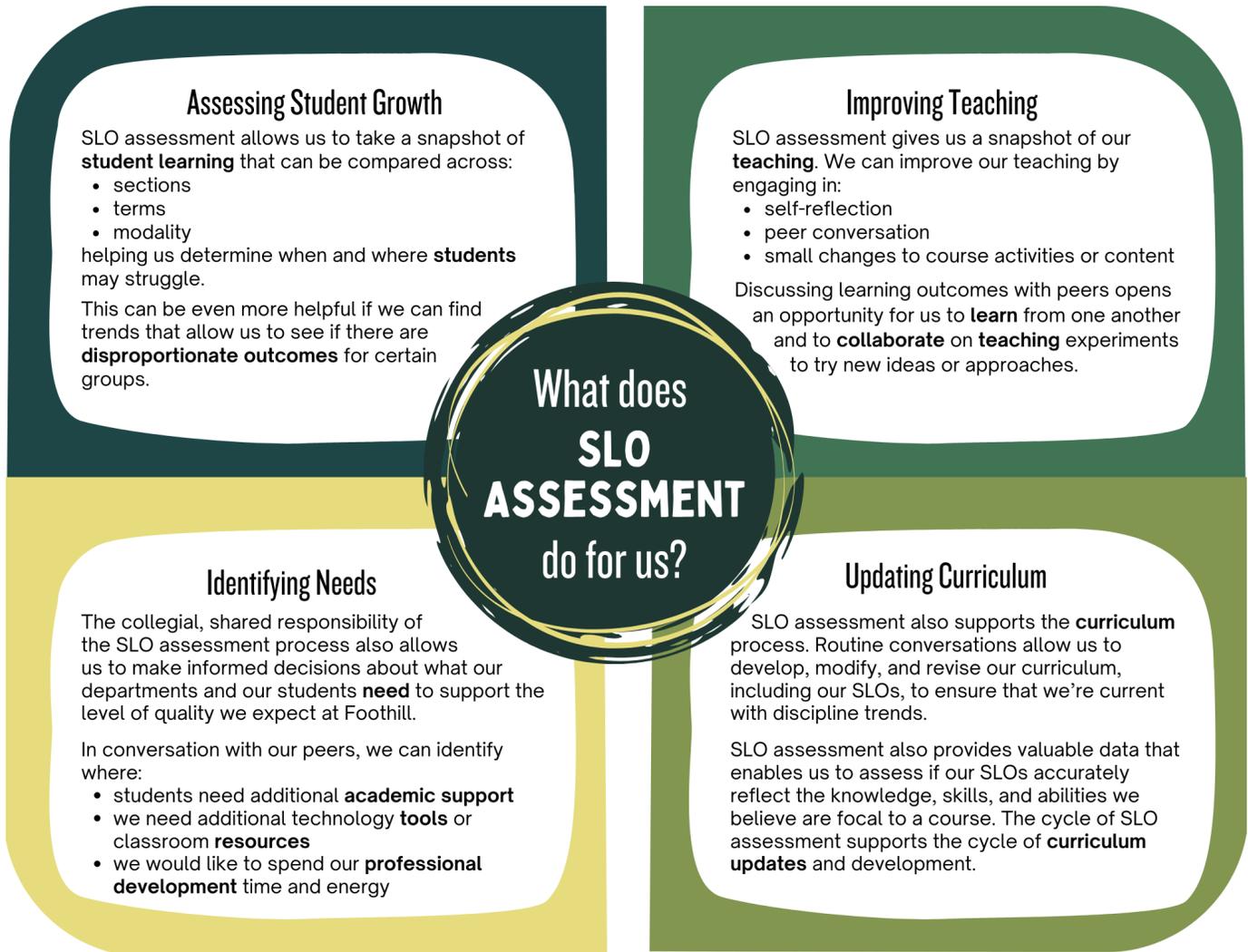
In addition to refining our teaching, reflecting on assessments also encourages dialogue and collaboration between colleagues, fostering transparency and consistency of curriculum within departments and divisions.

As we engage in our SLO Assessment process, we will be keeping our Foothill Mission, Values, and Strategic Vision for Equity in mind.

Consider This...

SLO Assessment is a great window into the connection between teaching and learning, but it can do much more! Though we know that the student/faculty relationship is very important, an SLO Assessment process grounded in collegial conversations allows us to take a more holistic look at what may affect student learning. When we engage with one another to meaningfully examine student learning, we gain far more than insight into how students are doing on a single assessment.

Please take a look at this infographic and consider how each of the four quadrants resonates with your department's needs:



Prefer a text only version? Please see [Why Do We Do SLO Assessment \[text only version\]](#)

<https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/pages/why-do-we-do-slo-assessment-text-only-version>

ASCCC Position Paper: Faculty Professional Learning & Student Success



Overview

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges affirms that intentional learning must be a central component of faculty professional development. This position paper explores the critical role that thoughtful, ongoing professional learning plays in enhancing faculty effectiveness and improving student success. Recognizing that high-quality instruction and equitable outcomes depend on faculty who are engaged in continuous growth, the paper examines both the philosophical foundations and the practical implementation of professional learning across the system. It also highlights the vital role that local academic senates can play in fostering a culture of professional development that is purposeful, inclusive, and aligned with institutional goals.

[ASCCC Position Paper 2021 ProfessionalDev 220310 epub \(https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879523?wrap=1\)](https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879523?wrap=1) [↓ \(https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879523/download?download_frd=1\)](https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879523/download?download_frd=1)
[Minimize File Preview](#)



THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

POSITION PAPER

**Going Beyond Development: Faculty
Professional Learning—An Academic Senate
Obligation to Promote Equity-Minded Practices
that Improve Instruction and Student Success**

ADOPTED SPRING 2021

SLO Glossary



From the ASCCC

Below is a short glossary of assessment terms. For a more comprehensive glossary, see the [ASCCC Assessment Glossary](https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879514?wrap=1).
(<https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879514?wrap=1>). ↓
(https://foothillcollege.instructure.com/courses/35384/files/10879514/download?download_frd=1).



Key Words for SLOs

Alignment

Alignment is the process of analyzing how explicit criteria line up or build upon one another within a particular learning pathway. When dealing with outcomes and assessment, it is important to determine that course outcomes align or match up with program outcomes; that institutional outcomes align with the college mission and vision. In student services, alignment of services includes things like aligning financial aid deadlines and instructional calendars.

Assessment Cycle

The assessment cycle refers to the process called closing the loop which is a cycle of exploration that includes developing or modifying curriculum; developing or modifying learning outcomes; designing curriculum and measuring student learning via assessment; collecting, discussing, and analyzing data about student proficiency of the assessment; determining refinements based on that analysis.

Assessment of Learning

Learning assessment refers to a process where methods are used to generate and collect data for evaluation of courses and programs to improve educational quality and student learning. This term refers to any method used to gather evidence and evaluate quality and may include both quantitative and qualitative data in instruction or student services.

Authentic Assessment

Traditional assessment sometimes relies on indirect or proxy items such as multiple choice questions focusing on content or facts. In contrast, authentic assessment simulates a real world experience by evaluating the student's ability to apply critical thinking and knowledge or to perform tasks that may approximate those found in the work place or other venues outside of the classroom setting.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is an example of one of several classification methodologies used to describe increasing complexity or intellectual sophistication. It's important to note that this taxonomy has been revised and repurposed to include the affective domain, and that it is only one of several classification schema.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

Classroom assessment techniques (CATs) are "simple tools for collecting data on student learning in order to improve it" (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 26).⁴ CATs are short, flexible, classroom techniques that provide rapid, informative feedback to improve classroom dynamics by monitoring learning, from the student's perspective, throughout the semester. Data from CATs are evaluated and used to facilitate continuous modifications and improvement in the classroom.

Closing the Loop

Closing the loop refers to the use of assessment results to improve student learning through collegial dialog informed by the results of student service or instructional learning outcome assessment. It is part of the continuous cycle of collecting assessment results, evaluating them, using the evaluations to identify actions that will improve student learning, implementing those actions, and then cycling back to collecting assessment results.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a diagnostic tool implemented during the instructional process that generates useful feedback for student development and improvement. The purpose is to help students understand their own progress and learn in a spirit of growth and improvement. This stands in contrast to summative assessment where the final result is a verdict and the participant may never receive feedback for improvement such as on a standardized test or licensing exam or a final exam.

Institutional Learning Outcomes

Institutional Learning Outcomes are the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student is expected to leave an institution with as a result of a student's total experience. Because GE Outcomes represent a common core of outcomes for the majority of students transferring or receiving degrees, some but not all, institutions equate these with ILO's. ILOs may differ from GE SLOs in that institutional outcomes may include outcomes relating to institutional effectiveness (degrees, transfers, productivity) in addition to learning outcomes. Descriptions of ILOs should include dialog about instructional and student service outcomes.

Learning Objectives

Objectives are small steps that lead toward a goal, for instance the discrete course content that faculty cover within a discipline. Objectives are usually more numerous and create a framework for the overarching student learning outcomes which address synthesizing, evaluating and analyzing many of the objectives. Objectives are the building blocks that are combined to lead to the outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are the specific observable or measurable results that are expected subsequent to a learning experience. These outcomes may involve knowledge (cognitive), skills (behavioral), or attitudes (affective) that provide evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specified course, program activity, or process. An SLO refers to an overarching outcome for a course, program, degree or certificate, or student services area (such as the library). SLOs describe a student's ability to synthesize many discrete skills (often part of a course's learning objectives) using higher level thinking skills and to produce something that asks them to apply what they've learned. SLOs usually encompass a gathering together of smaller discrete objectives through analysis, evaluation and synthesis into more sophisticated skills and abilities.

Summative Assessment

A summative assessment is a final determination of knowledge, skills, and abilities. This could be exemplified by exit or licensing exams, senior recitals, capstone projects or any final evaluation which is not created to provide feedback for improvement, but is used for final judgments.

Processes | Foothill's SLO Cycle



Module Description

The Processes Module offers a comprehensive overview of the Academic Senates SLO Framework document's process for supporting meaningful, sustainable assessment of student learning. It introduces the cycle of reflection and continuous improvement as the foundation for instructional and programmatic development. The module outlines the curriculum and Title 5 review processes and emphasizes the strategic use of marquee and specialty courses to support thoughtful, data-informed assessment. Finally, it provides practical strategies for organizing an effective SLO assessment cycle that aligns with the Title 5 review timeline while balancing faculty workload equitably over a five-year period.



Outcomes

By the end of this module, faculty will be able to:

- outline the steps in the cycle of continuous improvement for Student Learning Outcome assessment;
- describe how Title 5 curriculum updates relate to the SLO review process;
- differentiate between marquee courses and specialty courses in their department; and
- discuss the benefits of more frequent assessments for marquee courses SLOs.

Focusing on Continuous Improvement



Toward Continuous Improvement



- 1 Identify Focus**
Choose courses, SLOs, and purpose to be your focus for the year
- 2 Design Assessments**
Design (or choose) an assessment to measure student learning of each SLO
- 3 Collect & Reflect**
Collect data from the assessments then reflect on student learning
- 4 Compare & Reflect**
Compare data across sections and modalities with peers
- 5 Determine Next Steps**
Determine how best to use insights from the process for the next iteration

The cycle of continuous improvement in Student Learning Outcome (SLO) assessment has five parts. It is a collaborative, reflective process that supports meaningful improvements in teaching and learning. Grounded in regular dialogue and thoughtful analysis, this cycle invites faculty to plan together, assess authentically, reflect critically, and share insights that inform both individual and collective practice. The following outlines each step of the cycle, from initial planning on College Day through to departmental reflection and synthesis in the spring.

College Day Conversations: Steps 1 & 2



The first step in the cycle of continuous improvement begins with faculty coming together with their discipline colleagues on College Day to review their department's Student Learning Outcome (SLO) assessment cycle. This annual gathering provides a dedicated opportunity to identify which course(s) are scheduled for review in the upcoming year and to collaboratively discuss how best to assess student learning in those courses. By reviewing the assessment cycle collectively, faculty ensure alignment with departmental priorities and maintain momentum in improving teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Equally important is the opportunity for colleagues to share ideas for effective assessment practices. These conversations help surface both promising strategies and ongoing challenges—whether they involve complex teaching topics, areas where students face persistent barriers, or places where innovation is needed to better support engagement and equity. Faculty may choose to focus on topics such as addressing disproportionate impact, improving understanding of difficult concepts, or experimenting with new forms of assessment. By setting shared goals and identifying focal points for the year ahead, departments foster a culture of reflection and continuous improvement rooted in collective expertise and a shared commitment to student success.

Steps 1 & 2: To Do

- Collaborate with your colleagues to decide on which SLOs will be assessed for each course up for SLO assessment in the upcoming year.
- Discuss effective assessment strategies and plan your course assessments

Collect Data and Reflect: Step 3



Following the collaborative planning on College Day, the next step in the cycle of continuous improvement takes place during the academic year, as faculty members teaching the courses identified for assessment engage in the actual work of evaluating student learning. This includes selecting or developing appropriate assessment tools, collecting and analyzing student work or data, and documenting outcomes in relation to the course-level learning objectives. This process allows faculty to observe firsthand how students are engaging with core concepts and where they may be excelling or struggling, offering valuable insight into the effectiveness of current teaching methods.

As faculty review and reflect on the results of their SLO assessments, they begin to identify patterns, outliers, and areas of concern that warrant deeper attention. For example, they may observe consistent success in one area of the course but wide variation in another, or notice that specific student populations are underperforming compared to their peers. These reflections are essential for drawing meaningful conclusions from assessment data and help faculty make informed decisions about where adjustments in pedagogy, curriculum, or support may be needed. This individualized classroom reflection sets the stage for broader departmental discussions about student learning trends and equity gaps, and informs future innovations in teaching and assessment.

Step 3: To Do

- Each faculty is asked to record their observations about their SLO assessments in the reflection log provided in the department Canvas shell. The reflection log can be shared with colleagues and will be the foundation for the department conversations in the spring.

Spring Quarter Conversations: Steps 4 & 5



To close the loop of the cycle of continuous improvement, faculty reconvene as a department or program in the spring to share the results and insights gathered from their individual SLO assessments. This collective reflection is essential for identifying broader trends, common challenges, and shared successes across courses. By discussing their observations together, faculty can contextualize their findings, support one another in interpreting data, and collaboratively explore strategies for improving learning outcomes across the curriculum. These conversations may also illuminate areas where further inquiry is needed or where targeted interventions could enhance equity and engagement.

The department should collaboratively synthesize the insights into a concise summary for the SLO coordinator. This summary captures the core themes, reflections, and areas of focus that emerged from the year's assessment work. It ensures that the learning gained from the process is documented, shared, and used to inform college-wide planning and support. By intentionally closing the loop in this way, departments contribute to a meaningful, ongoing dialogue about student learning and maintain a purposeful cycle of instructional reflection, improvement, and innovation.

Steps 4 & 5: To Do

- Discuss the results of the SLO assessments with your colleagues, identifying areas of success and opportunities for improvement.
- Identify areas of disproportionate impact and strategies that could be implemented to address these.
- Determine who in your department will summarize and document the successes, areas for improvement and actions needed from instructors, the department and the college to improve student success. Equitable workload distribution should be discussed by all members of the department.

Title 5 and the Course Outline of Record

SLOs, the COR, and the SLO Cycle

Student Learning Outcomes are now part of the Course Outline of Record, so updating the SLOs is now part of the Title 5 updates.

One way we can demonstrate that we value the work and time of faculty is to highlight and intentionally connect processes that overlap or inform one another. Student Learning Outcomes are an integral part of both the SLO Assessment Process and the Title 5 Review Cycle.

Our conversations during SLO Assessment can prepare us to make informed and timely updates to our Course Outlines. It makes sense, then, to better understand the Title 5 Review Cycle before we plan our SLO Assessment Cycle.



What is Title 5?

In California, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations governs most of what we do in education, including things like school finances, attendance reporting and students' rights. For community colleges, most of these regulations come from the Board of Governors. Right now we are interested in curriculum and specifically, the Course Outline of Record (COR).



Title 5 Curriculum Updates

🔍 Why Review the COR?

The context in which we teach is rapidly changing, now more than ever. We need to maintain curriculum that:

- meets student and employer needs;
- supports equity;
- leverages technology;
- integrates modern pedagogy; and
- aligns with current laws and regulations, such as AB 1705,

📅 How Often?

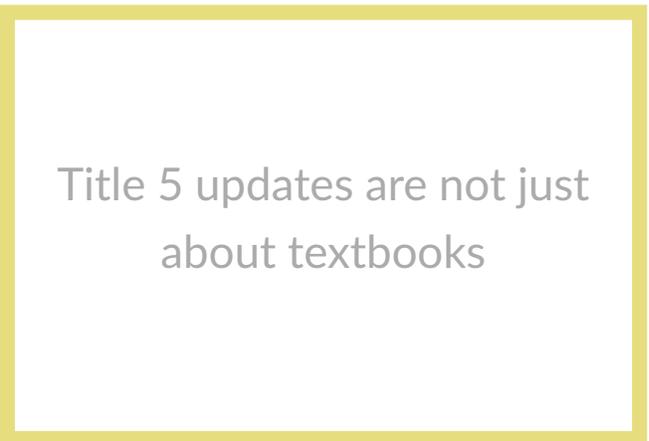
Title 5 states that a course outline of record must be reviewed regularly. While there is no specific definition of "regularly" in Title 5, the chancellor's office and ACCJC have advised that the review should occur at least:

- every five years for most courses; or
- every two years for career technical education (CTE) courses.

Curriculum can be reviewed more often as needed.

☰ What Gets Reviewed?

We often hear that the purpose of a Title 5 update is to make sure our textbooks are recent. In fact, every section of the course outline should be reviewed to make sure we are offering our students relevant classes. Since Foothill College is incorporating student learning outcomes into the course outlines, the five year cycle provides a sensible rhythm for reviewing and assessing the SLOs, as well.



Title 5 updates are not just
about textbooks

Marquee Courses

Every course is important, but the frequency a course is taught and the data we collect affects how we approach a course's SLO Cycle.



Marquee Courses Are Central To Our Curriculum

Frequent assessment of student learning outcomes in **marquee courses**—high-enrollment classes offered regularly and often in multiple sections—is essential because these courses have a significant impact on students' educational pathways. While many marquee courses satisfy general education (GE) requirements, others are core to a discipline and serve as gateway or foundational courses for students pursuing a particular major.

Whether GE, major-specific, or both, these courses are often among the first that students take in college, and they attract a diverse student population. As a result, they play a critical role in shaping students' early academic experiences, developing key skills, and influencing retention and persistence. Regular assessment of learning outcomes allows faculty to evaluate how effectively students are meeting key objectives across sections and to ensure consistency, equity, and quality in instruction.



Effective Practice: Assess Marquee Courses Annually

Both faculty and students benefit from engaging in assessments of learning outcomes in marquee courses on an annual basis because these regular check-ins create timely opportunities to reflect on what is working well and where students may need additional support.

Unlike the formal five-year SLO assessment cycle, an annual assessment of marquee courses and conversations around their results allow instructors to make responsive adjustments in their teaching. These assessments do not need to be officially reported, and unless there are significant issues with the SLOs, the learning outcomes listed on the Course Outline of Record should not be updated.

The annual conversations helps faculty foster a culture of continuous improvement, supports innovation in teaching, and allows faculty stay connected to student learning trends across multiple sections. For students, the impact is clear: instructors who regularly reflect on and adapt their teaching based on student performance and feedback are better able to create clear, inclusive, and effective learning experiences.

The Benefit of Collegial Conversations



Instructors Benefit From Regular Conversations

The work of SLO assessment is most meaningful when grounded in the cycle of continuous improvement.

Faculty who engage in routine assessment of marquee courses can:

- identify patterns in student achievement;
- reflect on their own practices; and
- participate in collegial conversations that lead to shared insights and effective instructional strategies.

These discussions foster alignment across sections, promote innovation in pedagogy and assessment, and create opportunities to respond to emerging student needs. The frequent nature of these courses allows departments to use current, real-time data as the basis for reflection and adjustment—helping to build a culture of collaboration, inquiry, and improvement.

Faculty who engage in routine assessment of their speciality courses and then share their insights with colleagues can:

- discuss strategies for helping students with consistent issues that occur across classes;
- identify intersections between courses, and;
- gain insights from discipline colleagues who share experiences and expertise with one another.



Students Benefit When Instructors Collaborate

Students benefit greatly when their instructors are engaged in ongoing professional dialogue. When faculty collaborate regularly to discuss teaching, learning, and assessment in marquee and speciality courses, the result is greater coherence in course design, clearer communication of expectations, and more responsive and inclusive learning environments.

This ultimately leads to increased student engagement, confidence, and success. Whether the course is serving as a GE requirement or a core class in a major sequence, students are better supported when their instructors are actively and collectively working to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Assessment of SLOs Across Multiple Course Sections



Build a Shared Understanding of SLOs

Assessing student learning outcomes (SLOs) across multiple sections of the same course presents both a challenge and an opportunity. One key strategy is to establish a shared understanding of the course-level SLOs and to define what successful demonstration of those outcomes looks like.

While individual instructors retain full academic freedom to design their courses and assessments in ways that reflect their teaching style, discipline expertise, and pedagogical approach, agreeing on a common SLO framework helps ensure that all students, regardless of instructor or modality, are being guided toward the same essential learning goals.

Departments can support this balance by offering suggested tools—such as shared rubrics, assignment templates, or question banks—that instructors can adopt, adapt, or use for reference.



Coordinated Assessments = Consistent Expectations

Coordinating assessments across sections does not require identical assignments, but rather a shared commitment to consistent expectations and comparable measures of learning. Faculty might agree to assess a specific SLO during a particular week of the quarter, use a common rubric to evaluate varied student work, or select a set of core criteria that all assessments should include.

These practices help create coherence and make it easier to compare and analyze outcomes data across sections, which in turn supports more meaningful departmental reflection and improvement. Coordination also helps students receive equitable learning experiences across different sections of the same course, which is particularly important in marquee courses that enroll large numbers of students each term.



Frequent Collegial Discussions

Creating space for faculty to discuss how they assess the same SLO in different ways can be a powerful driver of professional learning. These conversations can surface a range of approaches, from project-based assignments to embedded test questions or reflective writing prompts, all aligned to the same outcome.

Through this exchange of ideas, instructors can broaden their assessment toolkit, learn from one another's innovations, and uncover new ways to engage students in demonstrating their learning. These collegial discussions build community, foster mutual respect for diverse teaching styles, and support a culture of continuous improvement grounded in shared values around student success.

We encourage you to build in space in department/program meetings to check in with colleagues about course outcomes assessments, and, if it works for your program faculty, build a space in your department Canvas site to engage in ongoing collaborative sharing and dialog.

Assessment of Specialty Courses



Specialty Courses: Program Coherence and Depth

Engaging faculty in discussions about student learning outcome (SLO) assessment in specialty or infrequently taught courses is an important strategy for ensuring the quality and inclusivity of the full curriculum—not just the high-enrollment marquee courses.

Although these courses are often taught by only one faculty member at a time, they still play a critical role in program coherence, depth, and student preparation for advanced study or transfer.

Faculty teaching these courses benefit greatly from structured opportunities to share and reflect on how they design assessments, interpret results, and make adjustments to support student learning. These conversations can also help align specialty courses with broader program and institutional outcomes.



Create Space for Conversations

Creating intentional spaces where faculty who teach specialty courses can come together across disciplines or within related fields encourages collaboration, even when course content differs.

These gatherings might take the form of SLO-focused roundtables, cross-departmental retreats, or facilitated inquiry groups, and they provide a forum for sharing successful assessment practices, learning from colleagues' experiences, and identifying shared challenges such as low enrollment or inconsistent student preparation. These spaces also foster community among faculty who may otherwise have limited opportunities to discuss teaching and learning with peers in similar instructional contexts.



Focused Conversations Yield Big Impacts

A key component of these conversations is examining assessment data for patterns of disproportionate impact. Even in small or infrequent courses, faculty can benefit from looking at how students from different demographic groups are performing and reflecting on how course design, teaching strategies, or assignment structures may be affecting outcomes.

Faculty teaching specialty courses are often highly invested in their subject matter and student success, and engaging them in data-informed conversations about equity can lead to powerful innovations and improved outcomes. By supporting faculty in these efforts, departments signal that all courses—regardless of size or frequency—are integral to student learning and thoughtful, collaborative assessment practices.