

## What is Assessment?

It is a systematic process of collecting, interpreting, and acting (doing something with) data related to the goals and outcomes developed to support the institution's mission and purpose.

1. What are we trying to do?
2. How well are we doing it?
3. How can we improve?

Assessment is a *process* which should be meaningful to the faculty and department in which the assessment occurs. Assessment should be designed to provide informative data the department can *use* to examine trends, ensure students are meeting goals of the course, program, and college, and to determine what additional resources may be needed from the college to help programs achieve the goals set.

## What are the SUNY and MSCHE Policies on Assessment?

SUNY policy on assessment states that a campus shall develop a plan for the regular assessment of its registered academic programs, including general education, and institutional effectiveness, which will meet or exceed those set by MSCHE. To meet this requirement, SUNY Broome conducts Program Reviews on a 5 year cycle (SUNY Assessment Policy 1151, 2010).

MSCHE Standard III states that a periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs that provide student learning opportunities, including general education, are regularly assessed. MSCHE Standard IV states that educational goals at the institutional and program level should be clearly stated and assessed by examining data and that those assessment results are used to improve educational effectiveness (MSCHE Standards for Accreditation & Requirements of Affiliation, 2014). To meet these accreditation requirements, student learning outcomes for courses should be written in measurable ways, mapped to PLOs and ILOs, and be regularly assessed. Program Reviews provide the opportunity to examine the program goals and to conduct a periodic assessment of educational effectiveness.

**Assessment begins with writing measurable Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes that support the institution's mission and purpose (defined by the Institutional Learning Outcomes).**

**Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs):** These are written goals of the institution which align to the mission of the college. *All courses and programs should support the institution's mission and purpose.*

SUNY Broome has 6 ILOs. It is not expected that every individual course will meet all 6 of the ILOs within one course. It is expected that every program, however, will meet all the ILOs, from the combined efforts of *all* of their courses within a program. *At some point within the student's education, they will hit each ILO.*

### **SUNY Broome ILOs (Institutional Learning Outcomes)**

1. Cultural and global awareness
2. Critical analysis and decision making
3. Oral and written communication
4. Scientific and quantitative reasoning
5. Technological competency
6. Information Literacy

**Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):** These are written measurable goals specific to the program. They will map to the Institution's Learning Outcomes (ILOs). They demonstrate what a program is intended to accomplish.

**Program Reviews:** are periodic evaluations of registered academic programs. SUNY expects program reviews to be conducted every 5-7 years. While we do not send SUNY our completed program reviews, MSCHE will review Program Reviews during their site visit. Program Reviews focus on assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and program effectiveness. Accredited programs conduct self-studies, which take the place of Program Reviews. These self-studies meet the requirements of MSCHE, SUNY, and the accrediting body.

**Program Operational Outcomes:** these are outcomes by which a program measures effectiveness of their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Accredited programs use operational outcomes as determined by their accrediting body. These may include pass rate for licensure exams and employment satisfaction surveys, as examples.

For non-accredited programs, operational outcomes may include: graduation rate, transfer rate, retention rate, baccalaureate attainment, comparison of where the program is compared to other universities/colleges, etc.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):** These are written measurable learning goals specific to the course. They map to the PLOs and ILOs. Outcomes are the goals of the course—what students should know, be able to do, understand, how to behave, how to think, values to demonstrate, etc. by the end of that course. MSCHE expects that SLOs are regularly assessed.

*All sections of the course have the same SLOs. They demonstrate what students will be able to and can do by the end of the specific course. The SLOs are those written in the college catalogue which tell students what they should be able to know and do by the end of that course. What can the student do upon completing the course?*

### **Guidelines for Writing Outcomes:**

- They should be consistent with the program goals and college's mission/ILOs.
- They should be measurable and written using verbs which *specify* the skill, behavior, habit, value, etc. that will be assessed.

- Verbs should be chosen that allow you to *measure* understanding versus using the phrase “Students will understand...”
- Verbs chosen are used to demonstrate student understanding in a *specific* way. They should explicitly state what the student should do. (e.g. describe, list, define, analyze, create, evaluate)
- They should be student-centered vs. instructor-centered (e.g. Students will...)
- They should be assessed on a regular basis to provide data to the faculty about whether or not students are attaining those learning outcomes
  - If not, how can we improve to help students best achieve this outcome?
- Bloom’s Taxonomy can be a helpful hierarchical structure for developing SLOs. It demonstrates successive ability of a student to demonstrate ability/knowledge/behavior/values.
- Being able to demonstrate understanding at a higher level (e.g. analyze, evaluate, and create) assumes they can perform lower level skills (e.g. knowledge, comprehension, application).

**Objectives:** These are written statements which provide the detailed steps of what students will achieve. They are not assessed as SLOs are, but rather feed into the course SLOs. Objectives can be numerous and detailed. *They specify the steps taken to meet the learning outcomes of the course.* They can be used to structure the content of an educational activity. Objectives explain the steps faculty are going to take to get students to the end goal (Student Learning Outcomes).

*Each section of a course could potentially have different objectives, as these are the steps that instructors will take to meet the SLOs of the course. While we each must meet the SLOs of the course, how we get there may vary among instructors.*

Outcomes are the measurable specific goals of the course and objectives are all the steps faculty and students will take to reach those end goals.