FAQs about SLOs

for Faculty

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Q. What are SLOs?
A. SLOs are “Student Learning Outcomes,” what students are able to do after completing a course, program, or degree at our colleges.

Q. Is this different from what was formerly called, “Course Objectives”?
A. They’re similar, but not the same. “Course Objectives” focus on the course. SLOs focus on what students learn. This reflects a shift in emphasis from courses and instructors to students.

Q. Why do SLOs matter?
A. They matter on the most practical level because Accreditation mandates that every California community college develop SLOs and ways to assess their attainment. On a more philosophical level, SLOs matter because they define the skills of a person whom our society considers “educated.”

Q. Who determines the SLOs?
A. Our Academic Senates at Evergreen Valley College and San Jose City College defined the General Education SLOs, skills expected of our graduates. On the course level, faculty define discipline-specific SLOs during the routine process of updating course outlines.

Q. How are students affected?
A. SLOs describe students’ learning in terms of skills they have acquired. For example, instead of a student saying, “I passed English 1A,” s/he can say, “I can access information sources, evaluate their credibility, synthesize their information, and create original opinions informed by my research. I can write grammatically correct, logical and insightful essays and reports about topics I have researched.”

Q. How are faculty affected?
A. Instructors incorporate SLOs and ways of assessing them when they update course outlines. In addition, every instructor at EVC is expected to incorporate General Education SLOs in his/her green sheet.

Take a look at the Academic Senate’s GE SLOs listed at http://doweb/research/FTKWeb/General_Education/general_education.htm. Pick two or three that your course addresses. You may use the definitions provided or create your own. On your green sheet, name the General Education SLOs and how they will be assessed.

Q. Isn’t a quiz or a test “assessment”? Is this just a new name?
A quiz or test is part of assessment that can be built into the measurement of SLOs. However, for example, instead of “passing quizzes” being the indicator of success, the SLO spells out what the quizzes measure.

For the course grade, the measurement ideally is based on a collaboratively created rubric. Developing the rubric usually begins by determining the minimum set of skills required for passing a course. From there, working together, instructors describe the skills of students beyond the minimum as well as not up to the minimum.

Q. Is this process worth the effort?
A. The process of developing the rubric promotes discussion of fundamental values in our teaching. AB 1725 guarantees that faculty are key in matters of curriculum. After we define what we want students to know, and how we assess whether they know it, we can then decide how we may change what we’re doing in order to improve students’ success in attaining the SLOs we’ve deemed worthwhile.

SLOs are abbreviated for SLOAC = Students’ Learning Outcomes → Assessment → Change.

In other words, we define what we want students to be able to do, we agree on how to assess whether they can do these things, and we make changes to improve students’ success in attaining these outcomes.

Q. Where can I get help?
A. The Teaching and Learning Center is here for you!