Los Angeles Valley College
Institutional Assessment Guide, Revised 2021

Introduction

The mission, goals, and core commitments of Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) all focus on teaching, learning, and student success. Successful learning means more than memorizing facts; it requires students to apply knowledge to solve problems, demonstrate skills, and think critically about what they have learned. Therefore, measuring student learning is about more than course completion rates and grades; we must reflect on how students learn and how each component of the College contributes to the learning process.

The Institutional Assessment Guide (IAG) sets forth the assessment philosophy and plans for the College. This includes:

- An assessment philosophy
- Relevant accreditation standards
- Process for establishing SLOs, program outcomes (PSLOs), and service outcomes
- Process for assessing SLOs, PSLOs, and service outcomes
- Means of assessment to produce quality data
- How to conduct a student learning outcomes assessment cycle (SLOAC) for courses, programs, and service outcomes
- Links between the SLOAC and planning
- Roles and responsibilities

LAVC Mission

Los Angeles Valley College serves as our students' pathway to their success and career goals. We embrace the diversity of our community and strive to empower all members to be engaged, confident, and productive. Our comprehensive curriculum and support services enrich learning and inspire our students to achieve their personal goals, including completion of certificates, degrees, and transfer requirements. We are dedicated to providing continuing education, and enhancing personal development and quality of life.

LAVC Core Values

The core values at LAVC are:

Respect, Diversity, Openness, and Support
Los Angeles Valley College is a respectful and supportive community, open to all learners. We recognize diversity by offering extensive resources and pathways within a vibrant and evolving campus. Our focus on equity and inclusion will ensure our disproportionately impacted students are served.

Student Growth through Innovative Teaching and Learning
The college creates a learning-centered environment that offers a broad range of academic pathways and services in an atmosphere of academic freedom and collaboration responsive to students, faculty, staff, and community. The College proactively guides, helps navigate, and supports students' growth to fulfill their educational goals through innovative teaching and learning.

Resourcefulness and Environmental Stewardship
The college strives to be effective stewards of our physical, technological, and financial resources to maximize institutional effectiveness. The college fosters sustainability and pride in our vibrant and evolving campus.

Assessment Philosophy

The mission, goals, and core values of LAVC all focus on teaching, learning, and student success. We recognize that measuring student learning is about more than course completion rates and grades; we must think critically about how students learn and how each component of the College contributes to the learning process. Therefore, our assessment philosophy connects successful learning with the ability to demonstrate problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Since 2004, LAVC has assessed courses, programs, and services in cycles and tied assessment to other campus processes such as Program Review and planning. The SLO assessment cycle (SLOAC) is how we make our expectations explicit and public, set appropriate criteria and standards, and use information to document, explain, and improve performance. SLOAC cycle timelines are approved by the College's participatory governance groups and posted online. The goal of assessment is the continuous improvement of academic courses, programs, and services, and is strongly linked to the College goal of institutional effectiveness.

The development of assessment processes at LAVC is guided by the following principles (written with resources from Cabrillo College, Palomar College, and Long Beach City College):

1) Some portions of the campus community directly help students to learn while others offer indirect support by making the campus a place where learning can occur. Indirect units participate in campus assessment activities by evaluating their services and asking the campus community for feedback on how they are doing and how they can improve.
2) Assessment Plans are developed by the personnel in specific programs, and assessment results are evaluated primarily by those same sectors.
3) It is the faculty's responsibility to create assessment methods and evaluation processes for courses and programs. LAVC agrees with the mandate of the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges that a successful SLO assessment process must engage faculty and be faculty driven (ASCCC Resolution 2.01 F04). The responsibility for teaching and learning lies primarily with faculty, who are well versed in their disciplines, invested in student learning, and knowledgeable about the principles of their respective and professional associations and licensing boards.
4) Whenever possible, simplicity is encouraged in the development of assessment methods and plans.
5) Assessment can be quantitative or qualitative. Either way, the assessment process should be cost-effective and yield reasonably accurate and truthful results that inform important decisions on student learning and success.
6) The assessment cycle is an ongoing process and dialogue that is embedded in the College's culture. All staff and faculty members are invited to participate, regardless of rank or tenure.

The central questions of assessment are:
1) Upon completion of courses and programs, what do we want students to be able to do?
2) How do we know that students can do these things?
3) What are the services and activities that support the campus and student learning?
4) How do we know how well these services and activities are doing?
5) How can we use assessment results to improve student learning and campus services?

Assessment results will be used to:
o Promote student success and make improvements at all levels.
o Generate and encourage self-reflection, collaboration, and dialogue.
o Identify and respond in meaningful ways to student and community needs.

Assessment results will not:
o Be produced as a rote exercise. Results should be used to promote student success, inform changes to services, and foster campus improvements.
o Be used punitively or as a means of determining faculty or staff salaries or rewards. The purpose of assessment is to evaluate student learning, not to reward or punish faculty or staff.
o Undermine or impinge on academic freedoms of professional rights.
o Be seen as a solution to every problem or as an answer to every question.
o Always be quantitative. While numerical scales or rubrics can be useful, their accuracy always depends on the clear understanding of the concepts behind the numbers. Sometimes the best indicator of student learning can be expressed as a narrative or a performance rather than as a number.

SLOs AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

New ACCJC accreditation standards were adopted in 2014 that make student learning and student learning outcomes (SLOs) a major part of the accreditation process.

- o Standard I: B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

  1. The institution demonstrates a sustained, substantive and collegial dialog about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement.

  2. The institution defines and assesses student learning outcomes for all instructional programs and student and learning support services.

  4. The institution uses assessment data and organizes its institutional processes to support student learning and student achievement.

  5. The institution assesses accomplishment of its mission through program review and evaluation of goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, and student achievement. Quantitative and qualitative data are disaggregated for analysis by program type and mode of delivery.

  6. The institution disaggregates and analyzes learning outcomes and achievement for subpopulations of students. When the institution identifies performance gaps, it implements strategies, which may include allocation or reallocation of human, fiscal and other resources, to mitigate those gaps and evaluates the efficacy of those strategies.

- o Standard I: C. Institutional Integrity

  3. The institution uses documented assessment of student learning and evaluation of student achievement to communicate matters of academic quality to appropriate constituencies, including current and prospective students and the public.

- o Standard II: A. Instructional Programs

  3. The institution identifies and regularly assesses learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates and degrees using established institutional procedures. The institution has officially approved and current course outlines that include student learning outcomes. In every class section, students receive a course syllabus that includes learning outcomes from the institution's officially approved course outline.

  9. The institution awards course credit, degrees and certificates based on student attainment of learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education. If the institution offers courses based on clock hours, it follows Federal standards for clock-to- credit-hour conversions.

  11. The institution includes in all of its programs, student learning outcomes, appropriate to the program level, in communication competency, information competency, quantitative competency, analytic inquiry skills, ethical reasoning, the ability to engage diverse perspectives, and other program-specific learning outcomes.

16. The institution regularly evaluates and improves the quality and currency of all instructional programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, pre-collegiate, career-technical, and continuing and community education courses and programs, regardless of delivery mode or location. The institution systematically strives to improve programs and courses to enhance learning outcomes and achievement for students.

- o   Standard II: B. Library and Learning Support Services

3. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services includes evidence that they contribute to the attainment of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

- o   Standard II: C. Student Support Services

2. The institution identifies and assesses learning support outcomes for its student population and provides appropriate student support services and programs to achieve those outcomes. The institution uses assessment data to continuously improve student support programs and services.

In addition, the ACCJC also includes program outcomes and assessment in its list of eligibilities:

- o   STUDENT LEARNING AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
  The institution defines standards for student achievement and assesses its performance against those standards. The institution publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and any program-specific achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve the identified outcomes and that the standards for student achievement are met (a complete list of eligibility requirements is available at on the ACCJC website).

These standards are based on the idea that "covering" material in class does not guarantee that students have learned it. The process is intended to establish clear and transparent expectations for students and accountability for faculty. Success in this context is defined by students leaving a course or program with integrated, higher learning skills that they can demonstrate.

However, accreditation is not the only reason to assess SLOs. We believe that this process will both document the good work we already do and help us to improve student learning.

Student Learning Outcomes Defined

SLO means Student Learning Outcome. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has given the following definition: "Student Learning Outcomes refer to overarching specific observable characteristics developed by local faculty that allow them to determine or demonstrate evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specific course, program, activity, or process." There are several levels of outcomes including course-level, program-level, and service outcomes.

Course Outcomes

Course student learning outcomes (CSLOs) express higher-level thinking skills that integrate the content and activities of a class. CSLOs may be measured or observed as a behavior or skill. These outcomes demonstrate an overarching understanding and application of a subject beyond the specific course content. A typical course may have one to two CSLOs.

CSLOs should describe the broadest goals for the class and involve higher-level thinking (i.e., Bloom's Taxonomy Level 3 or higher). The outcome should require students to synthesize many discreet skills or areas of knowledge. CSLOs can be viewed in the course outline of record or in eLumen.

When writing CSLOs, consider the following questions:
- What should students be able to do with what they've learned?
- How will students demonstrate their knowledge or skill?
- What can students produce to demonstrate an application of new knowledge?

Program Outcomes

Program-Level SLOs (PSLOs) represent skills, knowledge, and abilities students attain as a result of the program. In 2020, Los Angeles Valley College established program-specific outcomes for every degree and certificate, and moved away from the previous program pathways model. With the support of the SLO coordinators, departments developed three to five PSLOs for each of the following:

o Associate in Arts Degree (AA)
o Associate in Science Degree (AS)
o Associate in Arts for Transfer (AA-T)
o Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-T)

In addition, two to four PSLOs were developed for each Certificate of Achievement (CA).

All degrees (AA, AS, AA-T, AS-T) and Certificates of Achievement are assessed within the student learning outcomes assessment cycle (SLOAC) with data from eLumen. The Program SLO (PSLO) data in eLumen is based on the accumulation of course data in each program. A sample alignment in eLumen is provided on the following page. PSLO data is also disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, veteran status or foster youth status on a rotational basis.

The overall program data and disaggregated data is then uploaded into the SLO Summary Module in Program Review, where departments must examine their outcomes for each degree and certificate. Questions in Program Review require departments to analyze data from each program and reflect on student achievement as well as steps to improve student learning. An opportunity to request resources for SLO assessment is included.

Music AA-T	PSLO 1	PSLO 2	PSLO 3	PSLO 4
- All Categories - / Courses / Music AA-T / ☐ Include inactive Courses	Play or sing music at an intermediate level, be familiar with standard repertoire for their instrument or voice, develop a body....	Analyze and write music with regard to techniques of tonal music.	Notate rhythmic, melodic and harmonic passages of music as they are dictated.	Perform as members of chamber and large ensembles.
MUSIC181 Applied Music I — Active since 2/2015				
Students will be able to perform selected repertoire at a level based on... — Active since 2/2015	✔			
MUSIC182 Applied Music II — Active since 2/2015				
Students will be able to perform selected repertoire at a level based on... — Active since 2/2015	✔			
MUSIC183 Applied Music III — Active since 2/2015				
Students will be able to perform selected repertoire at a level based on... — Active since 2/2015	✔			
MUSIC184 Applied Music IV — Active since 2/2015				
Students will be able to perform selected repertoire at a level based on... — Active since 2/2015	✔			
MUSIC200 Introduction To Music Theory — Active since 2/2015				
Demonstrate beginning-level aural skills. — Active since 8/2015		✔	✔	
Demonstrate fluency in beginning music theory. — Active since 2/2015		✔	✔	

Service Outcomes: Non-Instructional Areas

In addition, there are service outcomes for non-instructional areas. A service outcome describes the primary service(s) provided by an area and how that service assists or aids the students in achieving their learning outcomes. In cases where the personnel in the area have direct contact with students, the service outcome describes how students directly benefit. In the case where personnel have no contact or only indirect contact with students, the service outcome may describe how services assist the faculty and staff in their contact with students.

For example, a maintenance department may enable the faculty and staff to serve students by ensuring that classrooms and offices are kept in good condition. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) may assist students in achieving their learning outcomes by providing accommodations. Academic Affairs may enhance student success by ensuring that information is accurate and available in a timely manner.

Some areas may have both student learning outcomes and service outcomes.

Process for Establishing SLOs

Courses and Instructional Programs

To establish or revise SLOs for courses or instructional programs, the Course or Program SLO form and a Discipline Approval Form need to be submitted to Academic Affairs. The form requires both the outcomes statements and a description of the means of assessment (both what the students will do and how the instructor will evaluate that activity).

The submission will undergo technical review by the SLO Subcommittee of VCCC. After technical review, the submission will be circulated to all members of the VCCC, voted on at a meeting of the VCCC, and then forwarded to the Academic Senate for final approval. All forms and approved submissions are available on the [VCCC SharePoint](#).

Non-Instructional Programs

SLOs for non-instructional programs or service areas are established through Program Review, which requires both the outcomes statements and a description of the means of assessment. Any submissions or modifications of service outcomes will be reviewed by the Service Outcomes Coordinator and OAC.

Assessment

Assessment is not an end in itself, but a tool for educational and institutional improvement. LAVC stands by the [nine principles of assessment](#) from the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE).

In this process for instructional areas, evidence is gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to determine how well student performance matches faculty-defined expectations and standards. The results are used to improve teaching and learning.

For non-instructional areas, evidence is gathered, interpreted, and analyzed to determine how well the area meets staff-defined expectations and standards. The results are used to improve institutional effectiveness.

Assessment is an ongoing process, hence the name Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle (SLOAC). Faculty and staff define outcomes, assess outcomes, analyze the results, and institute improvements; then the cycle begins again. Cycle dates are published on the OAC SharePoint site.

Quality Data

The assessment loop is essentially a data-driven method of decision-making and instructional/institutional improvement. Assessment is a way of asking what works and what does not.

The goal of assessment is to gather quality data for faculty and staff members to analyze, interpret, and use to improve services or enrich the teaching/learning process. Quality data is based on best practices, answers important questions, and benefits the student and institution by providing evidence to complete the SLOAC loop.

Quality data is:

- o Valid - the data accurately represents what is being measured. For instance, a high percentage of graduating students doesn't necessarily represent true learning.
- o Reliable - the data is reproducible; repeated assessment yields the same data.
- o Authentic - the assessment simulates real-life circumstances.
- o Relevant - the data answers important questions and is not generated simply because it is easy to measure.
- o Effective - the data contributes to improving teaching and learning.

Means of Assessment: Instructional

When SLOs are well-written, the method of assessment is often clear. Faculty are encouraged to use existing assessment methods and to think of the process as documenting activities that naturally occur in teaching. The LAVC SLO Manual provides strong guidance on assessment and includes much of the information below.

There are two components to assessment:

- o Assessment activity - what students will do to demonstrate they have achieved the SLO
- o Assessment measure - how instructors will evaluate what the students have done

To select the appropriate assessment tools, faculty need to understand the:

- o Types of tools available
- o Nature of the data
- o Potentials and limitations of each tool

To create a specific assessment, start by looking at the SLOs for that course or program. Are there any assignments or activities that provide good data on outcomes? If not, one needs to be created. Determine which type of assessment tool best would assess that students can DO the outcome. Remember that the assessment should be authentic - closely resembling a real-life experience. Will the student perform a task, create a product, analyze a case study, or solve a problem?

After identifying what the students will do, faculty will decide on how to measure student outcomes. Start by identifying the major traits that determine a successful outcome. Describe the criteria relating to the traits and create a checklist, rubric, or set of descriptive performance standards. Be sure to set the criteria at the appropriate level of thinking (see Bloom's Taxonomy). Then, try out your assessment on student work and make appropriate modifications.

When SLOs are submitted to VCCC, they are evaluated with a checklist consisting of the following:

- Is the assessment directly related to the outcome? Can it realistically measure/document the outcome?
- Is the assessment specific enough to show how the SLO is being assessed (e.g., it is not enough to simply write "exam" without showing how the exam will assess student learning)?
- Will the assessment produce and/or document evidence of student learning?
- Will the assessment produce manageable information and statistical knowledge?
- Is the assessment a realistic, feasible way of collecting and analyzing evidence?
- Can the assessment differentiate between various levels of achievement through the use of a rubric or other measure?

Means of Assessment: Service Outcomes

The means of assessment should be derived from the outcome statement. Is there a way to effectively evaluate the service provided based on quantitative or qualitative data? Examples may include data on the number of students served, number of forms processed, or amount of time from request to completion. Are surveys an appropriate tool? For example, how satisfied are the people you serve with the services provided? Service areas should work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to design, collect, and analyze such data.

LAVC Program Assessment Process

All degrees (AA, AS, AA-T, AS-T) and Certificates of Achievement are assessed within the SLOAC cycle with data from eLumen. The Program SLO (PSLO) data is pulled in eLumen based on the accumulation of course data in each program. PSLO data is also disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, veteran status or foster youth status on a rotational basis. Questions in Program Review require departments to analyze data from each program and reflect on student achievement as well as steps to improve student learning. An opportunity to request resources for SLO assessment is included.

Student Experience

At the proficiency level of the [ACCJC Rubric on SLOs](#) is the statement: "Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled."
All syllabi must include approved course SLOs; syllabi are posted in a repository every semester on SharePoint. At the discretion of the instructor, Program SLOs and how the course supports program outcomes may also be included. Program SLOs can be found in eLumen and Program Mapper. Counselors should consider course and program outcomes when advising students. Any brochures or other ways that information about programs is disseminated should also include SLOs.

The student experience, however, is about more than just building student awareness of SLOs. Students participate in the process by having a student representative on campus-wide committees, including the Outcomes Assessment Committee. LAVC regularly gathers input from students about learning outcomes via surveys.

Closing the Loop

The ultimate goal of assessment is to use assessment results to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and services. The time frame of the Student Learning Outcome Assessment Cycle (SLOAC) is approved by participatory governance and all outcomes that exist in a department or area should be assessed within the SLOAC cycle. After collecting, discussing, and analyzing the assessment data, resource needs can be requested and improvements can be implemented. Examples of improvements may include revisions or modifications to courses, curriculum, pedagogy, or programs. In service areas, staff may need to develop or modify services or the way they are delivered. Another possible revision is to the outcome statement or assessment tool itself. And then the cycle begins again.

Evaluation of individual assessment efforts is inherent in the process of closing the loop. In examining the assessment results, individuals must evaluate the outcome itself, the assessment tools, and the assessment process. As part of Program Review, all departments and areas report on their progress in the SLO and Service Outcomes Modules by summarizing assessment results (to date) and describing how those results will be used for improvement.

On an annual basis, OAC reviews all responses from the SLO and Service Outcomes Modules in Program Review. This analysis is then sent forward to the Program Effectiveness and Planning Committee (PEPC). Finally, the global effort of assessment on campus is evaluated by reviewing existing forms, by updating assessment technology, and by conducting periodic surveys for all constituents.

Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty:
- Participate in the establishment and assessment outcomes of courses and programs in their discipline
- Include established SLOs on course syllabi
- Consider outcomes when designing course content and assignments
- Generate and gather data for assessment
- SLO assessment results are used for course improvement
- When applicable, service outcomes results are used for the improvement of services
- Participate in Program Review processes for their departments
- Serve on appropriate committees

Staff:
- Participate in the establishment and assessment of outcomes for their areas
- Consider outcomes when designing and conducting area activities, and identifying resources for improvement plans
- Assessment results are used for improvement of services
- Participate in Program Review processes for their areas
- Serve on appropriate committees

Faculty Positions

Department Chair (or designee)
- Work with department members to ensure steady progress on SLO assessment
- Include participation in the SLO assessment cycle on faculty evaluations
- Plan assessments in eLumen
- Coordinate SLO and service outcomes efforts at the department level
- Work with SLO Coordinator as a liaison for the department

SLO Coordinator, Courses
- Oversee and coordinate SLO efforts on campus
- Track and report course assessments for all instructional departments
- Educate faculty members about various course assessment techniques (e.g., rubrics)
- Assist faculty in analyzing results of assessments
- Train department chairs on how to plan assessments in eLumen
- Train faculty members on how to enter assessment data and reflections
- Troubleshoot technical difficulties in eLumen
- Respond to ACCJC Annual Report on SLOs and aid with SLO accreditation responses
- Chair Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC)
- Maintain web-based resources and reports
- Attend District SLO Coordinator meetings

SLO Coordinator, Programs
- Serve on Curriculum Committee and chair VCCC SLO Subcommittee
- Assist department chairs with developing PSLOs
- Train and assist department chairs with mapping CSLOs to PSLOs in eLumen
- Assist faculty in analyzing results of assessments
- Coordinate assessment of college-wide outcomes for degrees and certificates of achievement (through Program Review)
- Coordinate with faculty colleagues about progress on program SLOs and assessment

Administration

Academic Affairs and Student Services Deans
- Encourage and support departments in the SLOAC
- Review SLO submissions, Service Outcomes submissions, and Program Review modules as appropriate

Dean of Institutional Effectiveness
- Serve on Outcomes Assessment Committee
- Advise and support assessment
- Work to include assessment results in all planning processes
- Trains, tracks, and coordinates all service areas on service outcomes assessment

Vice-Presidents
- Encourage and support SLO efforts in their respective areas
- Facilitate dialogue about how the results of service outcomes assessments can be used for improvement, planning, and tied to program goals
- Include participation in the SLO assessment cycle in evaluation process
- Conduct assessment cycles in their own offices

President
- Encourage and support SLO efforts on campus
- Ensure SLOAC efforts in areas that report to the President's Office and in the office itself

Committees

Outcomes Assessment Committee
- Oversee and coordinate SLO efforts at the campus level
- Propose forms, processes, and SLO-related policies
- Update SLO Manual
- Review and approve outcomes for non-instructional programs and areas
- Showcase SLO efforts and promote the campus-wide understanding and integration of SLOs
- Report SLO assessment completion status to PEPC
- Review SLO and Service Outcomes modules annually and provide summaries to PEPC
- Consult with the Academic Senate on instructional policy items
- Bring non-instructional policy items to Institutional Effectiveness Council

Curriculum Committee
- Review and approve course and instructional program outcomes

Academic Senate
- Review and approve Curriculum committee actions
- Review and approve SLO policies proposed by the Outcomes Assessment Committee relevant to instructional programs and faculty roles

Program Effectiveness and Planning Committee
- Consult with OAC on the SLO and Service Outcomes Modules in Program Review processes
- Consider SLOAC results in planning
- Each fall, the Hiring Prioritization Workgroup considers completion status of course SLOs

Professional Development
- Conduct training on SLO-related activities
- Includes outcomes assessment overview for new faculty and staff

Additional Resources
LAVC SLO Manual
LAVC Outcomes Assessment Committee SharePoint
LAVC Curriculum Committee SharePoint
LAVC PEPC SharePoint
LAVC Educational Master Plan, 2020-2026
LAVC Accreditation Webpage
ACCJC Webpage
ACCJC Rubric on Institutional Effectiveness
Bloom's Taxonomy