

What is Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)?

Assessment of SLOs is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves:

1. Establishing clear, measureable expected outcomes of student learning.
2. Determining appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality.
3. Making our expectations explicit and public in the syllabus, catalog and/or Website.
4. Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.
5. Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards.
6. Using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance, programs, courses, instruction, student learning, and student support services – the feedback loop.
7. **Closing the loop** – Since the purpose of assessment is primarily improvement, in order for improvement to occur, the assessment loop must be closed. Closing the loop does produce rather immediate results, particularly in courses. Ways of closing the loop may include revising/improving teaching methods, incorporating learning strategies in courses, selecting alternative teaching strategies such as active and collaborative learning, revising course prerequisites, adding lab time, adopting a mastery learning approach, ensuring that students successfully complete foundational courses, scaffolding courses with progressive success opportunities, requiring tutoring when critical skills are not achieved – the list is exhaustive. See Closing the Loop diagram. Used by permission → Janet Fulks, Assessing Student Learning in Community Colleges (2004), Bakersfield College, jfulks@bakersfieldcollege.edu.