

Academic Affairs Policy No. 2.04-4
Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

1. Background

This policy replaces Policy No. 4.12-1, titled “Learning Outcomes Assessment Guidelines,” that was originally approved by the Provost in October 2009 and revised and updated in 2014.

2. References

- a) Board of Regents Policy Manual, University System of Georgia, Policy 2.9, titled “Institutional Effectiveness: Planning and Assessment”
- b) Board of Regents Policy Manual, University System of Georgia, Policy 3.6.3, titled “Comprehensive Academic Program Review”
- c) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Principles of Accreditation, Standards 8.2.a, 8.2.b, and 10.4.
- d) University of Georgia Curriculum Committee Bylaws
- e) UGA Academic Affairs Policy 4.12-2, titled “Academic Program Review Policy”
- f) UGA Academic Affairs Policy 2.04-3, titled “Academic Program Coordination”

3. Guiding Principles and Purpose of this Policy

UGA’s success in achieving its overall mission and strategic priorities is to a large extent dependent on the quality and effectiveness of its academic programs. Board of Regents (BOR) policies 2.9 and 3.6.3 and SACSCOC Standard 8.2.a require that UGA will have a formal process to assess the effectiveness of all institutionally approved academic programs. A fundamental principle of the assessment of academic programs is that the process of assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) must be continuous and provide evidence of changes or improvement of the academic program based on analysis of the results.

Consistent with SACSCOC expectations and stated requirements, the primary responsibility for the content, quality and effectiveness of academic programs is with faculty. The tradition of shared governance recognizes the importance of both faculty and administrative involvement in the approval and oversight of educational programs. Approval by the faculty ensures programs contain appropriate courses reflecting current knowledge within a discipline and are appropriate for the students enrolled. In turn, approval by the administration affirms i) academic programs are consistent with the mission of the university, ii) the institution possesses the organization and resources to ensure the quality of its academic programs, and iii) academic programs are in compliance with accreditation standards and requirements.

The overall purpose of this policy is to ensure excellence and continuous improvement of academic programs through the assessment of SLOs, and compliance with UGA policies and statutes, BOR policies, and SACSCOC accreditation standards and requirements.

4. Definitions

Academic Programs. Academic Programs refer to the following programs offered at any UGA campus:

- i. All degree programs and the individual majors within each degree program at the undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels
- ii. All certificate programs
- iii. The University-wide General Education Curriculum.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): SLOs articulate the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the program. SLOs should be appropriate to the nature of the discipline and be measurable.

Continuous Assessment: SACSCOC expects the institution to show a commitment to continuous improvement. For academic programs, this means that processes for collecting, analyzing, and using SLO data must be ongoing rather than periodic (e.g., once every three, four, or seven years). Assessment must occur in repeating cycles that are sustained and consistent over time to enable the faculty to evaluate the learning of students as they progress through and complete an academic program. Appropriate cycles of assessment should be determined by the discipline and the way students progress through the program, so that some outcomes are always being assessed and all outcomes are assessed over the period during which students customarily progress through and complete an academic program. Data collection and analysis for each SLO should coincide with the time the students are expected to achieve the specific SLO.

5. Responsibility for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans: As required by SACSCOC, faculty must identify expected SLOs for each academic program, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of changes or improvement based on analysis of the results.

For each academic program at UGA, the respective faculty are responsible for continuous assessment to determine the effectiveness of the academic program and to make changes as appropriate. In addition, and aligned with BOR Policies 2.9 and 3.6.3., the Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC) is responsible for the seven-year review of the procedures for SLO assessment as defined by UGA's Guidelines and Policies for Program Review.

For University-wide academic programs, the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) is the responsible faculty body for developing SLOs and SLO Assessment Plans. The UCC and the Office of the Vice President for Instruction (OVPI) must work collaboratively to collect and analyze data. OVPI is responsible for reporting on the extent to which these SLOs are achieved. Finally, the UCC is responsible for recommending changes and improvements and for their subsequent implementation.

To enable this assessment process, the faculty must maintain a current SLO Assessment Plan for each academic program and report on the extent to which all SLOs are met. Each requirement of the SLO Assessment Plan and reporting process must be maintained on the centralized electronic portal identified and supported by the Provost's Office.

The **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan** must contain the following elements:

- 1) Written Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), as defined in section 4;
- 2) Description of the measures that will be used to assess the extent to which the SLOs are met;
- 3) Description of the data that will be collected and analyzed annually; and
- 4) A schedule for conducting continuous assessments. The schedule needs to specify when data will be collected and analyzed for each SLO relative to the way students progress through and complete the academic program. Data must be collected and analyzed at frequent enough intervals to provide meaningful and continuous improvement in the academic program. Ideally, data will be collected and analyzed annually for all written SLOs. At a minimum, data must be collected and analyzed annually on multiple SLOs and data must be collected and analyzed on all SLOs within a timeframe that is defined and justified by the academic unit; however, the timeframe for assessment of all SLOs must not exceed seven years.

The **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reporting** must include the following:

- 1) Collected data on SLOs per the Assessment Plan;
- 2) Analysis of SLO data and conclusions as to the extent to which SLOs are met; and
- 3) Evidence of Improvement. The reporting must demonstrate, where appropriate, how the continuous assessments have been used to make changes or improvements in the academic program over time.

Maintenance of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans and Assessment Reporting: Deans have overall responsibility to ensure that SLO Assessment Plans are current and SLO Assessment Reporting is demonstrated for all academic programs under their oversight. In units other than colleges or schools that have oversight of academic programs, the most senior administrator (e.g., vice president or director) has overall responsibility. To meet this responsibility, the dean or senior administrator must serve as or name a qualified delegate to serve as the Student Learning Outcome Coordinator (“SLO Coordinator”) for the academic unit. The SLO Coordinator will serve on the Steering Committee (described in section 7) and ensure compliance with this policy and all SACSCOC and BOR policies and expectations as they relate to continuous assessment and assessment reporting of academic programs. To this end, the SLO Coordinator must work closely with Academic Program Coordinators, as defined in Academic Affairs Policy 2.04-3, titled “Academic Program Coordination.”

6. Externally Accredited Academic Programs

For the purposes of this policy and specifically relating to the assessment of SLOs of an academic program, an externally accredited academic program may substitute the section of the accreditation report pertaining to the assessment of SLOs, as long as the academic unit meets all of the ongoing data collection and analysis and reporting requirements of this policy. Importantly, depending on the timing and duration of the external accreditation, the academic program may be required to supplement the accreditation data and report accordingly to meet the ongoing and reporting requirements of this policy.

Specifically, if external accreditation materials and assessment are to be used in the institutional program review process, the following materials must be submitted via the centralized electronic portal:

- 1) A current SLO Assessment Plan;
- 2) An annual letter that certifies data have been collected and analyzed per the SLO Assessment Plan, supplemented with data, as needed, to comply with this policy;
- 3) The section of the accreditation report pertaining to the assessment of SLOs, supplemented by analysis and conclusions, as needed, to comply with this policy; and
- 4) Evidence, where appropriate, of how the continuous assessments were used to make changes or improvements in the academic program.

7. Committee Oversight

Consistent with the Guiding Principles and Purpose of this policy, the **Student Learning Outcomes Executive Committee** will have overall oversight over this policy to ensure excellence and continuous improvement of academic programs, and compliance with UGA policies and statutes, BOR policies, and SACSCOC accreditation standards and requirements.

Members of the Student Learning Outcomes **Executive Committee** include:

- Vice President for Instruction or their designee (Chair)
- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
- Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs
- Associate Vice President for Instruction and Registrar
- Director, Office of Institutional Research
- Associate Director of Assessment, Office of Instruction
- Senior Director, Office of Accreditation and Institutional Effectiveness
- Chair, University Curriculum Committee
- Chair, Program Review and Assessment Committee
- Additional members that may be appointed by the Provost

The Steering Committee will have the overall responsibility to implement and execute this policy. The Steering Committee will be comprised of 1) key stakeholders, who collectively oversee assessment of all academic programs, and 2) key support units, who facilitate and support the requirements of this policy. The Steering Committee will advise and update the Executive Committee and as necessary will develop additional policies, guidelines and procedures to be approved by the Executive Committee, that guide implementation and execution of this policy.

Members of the Student Learning Outcomes **Steering Committee** include:

- Vice President for Instruction or their designee (Chair)
- All Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Coordinators
- Chair, General Education Subcommittee, University Curriculum Committee
- Associate Director, Office of Accreditation and Institutional Effectiveness
- Associate Director of Assessment, Office of Instruction
- Director of Programming in Faculty Affairs
- Director of Assessment and Staff Development, Division of Student Affairs
- Representative from the Office of Institutional Research
- Additional members that may be appointed by the Executive Committee

8. Compliance

All academic programs that have institutionally-approved programs of study must comply with this policy. The dean or the most senior administrator has overall responsibility to remedy an academic program not in compliance with this policy. UGA's Accreditation Liaison to SACSCOC will be responsible for addressing non-compliance matters related to this policy. Continued non-compliance may result in suspension or termination of the academic program.

9. Required Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed no less than annually by the Executive Committee. Any recommended revisions to this policy must be approved by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

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Approved by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost on June 20, 2016.

Revised by the Executive Committee and approved by the Provost on May 12, 2017 and May 5, 2018, and July 30, 2020.