

## SLOs and the Syllabus

While ten [TWENTY] years ago it may have been acceptable for an institution to have an assessment plan, regional accreditors today expect that evidence of student learning outcomes will be assembled and used to improve teaching, learning, and overall institutional performance. This increased emphasis on assessment and on using assessment results for improvement is underscored by the fact that each of the regional accreditors has updated and strengthened standards for assessment at some point over the last eight years. . . . Because many institutions are on a ten-year reaccreditation cycle [UMW NEXT UP IN 2022], they are likely to confront a higher bar and raised expectations for learning outcomes assessment over the next several years. In other words, institutions reaccredited during the last decade may be vulnerable to a false sense of comfort as they prepare for the next accreditation review. The standards of almost all of the regional accreditors include the expectation that institutions clearly state learning outcomes. Each regional accreditor, moreover, expects institutions to assess stated learning outcomes at all levels with multiple measures and to use the assessment information primarily for institutional improvement.

Staci Provezis (October 2010). *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes*.

**Student Learning Outcome (SLO)** – Derived from programmatic learning goals, student learning outcomes identify the measurable and demonstrable learning (knowledge, skills, behaviors, values) that is expected to result from an activity, course, program, or curriculum.

### Five Tips For Writing Effective SLOs

- a) Consult the general education curriculum and/or the major program to identify SLOs that pertain to the course you are teaching.
- b) Avoid terms like “understand,” “appreciate” and “know.” These are aspects of learning which are internal to students and more difficult to assess. Instead, focus on what students should be able to do or demonstrate at the conclusion of the learning experience.
- c) Write SLOs as **discreet**, declarative sentences.
- d) Write SLOs from the student perspective, not from the instructor’s perspective on what the course covers.
- e) Outcomes should be observable and measurable and should be crafted in conjunction with planning and assessment strategies.

**UMW Syllabus** - According to the *Faculty Handbook*, a syllabus must contain several things

**5.4.6 Course Plans and the Syllabus** With the exception of courses for which a common syllabus is agreed upon by those teaching it, course plans are the responsibility of the individual instructor. Instructors have the right to determine the requirements of the courses they teach, based on the course description as published in the appropriate Academic Catalog and within the limitations of college, department and university policy. Faculty should provide students with a course syllabus containing, at a minimum, the following: (a) instructor identification and contact information; (b) course identification; (c) course goals and objectives; (d) student learning outcomes, including (when applicable) general education learning outcomes; (e) required materials (textbooks, lab manuals, etc.); (f) course calendar (assignment due dates, tests, etc.); (g) guidelines for class participation; (h) basis for determining final grades and mid-semester progress reports (in undergraduate courses, where required); (i) accessibility statement; (j) course recording policy statement; (k) Title IX policy statement; and (l) instructor’s statement of adherence to the Honor System. Individual colleges and departments may determine additional requirements for syllabus preparation. Sample syllabi statements for addressing accessibility, the recording policy, and the Title IX policy are available at the Provost’s web site. Instructors should distribute the syllabus to students no later than the first scheduled meeting of the course (or the first day of the semester/term for fully online courses). Instructors are required to submit a digital copy of the syllabus to the department chair and/or college dean’s office in each semester/term they are teaching.