

# Undergraduate Assessment Guide

Teaching Engagement Program  
Office of the Provost

Annual Program Assessment tracks efforts to improve the curriculum, specifically focusing on **student learning** and **student achievement** in UO academic programs over time. Each academic program is responsible for establishing their own program learning outcomes (PLOs) and a student achievement goal which together serve as the foundation for ongoing assessment efforts. The assessment cycle provides the steps for successfully closing the loop—taking action to achieve student learning and achievement goals.



**Student Learning Assessment:** *Each academic program identifies and assesses program learning outcomes. The focus should be on finding areas for improvement and taking action to improve student learning.*

Program learning outcomes describe what students should be able to do as a result of your program. Each learning outcome must be assessed at least once every 10-year Program Assessment Cycle. Units will be responsible for creating a schedule for assessing program learning outcomes (schedules can range from assessing all outcomes in a single year to one outcome every couple of years). Years not focused on program learning outcomes are flexible and can focus on assessment of other student learning projects (Topical Assessment Guides [provide some examples](#)). Programs can identify and report progress on more than one student learning goal in their annual assessment.

**Student Achievement Assessment:** *Programs monitor student outcomes (for example, grades, retention, graduation rates, post-graduation success), and implement plans for improvement, especially eliminating barriers and closing equity gaps where they exist.*

Student achievement assessment may include:

- Assessment of student achievement goal identified in most recent decennial program review
- Assessment of student achievement goal identified in Spring 2023
- Assessment of other student achievement goal (selected by programs)

Annual assessment immediately following decennial program review will focus on the student achievement goal identified in the Decennial Program Review self-study and implementation plan. Programs not currently undergoing decennial program review will be tasked with identifying a student achievement goal in 2023. Assessment work toward a single student achievement goal may span multiple years if units can define their progress. Upon completion of goals, programs will set new achievement goal(s) and begin the assessment cycle again. Programs can identify and report progress on more than one student achievement goal in their annual assessment.

## 2024-25 Assessment Reporting

Program learning outcome reports and student achievement goal updates should be uploaded to program assessment sharepoint [folders](#) by **April 28, 2025**.

**Program learning outcome assessment:** Each program is expected to assess each program learning outcome over each decennial program review. For many programs, it is useful to develop an assessment plan for when and how you will assess each learning outcome. We'll offer weekly office hours and a workshop in fall and winter term to support departmental assessment planning efforts.

**Student Achievement Goals:** Student achievement goals are a new part of program assessment. In 2022-23, programs developed student achievement goals. In 2023-24, programs identified potential strategies. This academic year, programs will report progress toward implementing a strategy and any preliminary outcomes.

**Office hours for assessment support:** Wednesdays 10-11am

<https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/95955411654>

Or schedule a meeting [ahocker@uoregon.edu](mailto:ahocker@uoregon.edu)

### Contents:

Assessment Cycle .....	3
Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes.....	4
Identifying Program Learning Outcomes.....	4
Assessment Methods.....	4
Assessment Planning .....	5
Assessment of Student Achievement Goals .....	6
Example Student Achievement Goals.....	7
Identifying Student Achievement Goals .....	7
Interpreting the data .....	7
Articulating a student achievement goal.....	8

## Assessment Cycle

Assessment is the process of making curricular improvements in alignment with our goals for students. The assessment cycle at UO outlines four steps that make up a productive approach to assessment.



**1. Set Goals:** The first step is setting intentional goals for student learning (program learning outcomes) and for student achievement (Student Achievement Goals). These goals serve as the basis for assessment projects – gathering information about how programs are meeting their goals, and taking action to make improvements. The goals that programs choose should be both practical and inspiring, reflecting their values and aspirations for educating students.

**2. Gather Evidence:** Programs can use a variety of sources to understand how well they are meeting their goals. For example, indirect evidence from faculty and student reflections is often a useful source of evidence for identifying areas for improvement. Direct evidence from student work samples or exams can help programs understand if students are able to demonstrate the skills articulated in program learning outcomes. Typically, the best assessment projects will use multiple sources of information to identify places where programs can be improved.

**3. Interpret and Reflect:** Assessment is intended to help improve a program’s curriculum. And the curriculum is set in place and enacted through the choices faculty make in every course in the program. Therefore, assessment can’t be a task carried out by a single individual. Programs should have conversations about assessment and identifying areas for improvement in their curriculum.

**4. Take Action:** The outcome of assessment is action, not just data. Assessment is made meaningful when it is used to identify areas for improvement and programs take action for improvement. Taking action for improvement can be the most challenging and most important aspect of assessment. However, it’s helpful to appreciate that small improvement efforts can be meaningful ways to improve student learning and are good examples of assessment. Examples of actions include: modifying an assignment to better achieve a student learning goal; changing a pedagogical approach in a class to support the learning of a specific skill; altering a course objective to be in better alignment with program learning outcomes; and intentionally increasing supports or outreach to struggling students in the program. Other examples of actions in assessment can be found [on this webpage](#).

## Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes

We recommend listing **4-5 learning outcomes** for each major. These outcomes should describe what students will know, value, and be able to do upon graduation. Good outcomes are specific and measurable, and most importantly, compelling to instructors and students. Remember that the measure of assessment success is whether your unit finds the process meaningful. Therefore, objectives should reflect the goals and values that your faculty have for student learning.

### Identifying Program Learning Outcomes

Articulating program learning outcomes is the first step of student learning assessment. In order for assessment to be meaningful and interesting to faculty, the program learning outcomes should describe student skills and abilities that are important to faculty. In other words, learning outcomes should be compelling and departments should work to articulate program outcomes that describe the most important aspects of student learning in their programs. Ideally, these should be things that graduating students would be excited and proud to have accomplished in the program. Program Learning Outcomes should be student-focused and are often written in the form “Students will be able to [VERB]....”

Consider using the following resources in identifying or revising program learning outcomes:

- See a list of all current program learning outcomes in the [UO Catalog](#).
- Use this [reflective checklist](#) to review your PLOs
- Consider guidance from the Teaching Engagement Program on [articulating effective learning objectives](#).
- [Invite a consultant](#) to help facilitate the conversation in your department
- Appendix 1 offers a “Goal Definition Worksheet” to guide a departmental conversation about learning objectives.
- Consider program learning objectives that address **career readiness** or **equity and inclusion** skills as described in the [career readiness assessment guide](#) or from [examples of equity and inclusion assessment projects](#).
- Schedule a consultation about setting useful program learning outcomes [here](#)

### Assessment Methods

#### ***How will you know that students are meeting program learning objectives? How will learning outcomes be assessed?***

The next step of assessment is to gather information about how well students are achieving the outcomes you have set. A useful initial process is to identify where in the curriculum you expect students to be developing the skills related to each program learning outcome. This process, called “curriculum mapping”, in itself can be a useful activity for understanding and improving the alignment of courses in your curriculum.

#### ***Curriculum Mapping: Where does learning take place in our curriculum?***

Curriculum Mapping is the process of identifying where in the curriculum students develop toward each of the program learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are developed at multiple levels and aligning them to specific courses allows us to understand how educational experiences work together to develop students. Creating and reflecting on a curriculum map can help improve the coherence of an academic program and help identify where to focus assessment activities. The goal of any assessment activity is to

find areas for improvement, so, if your curriculum mapping process leads you to identifying course misalignments, taking action to fix that alignment is a good example of assessment “working”.

Resources:

- A guide for curriculum mapping linked [here](#)
- An excel template for curriculum mapping ([linked here](#))

***What type of evidence will you collect to better understand student learning?***

The best assessment projects use multiple sources of evidence to inform your understanding of student’s learning. For example, direct evidence from student assignments, indirect evidence from students perceptions about their learning, and indirect evidence from instructors about which aspects of assignments students struggle with the most.

Choosing a manageable source of evidence is crucial. Many well-intentioned assessment projects are derailed by quickly becoming too complicated for faculty to meaningfully sustain. A useful approach can be to identify any existing assignments from your curriculum map that would be good sources of evidence about student learning related to each learning objective. Instructors may already be assessing student work in a way that provides useful data for assessment purposes. For example, using a rubric, or evaluating specific skills demonstrated by student work samples. Reflecting on these types of assessment data in conjunction with faculty reflections about which aspects of the program learning outcomes students struggle with can be a good mechanism to identify potential areas for improvement. In fact, in TEP, we find these types of activities happen frequently but are much less often associated with a programs assessment efforts.

Assessment methods should be matched to the types of learning you are expecting for students. [Schedule a consultation](#) to strategize about different assessment methods that may be useful in your context.

### Assessment Planning

***When will you conduct the assessment of each learning objective? Who will be responsible for each component? What is the overall timeline for the assessment plan?***

Each program is responsible for assessing each of their program learning outcomes at least once every 10 years. Consider using something like the simple table below to map out when each learning objective will be assessed in which years. In this example below, each learning objective would be assessed at least once every 5 years. Let your findings guide this plan and update it as needed. For instance, you might revisit a challenging learning objective sooner if you’ve made changes to improve the outcomes.

Learning Objective	AY 23-24	AY 24-25	AY 26-27	AY 27-28	AY 28-29
LO1 – Students will...	Collect evidence	Implement actions			
LO2				Collect evidence	Implement actions
LO3		Collect evidence	Implement actions		
LO4			Collect evidence	Implement actions	
LO5					Collect evidence

## Assessment of Student Achievement Goals

Student Achievement Goals should focus on student outcomes ( grades, retention, graduation rates, or post-graduation success) and focus on eliminating barriers and closing equity gaps where they exist.

Student achievement goals may come from goals identified in Spring 2023 as part of annual program assessment or recent goals articulated as part of decennial program review. Immediately following decennial program review, units should focus on the student achievement goal identified in their self study and implementation plan. Programs are welcome to identify and report progress for more than one student achievement goal in their annual assessment.

Effective student achievement goals should be:

- **Evidence-based:** informed by disaggregated data about student outcomes
- **Specific:** set for specific populations of students, for example, specifically for an individual racially minoritized group.
- **Ambitious:** goals should be bold, aiming to close equity gaps and eliminate barriers for students
- **Measurable:** the goal should be something that is assessable
- **Monitored:** student achievement goals will serve as the basis for assessment projects and assessment reporting and will therefore be monitored by the program over time.

See [Center for Urban Education 2020](#) page 53 for more

### **Important Note**

Each program is responsible for setting their own goals and tracking them over time as part of program assessment. Program assessment provides a structure and support for long-term goal implementation and making improvements in academic programs over time. The role of the office of the provost is to support long-term improvement efforts that are faculty led. We encourage units to set ambitious goals that are meaningful to them and to work over time to meet those goals.

## Example Student Achievement Goals

“Decrease the DFN% (percentage of students receiving a D, F or N grade) in [*specific course or course sequence*] for Black students by 10 percentage points.”

“Increase the 2 year retention rate for our Latino/a/x majors by 6 percentage points.”

## Identifying Student Achievement Goals

The Office of the Provost provides disaggregated data to support the process of identifying equity gaps in student outcomes can be found in Program Assessment SharePoint “Data” folders. Instructions and links to access these folders are found here:

<https://provost.uoregon.edu/program-assessment-folder-access>

### Example data sources include:

- A new Grade Equity Dashboard
  - o Data include: Department and course-level equity gaps, grade distributions, equity index
- A new [Undergraduate student dashboard](#)
  - o Data include: Demographics, Graduation Rates by major, Retention by major
- Undergraduate Profiles & appendices by each major
  - o Data include: Major Demographics, student grade and graduation outcomes.

## Interpreting the data

The most important element of using any of these data tools described above is focusing on **identifying areas for improvement**. In other words, using data as a part of a **inquiry** driven process for internal reflection and change. A common framework to make data conversations more productive for identifying areas for improvement is to notice and name equity-minded vs deficit-minded data interpretations ([Center for Urban Education 2020](#)).

**Deficit minded** data interpretation is more likely to assume students are responsible for worse outcomes.

**Equity minded** data interpretation acknowledges the possibility that current practices may not be working for every student and encourages questions that challenge assumptions about students. For example,

*“Are there any aspects of our policies, practices, course content, scheduling, or communications that better support some students over others?”*

The overall goal of assessment is finding areas for improvement, and interpreting student outcome data is no different. The program assessment process is about internal goal setting and improvement, not about external accountability.

### Articulating a student achievement goal

Below is a set of questions intended to guide a group through identifying potential areas for improvement that can serve as targets for student achievement goals.

Individuals and departments can request consultations about these data, coaching for leading conversations about disaggregated data, or request facilitation for group conversations. Contact us with [this form](#).

- 1) Your department may already have a student achievement goal. For example: Does your program already have a goal for student outcomes from your **Diversity Action Plan**? If so, you could make any needed updates and use as your student achievement goal for program assessment.
  
- 2) Using the **Grade Equity Dashboard** to identify a student achievement goal. You can either discuss the data in a faculty meeting or assign a small task force or existing committee to interpret the data and propose a goal and rationale to the department. Here are some simplified steps for identifying a goal based on the Course Equity Dashboard.
  - a. Start at the "**Course DFNW**" page.
    - i. Which are the courses with the largest enrollments over the last 11 years?
    - ii. Which course result in the most students receiving DFNW grades?
    - iii. Which courses have the highest DFNW%?
    - iv. Which have the lowest equity index for Black, Latinx, Native American and Pacific Islander (BLNP) students?

*Tip: You can sort the table by clicking on the column header you want to sort by.*

Add courses of interest to a simple table:

Course	Enrollment	# receiving DFN(W)	DFN(W)%	Equity Index for BLNP students

- b. Go to the next page, "**DFNW-Demographics**" to explore more disaggregated data for your courses of interest.
  - i. Select a course of interest from the list you identified from the previous page.
 

*Tip: Use the filter on the far left side to view data for a single course at a time.*
  - ii. Select a demographic grouping (e.g. BLNP Race/Ethnicity) from the options at the top of the page to see disaggregated data for your course of interest.
  - iii. What is the DFNW% for each racial/ethnic group? Which group has the lowest DFNW%? Which has the highest DFNW%?
  
- c. Based on your exploration so far, are there any equity gaps that could be the focus of a student achievement goal?
  
- d. Write a student achievement goal: e.g.

*"Decrease the [outcome metric (e.g. DFNW%)] in [specific course or course sequence] for [specific demographic group] students by [numerical amount needed to close the equity gap]."*



## **Resources**

Center for Urban Education. (2020). Equity minded inquiry series: Data Tools. Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Goal Definition Worksheet**

Each faculty member in the department should complete a copy of this worksheet. Arrange a time for all of you to sit down together to compare notes and discuss results. The final product of this exercise should be a list of three to five broad goals that describe what department faculty believe should be characteristic of graduates in the major.

1. List any department learning outcomes or goals that you know. This information can most likely be found in the course catalog, program brochure, or department mission statement. Some units have already identified learning outcomes and can find those on department or school/college websites, such as in CAS at <http://cas.uoregon.edu/learning-outcomes/>.

2. Describe your ideal student in terms of strengths, skills, knowledge and values, and identify which of these characteristics are the result of the program experience.

3. Keeping this ideal student in mind, ask what the student

- a. knows
- b. can do
- c. cares about

4. What program experiences can you identify as making the most contribution to producing and supporting the ideal student?