

Home Stretch
Tip Sheet #9
Cleaning Up the SLOs FAQs

How are we doing? Have any departments crossed the finish line?

Yes, I'm attaching two solid working drafts to this document from Computer Sciences and from Psychology. You will note the simplicity of their format. The outcomes appear clutter-free and should communicate directly to students and other stakeholders.

Is there a preferred format for submitting the SLOs?

To ensure that the SLOs have the same institutional feel, it would be helpful to include your mission statement, followed by the domains in this order:

- Content
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Integrity/Character
- Project Management

Please do not include any curriculum review or assessment specs at this point in our planning. We hope to post the collected SLOs on the CUTL website. At the end of the year when your department has lived with them awhile—and possibly tweaked them from practice—we will move the SLOs to a more prominent place on the website.

Should we have a minimum of two outcomes in each domain?

Not necessarily. The commitment to measurement certainly should encourage you to be more narrow than expansive, however, it is hard to specify what number would do justice to each domain from the stand-point of your distinctive discipline. Two outcomes in each domain would give you at least two ways to answer questions about how well you are doing in teaching the domain, but how many you put in each domain should reflect the discipline as well as your department's desires and energy for measurement.

Are there any interesting ideas that have been emerging from the plans so far?

1. Career Preparation. It appears that some departments may be including a formal CONTENT outcome that will help students recognize how the bachelor's degree qualifies them for different career paths related to the discipline. That kind of outcome may be especially helpful if your program has the traditional (and inappropriate) reputation of not qualifying graduates for any kind of job.
2. Academic Integrity. Several departments are including a statement about "recognizing and adhering to principles of academic integrity" in the INTEGRITY/CHARACTER domain. This is a good idea and probably one that we will visit institutionally next year when we begin to examine general education and its relationship to the ALCs.

3. Information Literacy. The ability to use database information to conduct research is showing up in CRITICAL THINKING domain. I suspect we will be getting some help from the library on this goal in the future.
4. Self-Assessment. Students may benefit from “recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in their own performance” which could fit easily under CRITICAL THINKING or PROJECT MANAGEMENT. A later tip sheet will deal with the value of self-assessment practices in more detail.

When the SLOs are done, what should we do with them?

Email them to me at jhalonen@uwf. I edit them to give them a consistent voice. Typically that means making them as lean as possible and to challenge outcomes that are not clear or may be hard to measure. Sometimes it may mean suggesting a different wording or encouraging you to think about putting the outcome in a different domain. It is a relatively painless process. I return my edits to you. When you are happy, you forward the final “working draft” to me and we post it on the website.

What happens next?

In the short-term, you should begin working the department on a curriculum audit. Basically, this procedure involves a departmental discussion where you look at the structure of the curriculum and identify the places where students get experience in the specific outcomes.

This process can usually produce some surprises. For example, you may discover that students are getting much more experience in writing and writing in diverse forms than you initially would have predicted. On the other hand, you may find that students’ get very little experience in writing and you may want to collaborate in the department to figure out the best places that writing should take place.

We will give you some later tips on formats that may facilitate your department discussions of the audit. The deadline for the audit is **February 1** so this activity can occur once the spring semester begins.

What about the long-term?

In the long-term, we will be asking the departments to include information on the achievement of the outcomes as part of the annual report. That planning should be part of departmental discussions next semester to meet the assessment plan deadline of **May 1**.

Finally, we ask you to prepare a print hand-out to be able to hand to your majors in the fall of 2005. It would make sense to post your work on your website as well.