

NU Learning and Teaching Toolkit #2

Assessment of Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Why should we focus on the assessment of LOs?

LOs Assessment is a key principle of the **ESG 2015** (standard 1.3) and a **requirement for accreditation** by accrediting agencies, including:

- [AACSB](#)
- [ABET](#)
- [EAPAA](#)
- [WHO-WFME](#)



It provides meaningful data on students' performance against LOs which can be used to improve learning (Cartwright, Weiner & Streamer-Veneruso, 2010).

Please read the [NU Assessment Strategy 2016](#) to learn more about the University's approach to assessment.

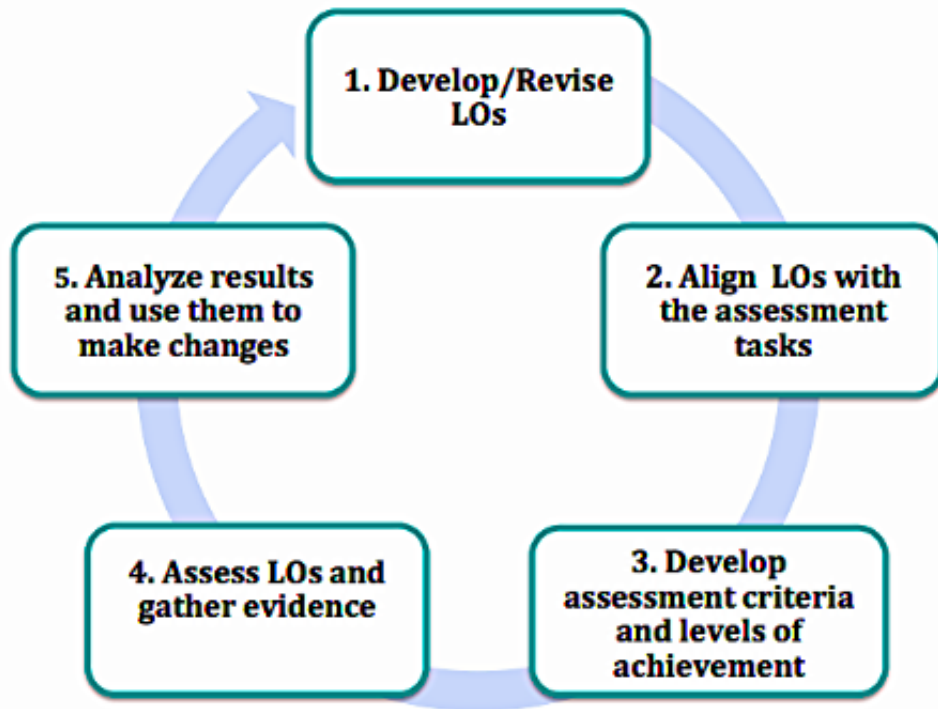
7 Steps in the Assessment of LOs

1. Question your status quo (for existing courses/programs)

Do your current assessment methods match the intended LOs? Review previous student feedback on grading (obtained through the course evaluation surveys) and peer review results. Discuss your assessment strategies with your colleagues.

The Assessment Cycle of Continuous Improvement

Each LO should go through this assessment cycle periodically (Diagram 1). The loop represents the continuous nature of assessing LOs (Roberts, 2008).



2. Develop/Revisit your LOs

Learning outcomes should:

- state what the student will be able to do by the end of the course/program;
- use action verbs (consider [Anderson and Krathwohl's taxonomy](#) as an example);
- be clear, comprehensive, and measurable;
- be benchmarked and appropriate to the level and year of study;
- **be aligned with** at least one of the program's LOs and the NU Graduate Attributes

Click [here](#) to find resources on writing effective LOs.

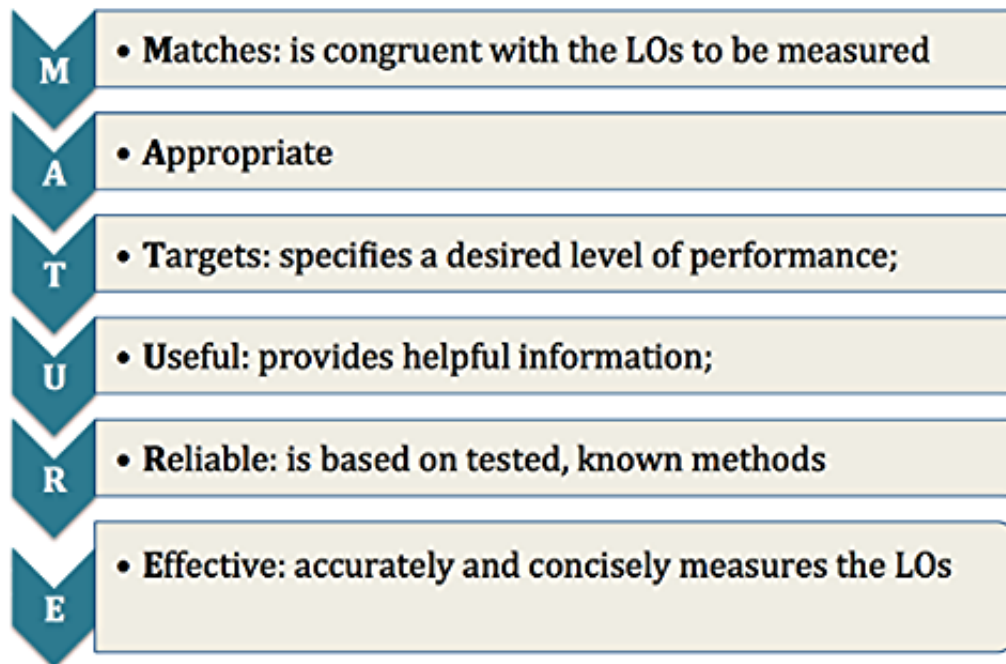


GSE students (MSc in Multilingual Education)

3. Create/Review your assessment methods (AM)

- In selecting an AM, look at the verb used for the LO and make sure that it can be assessed using the chosen method;
- Align the AM with the course LO;
- If several instructors deliver one course, ensure a unified approach, consistent outcomes and AMs;
- Inform your students of the LOs and how they will be assessed (including a rubric) to make the process transparent;

An AM should be **MATURE** (Diagram 2).



(Nichols, 2008)

4. Construct rubrics

Align assignment items with LOs and develop clear rubrics by establishing a range of performance categories that are clear, accurate, consistent and accessible to all students, staff and examiners. Look at some examples of the rubrics used at the [California State University](#) and [Carnegie Mellon University](#).

Determine the predominant performance level of the student work based on criteria in the rubric and convert to the corresponding letter grade.

Grade descriptors should be clear. The grades that are awarded must be accurate representations of the level of learning achieved; but they alone do not provide sufficient evidence of students' progress towards achieving LOs (James, McInnis & Devlin, 2002).

Read §6 for more details.

The Right Assessment? Example: *Analyzing*

Cognitive Process	Assessment	Question Starters
Organizing: Determining how elements fit within a structure.	Pre tab hie	Analyze, organize, outline, draw, diagram, chart, tabulate, subdivide.
Attributing: Determining a point of view, intent, purpose.	Constructing or selecting a description of an author's point of view for written or oral material	Attribute, ascribe, depict, describe, infer, deduce.

(See handout for more examples)

Workshop on the scope of assessment practices. The Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of South Carolina (2012).

5. Design the curriculum, teaching and learning activities to support the achievement of the LOs

Classroom activities should be introduced to help students achieve the LOs. Assessment results can show which students do best in response to specific teaching and learning methods, thereby improving the learning process.

In a constructively aligned course, LOs, learning experiences, and AMs work together to ensure the achievement of the LOs (Biggs & Tang, 2011).



A photo of the 2nd year MD students (NUSOM)

6. Determine whether and to what extent students have achieved the LOs

Accrediting bodies often require to provide evidence that LOs are being achieved. The data should reflect on the knowledge and skills that are developed in the program. To evaluate students' achievement of LOs, do not rely only on one type of assessment, but apply both **direct** and **indirect** types of AMs (Table 1).

Types of Assessment

Direct methods

- short form tests
- exams
- essay/papers
- lab work
- presentations
- written report
- projects
- capstone experiences
- theses and dissertations

(Roberts, 2008).

Indirect measures

- surveys can measure student experience, satisfaction, and their perception of their own learning
- exit interview
- focus groups
- course evaluation surveys
- questionnaires
- surveys of alumni/employers

(Suskie, 2009).

Alignment is critical for effective outcomes assessment. Develop an assessment matrix, which maps LOs against AMs, both direct and indirect on different courses. This mapping will ensure that all program LOs are addressed (Table 2).

Program Learning Outcomes	Direct methods					Indirect methods		
	Course assessment tasks					Focus-groups	Alumni Survey	Employers' interview
Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4	Course 5				
PLO1	Exam; Literature review			Project			X	
PLO2			Presentation	Test			X	
PLO3		Lab			Project		X	X
PLO4		Paper	Essay			X		X
PLO5	Test				Book review	X	X	
PLO6	Project			Exam		X	X	

To have an accurate representation of student achievement of LOs, align assessment tasks and each of their components (e.g. presentations, research papers, examination questions) with the course LOs.

Elicit grades from the assessment tasks that are aligned with the outcome. Refer to grade descriptors to describe the level of achievement. The awarded grades should reflect a link between the LOs and students' performance on the assessment tasks.

7. Use this information to improve teaching and learning

Assessment results should be thoroughly analyzed. If a LO was not achieved, consider

what needs to be changed? Include this information in the annual course/program monitoring reports. You may involve external examiners and your colleagues in an assessment review process and introduce appropriate modifications.

Ensure the assessment process is consistent and well-documented.

It is also important to make assessment an ongoing, not occasional, process. Student progress is better cultivated if assessment embraces a series of activities throughout the program of study.

References

Archive

Learning & Teaching Toolkit #1

Academic Quality Enhancement

academicquality@nu.edu.kz

my.nu.edu.kz

SHARE

TWEET

FORWARD

+

mailer lite