

Making Assessment Manageable

Jarrold Rossi, MS, MBA, EdD

Director of University Assessment

DARpA



Agenda

- Overview of Assessment
- Writing SLOs
- Selecting Measures
- Realistic Targets
- Analyzing Results
- Continuous Improvement
- Tips & Tricks
- Navigating Watermark



Overview of Assessment at Lamar



Assessment Plans and Reports

Assessment Plans

- Due December 1
- Include SLOs, Measures, Targets

Assessment Reports

- Due June 1
- Include Results, Analysis, and Continuous Improvement Efforts

Influenced by SACSCOC

Standard 8.2.a:

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.

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Program Assessment

Starts at the course
level... in the syllabus

Developing a Student Learning Outcome

Students will understand the basic concepts and theories in the discipline.

- Understanding is a valid learning goal, but “understand” alone does not specify the observable evidence students will produce to demonstrate that understanding.

Students will apply major concepts and theories in the discipline to analyze real-world problems or scenarios.

- That gives you two measurable actions: **apply** and **analyze**. You could assess it using an exam question, case study, paper, presentation, project, or rubric-scored assignment.

SLOs at Different Levels of Rigor

- **Topic: Applying disciplinary concepts to real-world problems**
- **Freshman level:** Students will **identify** major concepts and theories relevant to a real-world problem.
- **Senior level:** Students will **apply** major concepts and theories to **analyze** a complex real-world problem and recommend an evidence-based response.
- **Graduate level:** Students will **synthesize** disciplinary theories and research to develop and defend an original response to a complex or emerging problem.

SLOs at Different Levels of Rigor

- Freshmen work with foundational concepts and relatively structured problems.
- Seniors integrate knowledge and address more complex or ambiguous problems.
- Graduate students exercise independent judgment, synthesize research, and contribute an original interpretation or solution.

Choosing a Measurable Verb

Level of learning

Useful verbs

Remember

define, identify, label, list, recall

Understand

classify, compare, describe, explain,
summarize

Apply

apply, calculate, demonstrate, implement,
solve

Analyze

analyze, differentiate, examine, organize

Evaluate

critique, defend, evaluate, justify

Create

construct, design, develop, formulate, produce

Student Learning Outcomes vs Course Objectives... what's the difference?

Course Objective (what the course will provide)

- Introduce students to major disciplinary concepts and theories and provide structured opportunities to examine their relevance to real-world problems.
- Provide students with opportunities to compare and apply disciplinary concepts and theories when examining complex real-world problems and developing evidence-based responses.
- Facilitate advanced examination of disciplinary theories and research and provide opportunities for independent synthesis, critical evaluation, and the development of original responses to complex or emerging problems.

SLO (what the students will be able to do)

- Students will **identify** major concepts and theories relevant to a real-world problem.
- Students will **apply** major concepts and theories to **analyze** a complex real-world problem and recommend an evidence-based response.
- Students will **synthesize** disciplinary theories and research to develop and defend an original response to a complex or emerging problem.

Program Assessment Plans

- Each SLO requires two measures
 - One must be direct
 - The other can be another direct or an indirect measure
- **Direct Measures**
 - Direct measures require students to demonstrate their knowledge or skills.
 - Exam questions aligned with the SLO
 - Papers, projects, or case analyses scored with a rubric
 - Presentations, performances, or demonstrations scored with a rubric
 - Portfolios, capstone projects, or comprehensive examinations
 - **Indirect Measures**
 - Indirect measures capture perceptions or reflections about learning rather than directly demonstrating it.
 - Student surveys or self-assessments
 - Exit interviews or focus groups
 - Alumni surveys
 - Employer or internship-supervisor feedback

SLOs ✓
Measures?
Targets?

Choosing a Measure

Level

Freshman

Student learning outcome

Students will **identify** major concepts and theories relevant to a real-world problem.

Possible direct measure

Multiple-choice, matching, or labeling questions embedded in an exam

Senior

Students will **apply** major concepts and theories to analyze a complex real-world problem.

Case-based exam questions, simulation, demonstration, presentation, or rubric-scored project

Graduate

Students will **synthesize** disciplinary theories and research to develop an original response to a complex or emerging problem.

Research proposal, professional project, oral defense, portfolio, or comprehensive examination



Choosing a Measure

Freshman-level measure

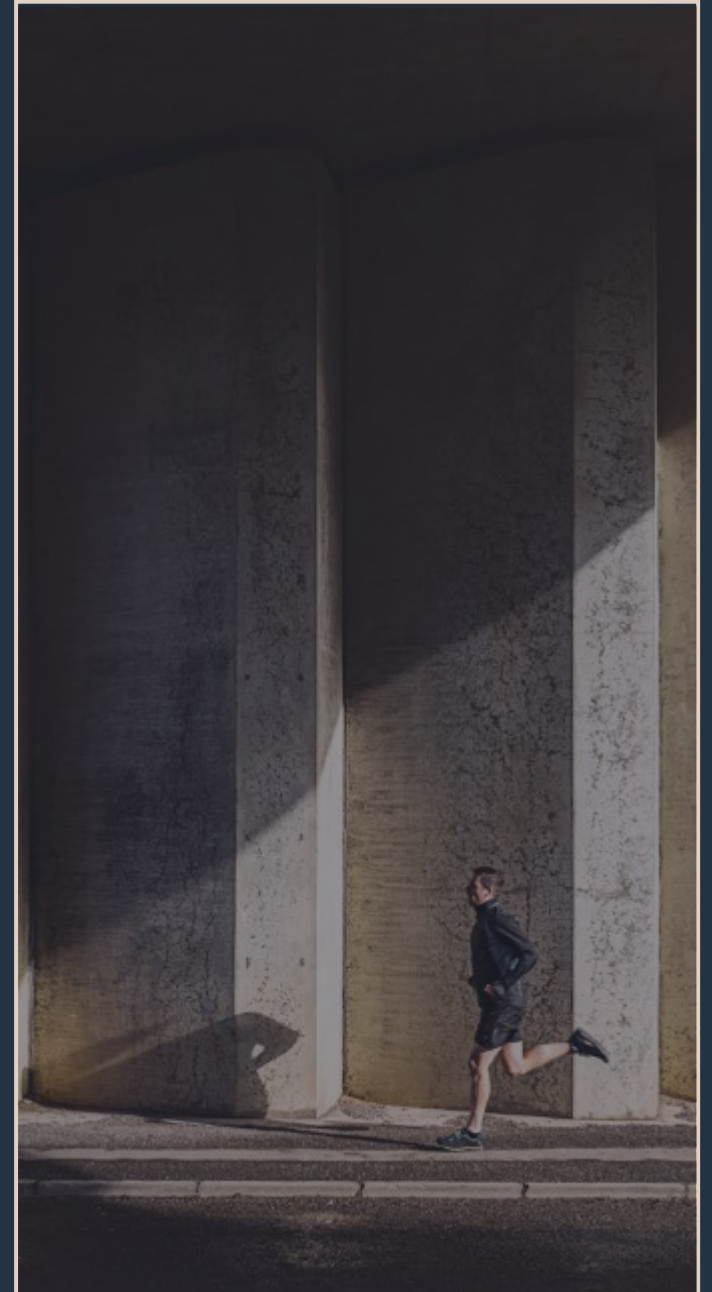
Students complete 15 multiple-choice or matching questions in which they identify the concept or theory illustrated by a brief scenario.

Senior-level measure

Students complete a case-based examination requiring them to apply disciplinary concepts and theories to a complex scenario. Responses are scored using a rubric or established scoring guide.

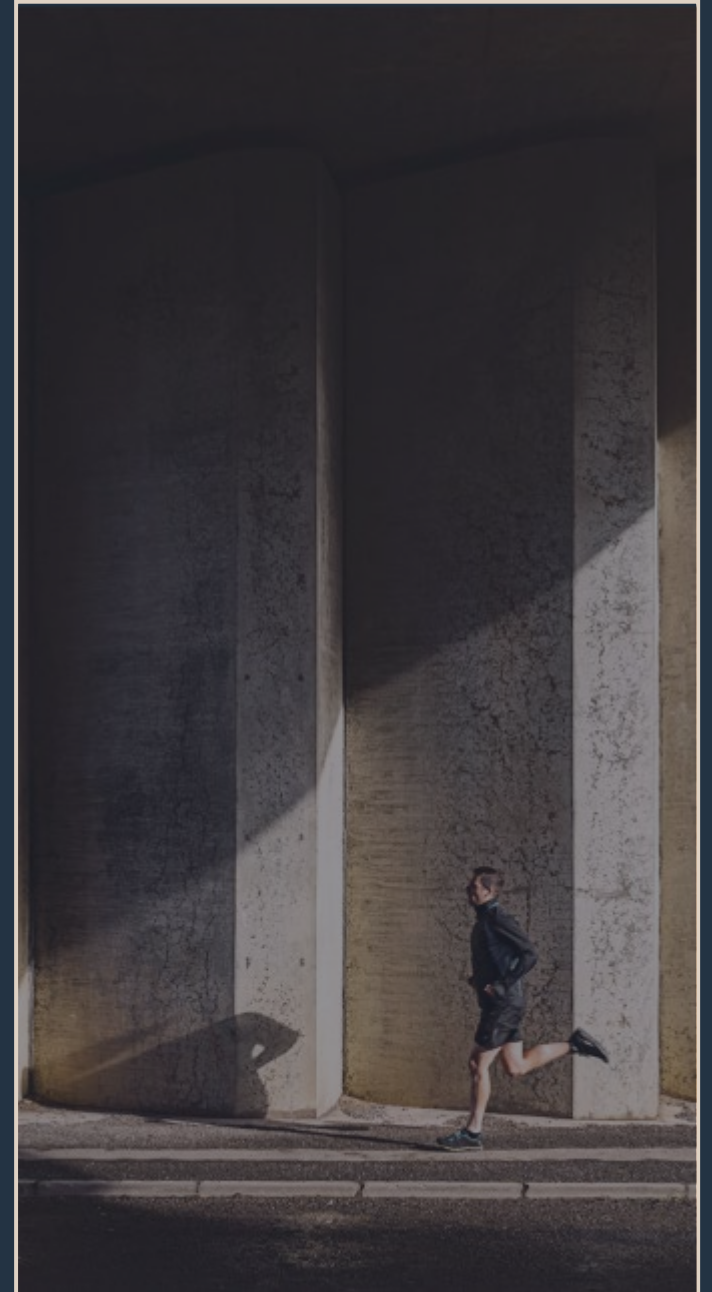
Graduate-level measure

Students develop and defend an original response to a complex or emerging disciplinary problem by integrating relevant theory and research. The project and defense are evaluated using a faculty-approved rubric.



Setting Targets

Level	Student Learning Outcome	Measure	Target/Benchmark
Freshman	Students will identify major concepts and theories relevant to a real-world problem.	Fifteen multiple-choice, matching, or labeling questions embedded in the final exam	At least 70% of students will correctly answer 70% or more of the designated questions.
Senior	Students will apply major concepts and theories to analyze a complex real-world problem.	Case-based examination scored with a faculty-developed rubric	At least 75% of students will score "Proficient" or higher on the application criterion of the rubric.
Graduate	Students will synthesize disciplinary theories and research to develop an original response to a complex or emerging problem.	Research proposal or professional project scored with a faculty-approved rubric	At least 80% of students will score "Proficient" or higher on the synthesis criterion of the rubric.



Justifying Targets

- Targets should be challenging but realistic and should reflect the level of the course or program, the complexity of the assessment, prior assessment results, faculty expectations, and any relevant disciplinary or professional standards.
- Example:
- **Target:** At least 70% of students will correctly answer 70% or more of the designated questions.
- **Rationale:** This target was selected based on prior student performance and faculty agreement that 70% represents acceptable achievement of foundational knowledge in an introductory course.
- If there are no prior data:
- **Rationale:** Because this is the first year the outcome will be assessed, the target establishes an initial baseline. Faculty will review the results and determine whether the target should be adjusted in the next assessment cycle.

SLOs ✓
Measures ✓
Targets ✓
Assessment Plan ✓

Assessment Reporting

- Entering Results
- Analyzing Results
- Continuous Improvement

Assessment Results

Example	Target/Benchmark	Results	Status
1. Exam Questions	At least 70% of students will correctly answer 70% or more of the designated exam questions.	Of the 82 students assessed, 63 students (76.8%) correctly answered at least 70% of the designated questions.	Met
2. Case Analysis	At least 75% of students will score "Proficient" or higher on the application criterion of the case-analysis rubric.	Of the 40 students assessed, 33 students (82.5%) scored "Proficient" or higher on the application criterion.	Met
3. Oral Presentation	At least 80% of students will score "Proficient" or higher on the organization and delivery criteria of the presentation rubric.	Of the 30 students assessed, 21 students (70.0%) scored "Proficient" or higher on both criteria. Nine students did not meet the expected performance level.	Not Met
4. Research Project	At least 80% of students will score "Proficient" or higher on the synthesis criterion of the research-project rubric.	Of the 25 students assessed, 18 students (72.0%) scored "Proficient" or higher on the synthesis criterion. Seven students scored below "Proficient."	Not Met

Analysis of Results

Example	Status	Analysis of Results
1. Exam Questions	Met	Although the target was met, performance varied across the designated questions. Students performed strongest on questions requiring identification of major concepts but had more difficulty distinguishing between closely related theories. The results indicate that students achieved the overall outcome, but additional emphasis on comparing similar theories may strengthen learning.
2. Case Analysis	Met	Most students successfully applied disciplinary concepts to the case. However, rubric results showed that students were more successful at selecting an appropriate concept than explaining why it applied. The target was achieved, but students would benefit from additional practice connecting evidence from a case to their selected concepts.
3. Oral Presentation	Not Met	Review of the rubric results showed that organization was generally stronger than delivery. Students who scored below "Proficient" had the most difficulty maintaining audience engagement and presenting information without relying heavily on notes or slides. Limited opportunities to practice and receive feedback before the final presentation may have contributed to the results.
4. Research Project	Not Met	Students generally located appropriate research but struggled to synthesize findings from multiple sources. Several projects summarized studies individually instead of integrating them to support a unified argument. The results suggest that students need more explicit instruction and practice in research synthesis before completing the final project.

Assessment Reporting

- Entering Results ✓
- Analyzing Results ✓
- Continuous Improvement?

Continuous Improvement

Example	Status	Continuous Improvement Action
1. Exam Questions	Met	Faculty determined that the current instructional approach and assessment are producing the expected level of student learning. No immediate changes are planned. The same outcome and measure will be assessed in the next cycle to determine whether performance remains consistent. If the target is met consistently, faculty will consider increasing the benchmark.
2. Case Analysis	Met	Because students exceeded the target, faculty will continue using the case-based instructional activities and assessment. Faculty will share the approach across all course sections to promote consistency and will compare results by section during the next assessment cycle.
3. Oral Presentation	Not Met	Students will complete a brief practice presentation before the final presentation and receive feedback from the instructor and their peers. Faculty will also provide clearer guidance on audience engagement and effective use of notes and slides. Results for the organization and delivery criteria will be reassessed in the next cycle.
4. Research Project	Not Met	Faculty will add a research-synthesis workshop and a scaffolded assignment requiring students to integrate findings from at least three sources before beginning the final project. Students will receive formative feedback on this assignment. Performance on the synthesis criterion will be reassessed during the next assessment cycle.

Meeting the target does not mean there is nothing to improve.

Assessment Reporting

- Entering Results ✓
- Analyzing Results ✓
- Continuous Improvement? ✓
- Assessment Report ✓

Avoiding Common Assessment-Reporting Problems

- Write outcomes that describe what **students will demonstrate**, not what the course or instructor will provide.
- Use observable actions such as **identify, apply, analyze, evaluate, or create**.
- Make sure the measure directly assesses the verb used in the SLO.
- State targets using a specific percentage of students and a defined level of performance.
- Report the number and percentage of students assessed—not simply “most students.”
- Analyze what students did well, where they struggled, and what the results mean.
- Connect improvement actions directly to the results and analysis.
- Do not automatically lower the target when it is not met.
- Do not manufacture unnecessary changes when a target is met; continued monitoring may be appropriate.
- Avoid using course grades as the only evidence of achievement.

Reducing Duplication: Use What You Already Have

- Use an existing exam, project, presentation, clinical activity, performance, or portfolio assignment.
- Identify the questions or rubric criteria that directly align with the SLO.
- Report only the relevant results instead of creating a separate assessment.
- Add a rubric criterion when an existing assignment measures the outcome but does not isolate the skill.
- Use LMS or gradebook data when it can provide the needed results.
- Coordinate measures across course sections so faculty are not creating separate processes.
- Incorporate assessment review into existing faculty or program meetings.
- Save rubrics, scoring guides, and reporting templates for reuse in future cycles.
- Collect only the information needed to evaluate the SLO.
- Treat assessment as documentation of work already being done—not as an additional assignment.

Keeping Assessment Manageable

- Start with a clear, measurable SLO.
- Use evidence from work students already complete.
- Set a specific and defensible target.
- Explain what the results mean.
- Make a reasonable decision based on the evidence.

Navigating Watermark

- Go to LUConnect <https://luconnect.lamar.edu/>
- Click on Assessment (Watermark)
- Click on Planning & Self-Study

Excellence in Assessment Grant

- To continue the efforts to foster a positive and engaged approach to assessment across campus, the **Office of the Provost** and the **Office of Data Analytics, Reporting and Assessment** are pleased to announce the *third and final year* of the **Excellence in Assessment Grant**. This initiative reflects our shared commitment to cultivating a culture that values assessment as a meaningful and transformative practice.

For the **2026–2027 Academic Year**, the program will provide **three competitive awards of up to \$5,000 each**. These grants are designed to support faculty and staff in advancing assessment-related initiatives, research, and dissemination efforts. Funding may be used for project expenses such as travel to present at conferences, acquisition of software or data, and other activities that directly contribute to strengthening student learning and assessment practices.

- https://www.lamar.edu/forms/data-analytics-reporting-analysis/ss-assessment_grant_application.html

Questions?

Contact Me:

jarrod.rossi@lamar.edu

409-880-7143

Digital Learning Center, 106A

University Assessment

Cardinal Kickoff

August 13, 2026



SCAN TO GIVE FEEDBACK!

[will require Smartsheet sign-in]

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