

Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes Cycle

Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) are an important part of a regular process designed to foster continuous quality improvement in all academic programs.

PSLOs represent what the students should learn and/or be able to do upon finishing an academic program. All PSLOs for each degree and certificate must be listed in both Meta and [Trackdat](#). In addition, the PSLO cycle (described below) must be completed for all PSLOs within each Program Review cycle.



What constitutes an academic program?

For the purposes of Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs), the term “academic programs” refers to degrees or certificates. Each degree or certificate is required to have their own PSLOs. Departments do not need to have broad PSLOs that encompass all of their degrees and certificates. Also, academic programs that do not culminate in a degree or certificate, such as the pre-collegiate English composition and math series are not required to post or assess PSLOs. However, departments are encouraged to complete PSLO cycles for these developmental programs to help foster continuous quality improvement. Academic Program SLOs that do not have an associated degree or certificate are documented in Tracdat only.

Developing PSLOs:

[Click here for the rubric that the Outcomes Committee uses to review PSLOs in Meta](#)

All outcomes need to be measurable and should address one of following four areas:

1. **Knowledge:** facts, concepts, principles/theories, etc.
2. **Skills/abilities:** information literacy, thinking strategies, computational skills, communication skills, collaboration skills, leadership skills, etc.

3. **Attitudes/characteristics:** open-mindedness, love of knowledge, diligence, integrity, social responsibility, etc.
4. **Habits of mind:** arts appreciation, proficiency in creative procedures, creativity, etc.

When creating SLOs be sure to **use action verbs** that result in observable behavior that can be and measured. Avoid verbs that call for internal behavior that is hard to measure, such as “appreciate, aware of, familiar with, understand...”

For more guidance on verb selection, refer to the [“Verbs for developing SLOs”](#) page.

When developing measurable outcomes, pay attention to the ABCs of measurable outcomes.

Actor – To whom the outcome relates

Behavior – What we expect the actor to know or be able to do

Context – Circumstances under which learning will take place

Each measurable outcome should contain specific information about the A, B, and C.

For example, Psychology has the following PSLO: “**At the conclusion of the program, students** will **articulate similarities and differences** in human behavior among cultures, times, and environments, **demonstrating an understanding of cultural pluralism and knowledge of** global issues as they relate to human behavior.”

Actor – Students

Behavior – Articulate similarities and differences; demonstrating an understanding of and knowledge of

Context – At the conclusion of the program

How many PSLOs do we need?

Each degree and certificate should have between one and five PSLOs, depending on how many units are in the program. Determining the exact number needed depends on the number of over-arching learning goals involved for each degree or certificate. Some certificates or degrees might truly develop only one skill applied in different contexts throughout the program. Others, have multiple strands of over-arching learning goals. It is up to the content experts in each department to determine the best number of PSLOs for each degree or certificate, but all PSLOs must be assessed within each Program Review Cycle. Below are the guidelines recommended by the Outcomes committee.

Degrees should include 3-5 PSLOs, unless this is not practical based on program goals and objectives.
Certificates with 30-59.5 units should include 3-5 PSLOs
Certificates with 18-29.5 units should include 3-4 PSLOs
Certificates with 12-17.5 units should include 2-3 PSLOs
Certificates with 3-11.5 units should include 1-2 PSLOs

Who is responsible for developing PSLOs?

In determining PSLOs, a college department should foster collaboration among its entire faculty. All full-time faculty (and where feasible, adjuncts) within a college's department should be included and participate meaningfully in the PSLO development process. Best practices encourage faculty to invite those who have a first-hand view of the roles for which students are preparing, such as colleagues from referring and receiving educational institutions, potential employers, and former students. These advisory groups can often offer valuable insight in developing a program's SLOs.

How do we enter PSLOs in TracDat?

Access to [TracDat can be found here](#). Use the drop-down menu at the top to navigate to your SLO page. [Click here to see how to title PSLOs in TracDat](#).

Do PSLOs need to be revised?

As with CSLOs, PSLOs are not meant to be static. PSLOs are subject to periodic revision in order to maintain currency and relevance. If a long-standing PSLO continues to be appropriate and relevant, there is no requirement to change it.

Mapping Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)

For each degree or certificate, departments should develop PSLOs that map directly to one of the eight ISLOs. Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs) must map to PSLOs, and PSLOs must map to [Institutional Student Learning Outcomes \(ISLOs\)](#). This mapping process is [recorded in TracDat](#).



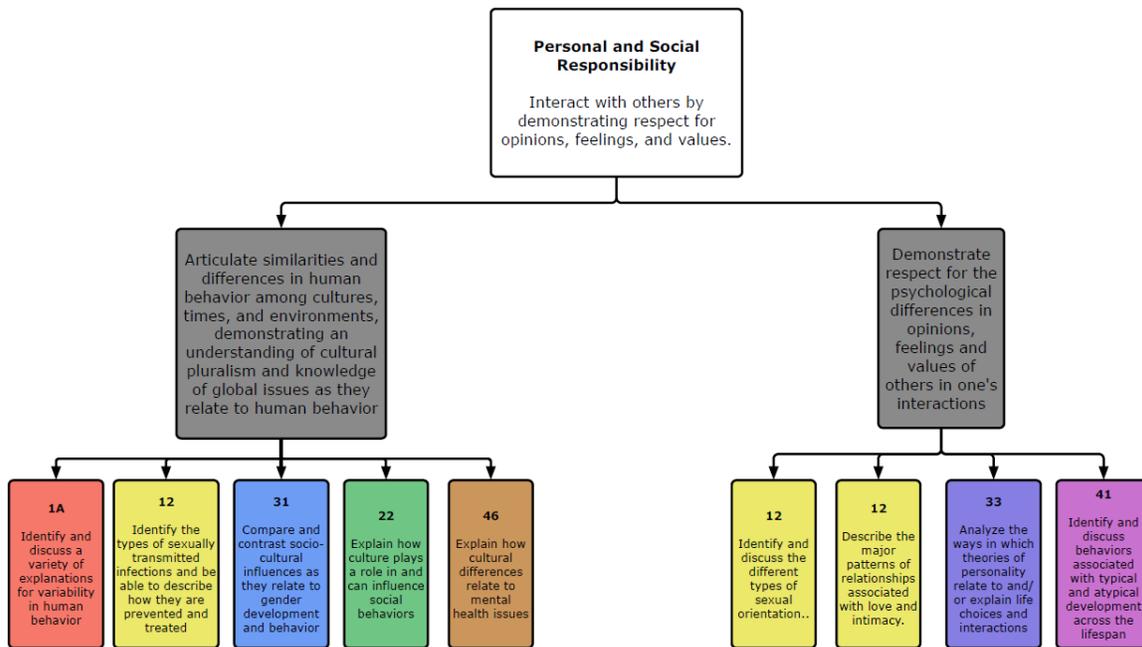
Why must we map?

CSLOs are like building blocks leading to specific program learning goals. Although students will not complete every course offered in a program, we deliberately design programs to ensure that all students receive the appropriate building blocks (learning). In order to make certain every student learns what she or he needs to know, we map all CSLOs to a PSLO.

Additionally, PSLOs are like building blocks culminating in an overarching goal. All PSLOs should map directly one of the eight ISLOs. Again, mapping is critical in order to make certain that every student who attends Yuba College receives all the building blocks necessary to achieve the institutional-level goals.

Example of how to map:

Below is one example of how CSLOs map to PSLOs that in turn map to ISLOs. Psychology has two PSLOs on their AA-T degree that map directly to one of the eight ISLOs. Every PSLO has at least three courses mapped to it. Every student who receives an AA-T degree in Psychology will take at least one class that maps to each of the two personal and social responsibility PSLOs.



What are CSLOs and ISLOs?

[Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes \(CSLOs\)](#) – CSLOs represent what the **students should learn and/or be able to do upon** finishing a particular course. This includes themes, concepts, issues, and skills taught in a particular course through demonstration, practice, and feedback. CSLOs assess the **impact of a particular course**. ALL courses at YC need to have at least one CSLO.

[Institutional-Level Student Learning Outcomes \(ISLOs\)](#) - ISLOs represent a broad set of outcomes **students should achieve** upon completing their educational goals at the Yuba College. Students achieve these outcomes through instructional and non-instructional contact. Examples of non-instructional contact include student services such as financial aid, counseling, and DSPS. ISLOs assess the impact of the institution. [There are eight ISLOs](#)

Assessing PSLOs: There are many ways to assess Program Student Learning Outcomes, and as with CSLOs, there is no one right way to determine how many students completing degrees or certificates achieve specific PSLOs.

Four steps to assessment: There are four steps in the assessment process, as outlined in the table below. If followed correctly, these steps will lead to continuous quality improvement and increased student success.

Step	Definition	Example
1. Develop assessment method	The instrument, process, or activity developed to collect data about the PSLO.	Analyze collective portfolios created by all students earning a degree in English.
2. Establish criteria	Establish the criteria that will be used to determine if the PSLO has been successfully met.	A rubric that clearly indicates what is expected of student work in their portfolios. The rubric clearly defines results that do not meet, meet, or exceed expectations.
3. Establish a standard	Establish the minimum that must be met to consider the aggregate results of the assessment method as meeting expectations.	In order for the aggregate assessment results to be considered successful, the department agrees 70% of all the students will meet or exceed expectations.
4. Close the loop: discuss results and develop a plan for continuous quality improvement	Discuss assessment results, reach conclusions about them, develop a plan for change, and implement the plan.	The established standard was not met. It is possible that students can complete the degree without getting specific instruction related to this outcome—we need to redesign degree requirements and/or revise Course Outlines of Record to ensure students have an opportunity to achieve this PSLO.

Preferred PSLO Assessment Methods:

Collective Portfolios: At the beginning of their program, students create a learning portfolio in Canvas, and as they progress through the program, they assemble samples of their work from various classes. Faculty use the "collective" samples to assess specific program learning outcomes. Portfolios can be assessed by using scoring rubrics; expectations should be clarified before portfolios are examined. [Click here for more information about how to create portfolios in Canvas.](#)

Capstone Course Assessment: Program Learning Outcomes can be assessed using assignments, projects, or exams from a course that all students in the program must take towards the end of the course sequence.

Exit or License Exam: Students finishing a program may take a culminating exam. Data obtained can address strengths and weaknesses of an institution or program and/or assess relevant concepts, theories, or skills.

Additional Assessment Options for Consideration:

***Exit Survey or Interview:** Students leaving the college, generally graduating students are interviewed or surveyed to obtain feedback. Data obtained can address strengths and weaknesses of an institution or program and or to assess relevant concepts, theories, or skills.

***Focus Groups:** Are a series of carefully planned discussions among homogeneous groups of 6-10 respondents who are asked a carefully constructed series of open-ended questions about their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. The session is typically recorded and later the recording is transcribed for analysis. The data is studied for major issues and reoccurring themes along with representative comments.

***Interviews:** Are conversations or direct questioning with an individual or group of people. The interviews can be conducted in person or on the telephone. The length of an interview can vary from 20 minutes to over an hour. Interviewers should be trained to follow agreed-upon procedures (protocols).

Aggregating data from course-level SLOs: This method may be appropriate for programs that serve a broad population of students, and thus may not have a well-defined set of “graduates” or “majors.” Although this method does not require developing a unique assessment method, it does require careful “mapping” of all the CSLOs in the courses offered in a program to the PSLOs for that program, and careful aggregation of data based on the links between CSLOs and PSLOs. *Using only course-level SLO mapping to assess PSLOs is discouraged. Whenever possible, it is recommended that faculty develop and assess unique PSLO assessment methods to ensure continuous quality improvement.*

** Source: Allen, Mary; Noel, Richard, C.; Rienzi, Beth, M.; and McMillin, Daniel, J. (2002). Outcomes Assessment Handbook. California State University, Institute for Teaching and Learning, Long Beach, CA.*

How often do PSLOs need to be assessed?

At least one PSLO should be assessed each year, and all PSLOs should be assessed within the four-year Program Review Cycle. The results of PSLO assessment should be uploaded into TracDat and included in the department’s program review. To ensure that all of the PSLOs are assessed, departments need to develop an assessment schedule. For example, Psychology has developed the following PSLO schedule.

Program SLO	Institutional SLO	Assess When?
1. Analyze psychological data, information, and theories	Critical Thinking	Spring 17
2. Apply psychological principles to the development of interpersonal, occupational and social skills and life-long personal growth.	Critical Thinking	Spring 16
3. Draw reasonable conclusions in relation to human behavior from the data/information/theories	Scientific Awareness	Spring 15
4. Articulate similarities and differences in human behavior among cultures, times, and environments, demonstrating an understanding of cultural pluralism and knowledge of global issues as they relate to human behavior	Personal & Social Responsibility	Spring 19
5. Demonstrate respect for the psychological differences in opinions, feelings and values of others in one's interactions	Personal & Social Responsibility	Spring 18