SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE
Outcomes Assessment Handbook

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

As the Leading College of Equity and Excellence, Mesa (Faculty, Classified Professionals, and Administration) prioritizes student success. This principle runs through the classes we teach, the services we provide, and the policies and procedures we adopt as a college. We strive to create effective learning opportunities and environments for our students. It is also our duty to question how effectively our courses, programs, and services facilitate our students' learning and development.

The assessment process helps instructional areas and programs determine if what students learn through instruction and service delivery align with stated learning outcomes. Based on these assessments, we make decisions based on empirical data (evidence) rather than solely on intuition. Data-informed dialogue among members of a program or service area is a critical piece of continuous improvement, and it is also incorporated into program reviews and requests for resources.

Assessment is important work essential to institutional effectiveness. Authentic, valid, and reliable assessment must be meaningful, manageable, and sustainable. It does not always happen effortlessly. Each instructional program and student services area takes ownership of the assessment process.

This guide is our roadmap to balancing this vital process and our workload realities by organizing and streamlining the process and offering support, suggestions, and best practices.

Living up to our mission to be the Leading College of Equity and Excellence, we need Learning Outcomes and Learning Outcomes data. Ensuring learning, inclusivity, accessibility, and equity can be achieved with meaningful Learning Outcomes data that identifies equity gaps in our courses, programs, and services to abide by our campus mission.

What is Learning Outcomes Assessment?

Learning Outcomes Assessment is the process of collecting information to convey whether the programs, services, activities, and experiences we provide have the desired impact on student learning. Learning outcomes help us identify knowledge and skill sets that students learn from our courses, programs, and service units. In higher education, learning outcomes assessment has three stages:

1. Define the most important goal(s) of an academic experience (learning outcome).
2. Aid students achieve those goals
3. Evaluate how well students achieved the goal(s) (assessment)
4. Use the results to improve academic experience (closing the loop)

Assessment should strive to serve as a mechanism that helps close opportunity, persistence, and attainment gaps between different student populations (Erick Montenegro & Natasha A. Jankowski, 2020).

Pillar of Guided Pathways: Ensure Learning

Learning Outcomes Assessment is part of the Guided Pathway Pillar: Ensure Learning. An integral part to promote learning is to identify if learning is happening. By establishing course and program level learning outcomes, we secure a path for our students to continue their academic journey and career goals. We are the direct link to our students through instruction and services. Therefore, we take it upon ourselves to continuously improve the effectiveness of our practices. The results of intentional Learning Outcomes Assessments support and encourage students to stay on their path.

Organization for Learning Outcomes at Mesa College

The structure of learning outcomes at Mesa is fluid. Four sectors of outcomes flow into the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO). Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) comprise the learning outcomes for Instruction. Student Services Outcomes (SSO) and Student Service Program Learning Outcomes (SSPLO) include the learning outcomes for Student Services.

Mesa College Institutional Learning Outcomes

Institutional Learning Outcomes are developed and systematically evaluated each cycle by the Committee on Learning Outcomes and Assessment (CLOA), then vetted through the Participatory Governance organization of the College. ILOs (Institutional Learning Outcomes) are assessed through the Center for Institutional Effectiveness.

Mesa College ILOs are assessed through two approaches. The most general assessment is mapping CLOs, PLOs, and SSOs (Student Services Outcomes) to the ILOs. This allows an analysis of all CLOs, SSOs, and PLOs that map up to ILOs to be aggregated together to show general results for each ILO. The second process consists of a series of ILO assessment questions on the Graduate Survey, which is sent to all students who file a petition to graduate. This survey explores graduating students' perceptions of their experience at Mesa College.

COMMUNICATION	• Respond appropriately to incoming information in a variety of ways: written, oral, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic • Communicate awareness and impact individual experiences and society as a whole • Converse with civility and appropriateness for situational context
CRITICAL THINKING	• Effectively interpret, analyze, synthesize, explain, and infer concepts and ideas • Construct and deconstruct arguments • Demonstrate quantitative or qualitative competency • Apply problem-solving methods in the appropriate context for making decisions • Come to rational conclusions based on evidence • Think independently, creatively, and logically
INFORMATION LITERACY	• Gather, analyze, evaluate, and disseminate appropriate information using multiple modalities • Utilize 21st-century tools effectively, ethically, and responsibly in information acquisition and distribution • Cultivate the skills necessary for life-long learning
PROFESSIONAL & ETHICAL BEHAVIOR	• Practice responsible, professional, and civil conduct in the classroom, workplace, community, digital world, and the natural environment • Demonstrate the ability to work both independently and collaboratively • Develop the cultural sensitivity needed to resolve conflicts and build alliances

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS	• Recognize the interconnectedness of global, national, and local concerns from multiple perspectives • Exhibit awareness, appreciation, and respect for the diversity of individuals in one's immediate environment as well as in the global community • Apply knowledge of diversity and multicultural competencies to promote equity and social justice in our communities

(Approved: COA 10/18/2016; PIE (Planning and Institutional Effectiveness) 10/25/2016; PCab 11/01/2016)

Instructional Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

→ Program Learning Outcomes for each cycle are developed and assessed by Faculty within Instructional Programs.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

→ Course Learning Outcomes for each cycle are developed and assessed for each course taught within a Program. CLO should be developed and assessed in consultation with all Faculty teaching the course.

Student Services Learning Outcomes

Student Services Outcomes (SSO)

→ Student Services Outcomes for each cycle are developed and assessed by Classified Professionals, Faculty, and Administrators for all areas of Student Services (i.e., Admissions and Records, Transfer, Financial Aid, Counseling).

Who Benefits from Learning Outcomes Assessment?

Everyone! One of the great advantages of Learning Outcomes Assessment is that when done systematically, it benefits everyone throughout the institution.

For students, Outcomes Assessment will:

→ Provide students the support they need throughout their educational experience
→ Communicate and set clear expectations for students to successfully complete a course or program
→ Reassure students that there is foundational content across all course sections
→ Allow students to make better decisions on their path to completion of programs based on outcomes results

For Faculty, Classified Professionals and Administrators, Outcomes Assessment will:

→ Provide data to determine what is working and what is not working in their courses, programs, and service areas
→ Allow all faculty teaching a course to address content listed on the course outline.
→ Allow valuable interdisciplinary and intercampus discussions about the validity and reliability of the outcomes, share best practices based on the assessment results
→ Provide evidence to justify the need of resources necessary to maintain and/or improve programs and services

→ Allow faculty, classified professionals, and administrators to share results and learn from individuals outside their area (e.g., employers, prospective students, transfer institutions, elected officials)

Implementing college-wide, Outcomes Assessment will:
→ Demonstrate an institutional commitment to continually improve the academic programs and services offered by the college
→ Inform academic planning and decision-making
→ Provide informative data to support requests for funds from the State, local government, and private donors
→ Enable administrators to inform elected officials, local businesses, and potential donors about the college's impact on our students and community in a compelling and convincing way.

Continuous Outcomes Assessment will enable us to:
→ Devote time to activities that we value most.
→ Collect evidence that will support decisions around how best to improve instruction, meet student needs, strengthen curricula, and create effective academic policies.
→ Strengthen our ability to show that our graduates are well-prepared for transfer or to move into the workforce
→ Develop policies to allocate funding and/or resources more effectively
→ Provide Faculty and Classified Professionals with feedback they need to strengthen and grow their programs and services
→ Demonstrate the value of a Mesa College education to the community and other stakeholders
→ Provide data to satisfy the requirements of accrediting and funding agencies
→ Provide data to all Faculty, Classified Professionals, and Administrators to help identify equity and achievement gaps

Guiding Principles of Outcomes Assessment at Mesa College
→ Outcomes Assessment is intended to improve student learning by systematically evaluating student performance on specific outcomes.
→ The Mesa College Outcomes Assessment process is based on college-wide Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).
→ In instruction, Outcomes Assessment is faculty-driven and course-embedded. In Student Service areas, Outcomes Assessment is the responsibility of those providing the services associated with the service area or unit.
→ Outcomes Assessment is an on-going, not episodic, process.
→ Outcomes assessment is about evaluating the effectiveness of programs, courses, and services as a whole, not individuals.

Roles of Participants in Outcomes and Assessment at Mesa College
Successful Outcomes Assessment requires the participation of everyone in the Mesa College Campus community.

The Role of Practitioners

The Assessment process involves and impacts all faculty, classified professionals, and administrators in the areas of instruction and student services. Faculty and classified professionals are expected to engage in discussion of the outcomes for their respective departments, programs, and areas. In addition, these practitioners create assessment tools used in assessing their outcomes, discuss the assessment results, and implement any action plans necessary to improve student learning. All practitioners are expected to inform students of course, program, and service-learning outcomes.

The Role of the Department Outcomes Coordinator (DOC)

A Department Outcomes Coordinator (DOC) is assigned to each department, program, and service area. The DOC serves as a liaison for the members of their respective departments. As a liaison and expert in outcomes and assessment, the DOC supports their department through the three stages of the cycle.

1) Outcome:
   → Help identify the Learning Goals for instruction
   → Help identify the Service Goals for Student Service areas
   → Share best practices with departments to ensure outcomes are valid, reliable, and objective
   → In the 1st of every OA (Outcomes Assessment) cycle, coordinate a discussion of the validity and the reliability of outcomes
   → Share the course, outcome(s), and service area changes with IE (Institutional Effectiveness) office to include any course or service area changes (i.e., inactive courses/programs; new courses/programs)

2) Assessment:
   → Communicate with Faculty and Classified Professionals about target courses and areas to be assessed each year
   → Share best practices for authentic assessments
   → Ensure departments, programs, and service areas are on track to complete assessment targets each year
   → Learn the new platform to support Faculty and Classified Professionals in their respective departments
   → Create and administer PLO assessment in year 4, the last year of the OA cycle

3) Closing the Loop:
   → Host outcomes across campus to discuss best practices, assessment results, action plans, and OA updates
   → Identify and work to eliminate equity and achievement gaps
   → Use the assessment results to guide Faculty and Classified Professionals to continuously improve learning and provide services to our students
   → Enter a summary of department discussion in Nuventive

"Simply examining disaggregated data without examining if the assessment process is equitable will lead to continued inequities" (Erick Montenegro & Natasha A. Jankowski, 2020).

The Role of Students

Students can expect to be assessed according to the course and program learning outcomes provided to them. Also, students can expect to be made aware of various student service areas that will guide and support them on their educational journey. Ultimately, the role of outcomes assessment is to guide students to meaningfully engage in the learning process.

The Role of Administration

Administration, from the campus Deans to the Vice President and President, help to convey the importance of Outcomes Assessment to the college community. They provide guidance and support for the process and for any recommendations to improve student learning that may result from the assessments.

The Role of the Committee on Outcomes Assessment [COA]

COA is a Participatory Governance Committee responsible for overseeing and supporting Outcomes Assessment efforts at Mesa College. The Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and the Faculty Outcomes Coordinator co-chair the committee. The Committee works with the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Academic Senate leadership, Classified Senate leadership, Faculty, Classified Professionals, and Administrators to facilitate and promote Outcomes Assessment.

As its primary goal, the COA facilitates an equitable, accessible, and meaningful learning experience for all Mesa students. To achieve this purpose: COA establishes and maintains structures and standards for outcomes assessment, creates a framework for authentic assessment of learning, supports innovation and provides professional learning around outcomes assessment, promotes a culture that integrates outcomes assessment results into the continuous quality improvement cycle, and ensures Institutional Learning Outcomes reflect Mesa's Mission and curriculum.

The Role of the Faculty Outcomes Coordinator

The Faculty Outcomes Coordinator is a faculty member who provides direct oversight and coordination of the Outcomes Assessment on the campus, supports the Faculty and Classified Professionals responsible for Outcomes and Assessment, communicates outcomes information to the college-wide population, coordinates and facilitates outcomes-based workshops, and meets with coordinators from sister campuses to coordinate efforts district-wide.

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges [ACCJC] Standards – adopted 2024

Accreditation is both a process and a status. As a process, it ensures that institutions of higher education meet established standards of quality and provides educational programs, services, credentials, and credits that students and the community can trust. The ACCJC Accreditation Standards are statements of good practice that reflect expectations for educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Institutions evaluate themselves against the ACCJC Standards to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Below are the standards associated with Learning Outcomes.

1.2. The institution establishes meaningful and ambitious goals for institutional improvement, innovation, and equitable **student outcomes**.

1.3. The institution holds itself accountable for achieving its mission and goals and **regularly reviews relevant, meaningfully disaggregated data** to evaluate its progress and inform plans for continued improvement and innovation. (ER 3, ER 11)

2.1. Academic programs at all locations and in all modes of delivery are offered in fields of study consistent with the institution's mission and reflect appropriate breadth, depth, and **expected learning outcomes**. (ER 3, ER 9, ER 12)

2.2. The institution, relying on faculty and other appropriate stakeholders, designs and delivers academic programs that reflect relevant discipline and industry standards and **support equitable attainment of learning outcomes** and achievement of educational goals. (ER 3, ER 9, ER 11, ER 14)

2.3. All degree programs include a general education framework to **ensure the development of broad knowledge, skills, and competencies related to communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, information literacy, civic responsibility, and the ability to engage with diverse perspectives**. (ER 12)

2.6. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that meet student and curricular needs to promote **equitable student learning and achievement**.

2.9. **The institution conducts systematic reviews and assessments to ensure the quality of its academic, learning support, and student services programs to implement improvements and innovations in support of equitable student achievement**. (ER 11, ER 14)

4.3. The institution's decision-making structures are used consistently and effectively. Institutional decision-making practices support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and prioritizes **equitable student outcomes**.

Connection to Program Review

Learning Assessment data is a critical component of the Annual Program Review process for all instructional and student support programs. The collection and evaluation of learning assessment data is a necessary process that practitioners must engage in so that programs can effectively reflect on policies and practices to develop goals and action plans to improve learning and remove equity gaps. The efficacy of this process is linked to the quality and validity of the collected data and the inclusion of all practitioners.

During the Data reflection portion of the Program Review process, units are asked to describe the discussion(s) that took place about the unit's learning outcomes assessment data and connect their observations of that data reflection to the Unit's Goals and Action Plans.

Lead writers are asked to collaborate with practitioners throughout the unit (including those coordinating the collection of outcomes data) to reflect on Learning Assessment data and discuss ways individuals in their unit have adjusted policies and practices in their own spaces to improve learning and eliminate equity gaps.

Chapter 2: Timeline and Cycle

Mesa's Outcomes Assessment Cycle is four years and aligns with the Program Review Cycle. During the 4-year cycle, all Course Learning Outcomes, Student Service Outcomes, Program Learning Outcomes, and Institutional Learning Outcomes will be assessed, discussed, and used for improvement of practice and policy. Below is a list of actions for each year in the cycle beginning in 2022/23.

YEAR 1-
2022/23
	• Outcomes Across Campus (occurs within each unit at start of semester)
	    ○ Reflections on the previous cycle
	    ○ Develop a plan to review, revise, reaffirm outcomes, and share with unit practitioners (including Lead Writer).
	    ○ Review Institutional Learning Outcomes results
	    ○ Develop unit goals and action plans, as appropriate, and share them with Lead Writer
	• Coordinate a system to support faculty and student services professionals to review, revise, or reaffirm all CLOs, PLOs, SSOs, and ILOs.
	• Support processes for validating the active course list.
	• DOC reports all outcomes and course changes to the Faculty Outcomes Coordinator (ongoing).
	• Program Review Lead writer indicates accuracy of Learning/Student Service Outcomes for their unit during the program review (ongoing).
	• COA reviews, revises, and/or reaffirms ILOs.
	• ***Note: Some units will follow their own assessment timeline based on external accreditation requirements or other department standards that would require more frequent assessments (i.e., Units that need to assess each semester)**

YEAR 2-
2023/24
	• Outcomes Across Campus (occurs within each unit at start of semester)
	    ○ Review validated outcomes list (developed during year 1) with unit practitioners (including Lead Writer).
	    ○ Identify all Gateway Courses and share them with the Faculty Outcomes Coordinator (gateway courses are defined as introductory courses in a program of study)
	    ○ Review Institutional Learning Outcomes results
	    ○ Develop unit goals and action plans to share with Lead Writer
	• Assess all Course Learning Outcomes in Gateway Courses.
	• Assess all Student Service Outcomes (ongoing).
	• Results of all assessments due in Nuventive by June 30.
	• Develop assessment schedule for remaining courses to be assessed during years 3 and 4. Submit assessment schedule in Nuventive.
	• COA and Institutional Effectiveness create a system to ensure systematic, timely and accurate updates to CurriQunet Meta.
	• DOC reports all outcomes and course changes to Faculty Outcomes Coordinator (ongoing).
	• ***Note: Some units will follow their own assessment timeline based on external accreditation requirements or other department standards that would require more frequent assessments (i.e., Units that need to assess each semester)**

YEAR 3-2024/25	• Outcomes Across Campus (occurs within each unit at start of semester)
	    o Review data from previous years' assessments
	    o Review Institutional Learning Outcomes results
	    o Develop unit goals and action plans, as appropriate and share with Lead Writer
	• Assess course learning outcomes per units' assessment schedule.
	• Assess all Student Service Outcomes (ongoing).
	• Results of all assessments due in Nuventive by June 30.
	• DOC reports all outcomes and course changes to Faculty Outcomes Coordinator (ongoing).
	• ***Note: Some units will follow their own assessment timeline based on external accreditation requirements or other department standards that would require more frequent assessments (i.e., Units that need to assess each semester)**

YEAR 4-2025/26	• Outcomes Across Campus (occurs within each unit at start of semester)
	    o Review data from previous years' assessments
	    o Review Institutional Learning Outcomes results
	    o Develop unit goals and action plans, as appropriate and share with Lead Writer
	• Assess all remaining course learning outcomes per units' assessment schedule.
	• Assess all Student Service Outcomes (ongoing).
	• Results of all assessments due in Nuventive by June 30.
	• DOC reports all outcomes and course changes to Faculty Outcomes Coordinator (ongoing).
	• Prepare to review summary of CLO data as one way to assess unit's PLOs, or create a separate tool for assessment of unit's PLOs. Results of all assessments due in Nuventive by June 30.
	• ***Note: Some units will follow their own assessment timeline based on external accreditation requirements or other department standards that would require more frequent assessments (i.e., Units that need to assess each semester)**

Chapter 3: Committee on Outcomes Assessment [COA]

Committee Charge

The Committee on Outcomes and Assessment (COA) has, as its primary goal, to facilitate an equitable, accessible, and meaningful learning experience for all Mesa students. In order to achieve this purpose, COA will establish and maintain structures and standards for outcomes assessment, create a framework for authentic assessment of learning, support innovation and provide professional learning around outcomes assessment, promote a culture that integrates outcomes assessment results into the

continuous quality improvement cycle, and ensure Institutional Learning Outcomes that reflect Mesa's Mission and curriculum.

Ongoing Responsibilities

1. Promote a practice of meaningful dialogue around learning outcomes development, assessment, and improvement college-wide.
2. Provide a forum to generate learning outcomes and assessment ideas and practices while sharing progress and accomplishments.
3. Incorporate learning outcomes assessment in Guided Pathways, Program Review, and Integrated Planning Processes.
4. Support faculty and classified professionals to complete effective learning assessments aligned with our cycle timeline.
5. Participate in ongoing professional learning around different types of learning assessments and provide leadership to the campus regarding best practices.
6. Maintain the structural and technological components of the learning outcomes process

2023/2024 Deliverables

1. **Nuventive**
   - Support the design of the Outcomes Assessment module in the Nuventive Platform.
   - Provide training and ongoing support.

2. **Process**
   - Update and maintain the Outcomes Handbook.
   - Promote and provide support for COA's work (clarify and support the responsibilities of DOC, facilitate and support the process for student services to assess SSOs, clarify the goals and the assessment cycle).
   - Support departments and certificate/degree programs to identify gateway courses and assess CLOs in those gateway courses by June 30, 2024.
   - Assist departments with the development of an assessment schedule for remaining courses to be assessed during years 3 and 4.
   - Clarify and consolidate processes for currIQūnet Meta, Nuventive, Program Review, Outcomes to ensure a systematic, timely, and accurate updates process.
   - Discuss strategies to turn results into impactful activities (emphasizing both compliance and improvement/equity).

3. **Ongoing Responsibilities**
   - Promote a practice of meaningful dialogue around learning outcomes development, assessment, and improvement college wide.
   - Provide a forum to generate learning outcomes, assessment ideas and practices while sharing progress and accomplishments.
   - Incorporate learning outcomes assessment in Guided Pathways, Program Review, and Integrated Planning Processes.

- o   Support faculty and classified professionals to complete effective learning assessments aligned with our cycle timeline
- o   Participate in ongoing professional learning around different types of learning assessments and provide leadership to the campus regarding best practices.
- o   Maintain the structural and technological components of the learning outcomes process.

Membership

Co-chairs	→ Dean of Institutional Effectiveness → Faculty Outcomes Coordinator
Members	→ VPI-Instruction → VPI-Student Services → Student Affairs/Student Development (1) → Counseling (1) → Student Services (1) → Academic Senate President (or designee) → Classified Senate President (or designee) → Classified (3; 1 from each division) → Dean/Director or Faculty (1 from each Instructional School (not to exceed 3 Deans)
Advisory	→ College President → VP-Admin Services

Chapter 4: Effective Assessment and Best Practices

Authentic assessment is one approach to effective assessment. It goes beyond basic grading or homework, quizzes, exams, etc., where it deeply examines whether students are gaining the skills needed to progress academically or build a deeper knowledge set for life. This serves two purposes: to demonstrate to students that they have gained knowledge beyond what tests can measure, and demonstrating, at the appropriate level, the application of the knowledge gained and adding to the student's growth. In short, it is a more equitable and inclusive form of the evaluation process and can be a step towards removing barriers in student success.

This type of assessment is not required for Course Learning Outcomes; however, it is a groundbreaking method of going beyond simple metrics to dig deeper into what students gain from what is being taught. This allows instructors to get a practical grasp of what students more accurately are retaining from their courses, which can provide the opportunity to improve their courses based on genuine experience. It also empowers students to see the wider breadth of learning that they have gained from that course and how it can apply to scenarios outside the typical academic world.

→ *Assessment ensures we focus on student learning rather than how well students are following the requirements.*
→ *Success rates should demonstrate student competency.*
→ *The focus of outcomes is what a student will learn or gain rather than what an instructor will teach or what service a classified professional will provide.*
→ *A grade will not show how well a student acquired and learned in the class; it will not show if a student learned a certain skill; only assessment of a specific outcome will demonstrate that learning.*

What is Authentic Assessment?

The ACCJC (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges) defines authentic assessment as something that "simulates a real-world experience by evaluating the student's ability to apply critical thinking and knowledge, or to perform tasks that may approximate those found in the workplace or other venues outside of the classroom setting." This deviates from standard assessments which are simply numerical or alphabetical scores that measure a student's ability to produce the correct answers for an assignment or exam with no deeper meaning or insight into the impact of what has been learned.

An authentic assessment allows for a more creative design in which instructors are able to assess scenarios where students engage their critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and actively incorporate course learning to produce their own original work to better demonstrates what they have learned.

You can see more examples of authentic assessments in the appendix. You can also reach out to your DOC and outcomes coordinator (see directory) for guidance on best practices for authentic assessments.

Differing Methods of Assessment

Assessments tend to fall into different categories. They can be a mix of summative, formative, direct, or indirect. While the college may require only a summative assessment (a grade letter at the end of the course) it is encouraged to use a blend of all four of these methods throughout the course to help inform the learning, rather than simply reflect on it after the course is completed.

The definitions and importance of these differing methods of assessments will be outlined and elaborated on in the sections that follow.

Summative Assessments

Like a summary of a student's performance, a summative assessment evaluates what a student has learned at the end of a course. This grade takes the form of a letter, or number. It has historically been the primary focus of many schools because it is a simple way to compare one student's work to another or to the goals or benchmarks that students are expected to achieve. It is easy for educators and administrators to see at a glance which students have learned the necessary information from the course, so that they can go on to the next level of instruction.

This grade is important to get a general sense of what a student has achieved in comparison to what they were expected to achieve. However, it does not consider how the students have absorbed the material and can use it in a practical, real-life scenario. Without feedback on their work, there's little opportunity for students to grow, or recognize areas for improvement.

Summative assessments evaluate student learning, knowledge, proficiency, or success at the conclusion of an instructional period, like a unit, course, or program. Summative assessments are almost always formally graded and often heavily weighted (though they do not need to be). Summative assessment can be used to great effect in conjunction and alignment with formative assessment, and instructors can consider a variety of ways to combine these approaches.

Formative Assessments

Conversely, a formative assessment can help students discover how they can apply what they have learned in a course to their own lives and incorporate their strengths into more practical work that demonstrates their knowledge. It can also provide an opportunity for them to create something more akin to what they will be doing with all this information outside of an academic setting, such as when a student graduates and finds a job in which they may apply these skills.

For faculty, formative assessments can show to what extent students are deeply grasping the course learning and where they are struggling and could use guidance, input, and support. By having formative assessments that connect with outcomes, it can give faculty more insight into where their students are at before conducting the final summative assessment. This is also a great opportunity for students to get feedback throughout the semester so they can continue to improve their learning.

Formative assessment refers to tools that identify misconceptions, struggles, and learning gaps along the way and assess how to close those gaps. It includes effective tools for helping to shape learning and can even bolster students' abilities to take ownership of their learning when they understand that the goal is to improve learning, not apply final marks (Trumbull and Lash, 2013). It can include students assessing themselves, peers, or even the instructor, through writing, quizzes, conversation, and more. In short, formative assessment occurs throughout a class or course and improves student achievement of learning objectives through approaches that can support specific student needs (Theal and Franklin, 2010, p. 151).

Direct Assessments

Direct assessments involve a student's knowledge, skills, or behaviors while they are attending a course. The aim is to allow the student to produce work as part of the curriculum, which is then evaluated and critically examined by the teacher and possibly peers. With clear expectations and guidelines, along with the flexibility to modify the approach and the work, this method allows for significantly more effective live feedback that then continues to inform the learning.

After the course is complete, the teacher can then more reliably determine how this type of assessment effectively demonstrated a student's abilities regarding the student learning outcomes. So, direct assessments can be formative and summative.

The following are some of the scenarios in which direct assessments can be incorporated:

1) Written Work
   a. Demonstrates knowledge of important content on an exam or in a paper
   b. Shows an analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation capabilities
   c. Displays writing skills
   d. Produces reflections on what, how, when, and why they learned

2) Portfolios of student work
    a. Assessed regularly using a rubric
    b. Evaluated to determine student learning over time
    c. Composed of the student's best work
    d. Encourages self-reflection for students

3) Multimedia Work
    a. Visual or audio recordings of oral presentations or performances
    b. Can include self, peer, and or instructor evaluations using a rubric
    c. May include recordings of subsequent performances to document improvements

4) Capstone Projects

5) Field or Service-Learning Projects

6) Performance on in-class tests, or a portion of a larger exam, assuming they are valid, reliable, and objective

7) Presentations
    a. Demonstrates acquired skills
    b. Demonstrates ability to work collaboratively

Indirect Assessments

Indirect assessments are more of a reflection where data is collected after the course is complete. These assessments address what the student has gained from the course in terms of learning, skills, and behaviors, and may inform their future progress after the course has ended. While this is considered a method that is inferior to direct assessments, it is recommended to include Indirect Assessments as an additional tool in the overall scope of authentic assessments.

One key factor to consider when collecting indirect assessments is anonymity and timeline, especially if a student feels like their grade may be connected to their responses to the questions on a survey.

The following are possible scenarios in which Indirect Assessments can be gathered:

1) Surveys & Course Evaluations

    Both Surveys and Course Evaluations help to provide qualitative data that can be used to compare and contrast responses within a class, as well as compared to other classes. Students' attitudes and opinions on open-ended questions can gather valuable insight to help produce significant changes to a course.

2) Entrance and Exit Interviews

    Gathering information before and after a student takes on a major and completes it can offer more insight into the bigger picture of how departments function collectively to create a

cohesive experience. These can be used to perform departmental analysis and become the impetus for creating a better student experience.

3) Curriculum and Syllabus Analysis

When a department defines its outcomes and learning objectives, it is important for each course offered in that department to offer specific components and learning outcomes which they intend to cover and achieve. While each course is not required to cover all of the learning objectives, it is important for students and instructors to know which outcomes are covered by which courses, in order to provide a more comprehensive learning experience for the students.

4) External Reviewers

Bringing in external reviewers to analyze the effectiveness of learning outcomes can lead to critical insight into the strengths and weaknesses of a program. Their recommendations can help to inform changes in any given course, as well as departmental shifts to enhance the student learning experience and ensure all learning goals are met.

Chapter 5: Curriculum Update Process

Teaching methods and contents. To introduce some of the latest and updated methods of teaching and content, new knowledge, and practices.

As stated by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, in accordance with state regulations and confirmed by SDCCD Board Policy 0210, curriculum is the purview and responsibility of faculty, and this includes "student outcomes assessment"; therefore, it is the role and responsibility of faculty to originate, assess, and update course learning outcomes.

1. Who initiates the update?

Faculty initiate updates to course learning outcomes (CLO) – a term that is used interchangeably with the older "student learning outcomes." When and how this occurs is up to individual departments. The same is true for program learning outcomes (PLO). Keep in mind this is also done on a college-by-college basis. Departments at the three credit colleges may and do write different outcomes for the same course. Programs are not aligned amongst the colleges, so they have different PLOs.

2. How often should the updates/review process occur?

Departments determine for themselves how frequently CLOs and PLOs are updated and approved. Faculty initiating the changes must start by consulting the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to get the proper forms.

3. Who is part of the approval process?

There should be an outcomes coordinator for each department. Who else is involved may vary by department.

4. What committees (if any) receive notice of the updates?

No committees are formally involved. The Curriculum Review Committee will see the CLOs on a course's Course Report (CR) when a course is activated or revised, but it does not as a matter of practice question the outcomes, deferring this to the subject-matter experts (the initiating faculty). While the ACCJC Accreditation Handbook states that student learning outcomes are to be in the approved course outline (CO), the Program and Course Approval Handbook (PCAH)¸ 9th edition, published by California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, makes no mention of outcomes whatsoever. Indeed, it does not even list learning outcomes as a required component for the Course Outline of Record (COR). There is no mention of program learning outcomes in the PCAH either.

5. How are program faculty notified of changes?

The department chairs and their respective outcomes coordinators are responsible for informing departments when CLOs and PLOs are revised. There is no college or district procedure for dictating when or how this occurs.

6. Where are those updates compiled?

CLOs and PLOs currently are entered into Nuventive by the department outcomes coordinators. Changes to the CLOs, however, make their way into the Course Outline of Record (COR) in a process that runs through the district's Office of Instructional Services. Any changes are manually entered into currIQunet Meta which is time-consuming.

7. Who (person/office) needs to receive the updates for storage?

CLOs are "stored" on the Course Report, so updates need to make their way to the district office via Nuventive. There is no comparable "storage" of PLOs; although, PLOs appear in the college catalog and individual departments post them on their department website.

8. How often should updates be sent to this person/office?

Ideally, the district would have the materials in time to update CLOs in currIQunet Meta once a year during summer.

9. Who is accountable to be sure this process occurs?

Faculty are accountable for CLOs and PLOs, so the ultimate responsibility lies with the department chairs in consultation with their outcomes coordinators.

Chapter 6: Nuventive

(link to handbook coming soon)

FAQ's

What is the purpose of outcomes?

Outcomes provide substantive feedback to help programs improve through assessment by the respective faculty/Classified Professionals/administrators of the program/service area/administrative unit. It is a process of collecting information that will tell us whether the programs, services, activities, and experiences we provide have the desired impact on student learning. Outcomes are the results achieved, such as making process toward the achievement of a particular goal.

Why is not grading the same as Outcomes Assessment?

In Outcomes Assessment, the terms "scoring" and "grading" have different meanings. Scoring refers to the process of marking an assessment instrument to get data about how the course has done at achieving its outcomes. Grading is the process of marking an assessment instrument for the purpose of assigning a student a grade for the course. Scoring needs to be done consistently across all sections; grading can be done differently in each section, if instructors desire. In no way does the Outcomes Assessment scoring process infringe on an instructor's grading; final grades are an aggregate assessment of a student's entire body of work for the course, often including attendance and class participation.

Grades do not provide:

→ Specific information about students' performance on core learning outcomes
→ Detailed data across sections
→ Objective student data which can be used for improvement of student learning.

How many outcomes should our course or program have?

It does not matter; what matters is that you are assessing the objectives listed in the course outline of record. If there are too many objectives; talk to the department and curriculum chair.

How does this affect Academic Freedom?

Nothing inherent in the Mesa College Outcomes Assessment process interferes with or violates the academic freedom of the instructor. Assessing outcomes is simply about faculty determining whether students are learning those things they deem most important to then use the information to make changes where appropriate. Nothing in Mesa College's process dictates in any way how faculty choose to deliver the course content or how they grade their students.

How are courses and service areas assessed?

There are many ways in which courses and service areas can be assessed. Some are done through direct student surveys, while others conduct assessments of students' learning. There are also direct and indirect forms of assessment. It is best for the Department Outcomes Coordinator to have this discussion with the specific department/program/service area to determine which type of assessment

will best serve your needs. You can also refer to Chapter 4: Authentic Assessment and Best Practices for examples.

Will the results have statistical validity?

The short answers are yes and no. While the results will not have the kind of statistical validity or reliability that would make a statistics professor happy, they will most certainly be useful in the way this process intends – to give faculty members meaningful information about how their courses are doing at achieving the goals they themselves have defined. Achieving greater validity and reliability would require a carefully selected random sample of papers be scored by a team of trained evaluators, thus minimizing the direct participation faculty in the process. The College's assessment process makes a trade-off between complete statistical reliability and faculty involvement.

Isn't this just a slippery slope leading to standardized testing?

Absolutely, and unequivocally, not!! Such a direction has never even been contemplated by anyone, including administrators, involved with Outcomes Assessment at Mesa College. For further reassurance, know that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), a strong advocator for Outcomes Assessment, does not support standardized testing.

Is this just another academic fad that will be gone in a couple of years?

Not likely. The Outcomes Assessment movement has been in existence since the early 1990's, and its momentum is growing, not waning. Every higher education accreditation agency across the country now includes the assessment of learning outcomes as one of their highest priority criteria. ACCJC, just like WASC, Middle States, Higher Learning Commission, and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, emphasizes and requires the importance of creating a culture of Outcomes Assessment within the institutions it oversees.

Can the results of assessment be used to evaluate faculty performance on merit or tenure and promotion evaluations?

No, outcomes assessment results are not a component of faculty evaluation. **Results from individual student work on courses will remain the purview of the Department with only the aggregate data from all courses assessed are submitted to Nuventive**. Outcomes assessment results serve solely to provide data about the quality of academic programs allowing faculty to review and improve as desired. Note that this is a department/program/service area led process.

Common Misconceptions

Our program/service area/administrative unit is working well, the students are successful, and therefore we do not need to bother with assessment. If our program/service area/administrative unit is working well and the students are successful, do we need to bother with completing the assessment?

No matter how well a program/service area/administrative unit is working, there is always room for improvement. Our students are constantly evolving, so our teaching and services to students must evolve too. Continuous assessment to determine how best to improve the educational experience of our students must be an integral part of all our activities. To retain our institutional accreditation, carefully assessing all our programs/service areas/administrative units provides both the evidence needed and validation of a job well done.

We will just assign a single faculty or Classified Professionals member to plan and conduct the assessment. Can we assign a single Faculty or Classified Professional to plan and conduct the assessment?

It is important that everyone is involved at all stages of the process. Each person in the department/service area/administrative unit contributes different perspectives and ideas for improving the students' educational experience. The combined experiences of all participants create a more comprehensive result.

Will the Administration use the results of the Outcome Assessment to eliminate programs?

This is a formative assessment process that will provide substantive feedback to help programs improve themselves through assessment by the respective faculty/classified professionals/administrators of the program/service area/administrative unit. Program assessment is not a summative evaluation aimed at eliminating programs or services. Mesa College aims to grow and improve our programs and services, not to eliminate them.

Appendix and Resources

DOC Directory

Glossary

California Outcomes Assessment Coordinators hub

Guide to SLO Assessment

Grand Challenges in Assessment: Collective Issues in Need of Solutions

A New Decade for Assessment: Embedding Equity into Assessment Praxis

SLO Symposium-Recordings

MOST Toolkit-Rubrics

MOST-Authentic Assessments