

Guidelines for Developing Degree SLOs¹

Begin by considering only the courses which are *required* to earn the degree.

Review the course-level SLOs for these courses. For each SLO, ask yourself:

Does this same SLO (or something similar) occur in any other courses—required or elective—for this degree?

Does this SLO address key skills/knowledge/abilities which you would expect all students who earn this degree to possess?

If you answered ‘yes’ to these questions then you have probably identified a good candidate for a degree SLO. If you did not identify any potential degree SLOs from your existing course SLOs, try to develop outcomes which do satisfy the first two questions above. Ultimately, you should develop as many SLOs as are necessary to broadly address the major skills a student which this degree should possess.

To give you an idea as to what a representative set of Degree SLOs looks like for an academic area, consider these four (of nine) SLOs for the History degree at DePaul University:

1. Students can describe and discuss historical facts, themes, and ideas.
2. Students can identify, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize primary and secondary source evidence.
3. Students can identify and explain how the past is different from the present.
4. Students can analyze an event, source, idea, or person within its historical context.

There is much to commend these Degree SLOs. In particular,

- They are each general enough that they can be linked with a wide variety of courses.
- They include higher-level thinking skills (analyze, evaluate, synthesize).
- They are measureable and can be assessed in several different ways.
- They are well-written (although the constant use of “can” seems unnecessary).
- As a set, they broadly address a diverse set of outcomes for the degree.

You should keep these points in mind as you develop your own degree outcomes.

Before entering the SLO into the software, you should

- a. Write the text of the SLO and check it for spelling and grammatical errors. Keep the SLO concise. Avoid vague phrases like “demonstrate knowledge.”
- b. Come up with a set of possible assessment methods (exams, presentations, portfolios, performances, etc.)

¹ I use the word “degree” throughout this document to include both degrees and certificates.

- c. Determine whether or not the outcome should be linked with courses. This should always be the case unless the SLO requires achievement of some goal outside of the campus such as passing a vocational exam or obtaining employment.
- d. Determine which courses will be linked with the SLO.
- e. Decide whether or not the SLO will be in “active” status. All active SLOs must have a rubric. Sketch out the rubric before you put it in the software to minimize errors.

A few final points:

It is not possible to directly copy a course SLO to a degree SLO. Copying can only be done from program to course, not the other way around. This means that if you want to use an existing course SLO for a degree you will need to re-enter it manually into the system. However, to avoid having identical SLOs in the same course, it is possible to have the data in the original course SLO transferred to the new degree SLO so long as the rubric you create has the same number of rows/standards and either the same rubric scale or one with fewer columns (that is, you can change the scale from “Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory” to “Proficient/Not Proficient”, but not the other way around). This cannot be done directly in the system; email Matt Koutroulis for help on this.

If you have a degree and a certificate in the same area for which you plan to have the same SLOs, only work on one or the other to begin with. Once you have the SLO developed for the degree, it can be linked to the certificate as well.

Instructions explaining how to enter these SLOs into SLOlutions and link them with courses can be found on the SLOlutions website. Click on the “Resources” tab, then click on “Creating and Linking Program SLOs.” For more information on creating rubrics, click on “SLOlutions Primer”; the instructions in this document for creating a rubric for a course-level SLO are essentially the same as those for a program-level SLO.