

Assessment Terminology

John Brown University

Approved by Assessment Committee January 23, 2023 and by Deans Council January 25, 2023

The following definitions of assessment terms are provided by the Assessment Committee to give the John Brown University campus a common language for discussing assessment. While it is acknowledged that alternate definitions for these terms abound, the intent here is to provide a common and consistent terminology for the JBU community, and any documents targeting the JBU community should use these terms as defined below. Since specialized accrediting bodies may define and use these terms differently, documents written for those organizations may need to translate this terminology appropriately.

Applicable Units

Unit	Mission Statement	Operational Effectiveness Assessment	Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
College	Required	Required	N/A
Academic Department, e.g., Bible and Ministry, Chemistry, Grad Counseling	Recommended	Required	N/A
Academic Program, e.g., Graphic Design (BS), Spanish (BA), Accounting (BBA)	Optional	Included in Department-level Assessment	Required
Academic Administration	Recommended	Required	N/A
ATLAS	Recommended	Required	N/A
Center for Faith and Flourishing	Recommended	Required	N/A
Core Curriculum	Recommended	Required	Required
Faculty Development	Recommended	Required	N/A
Honors Scholars Program	Recommended	Required	N/A
Innovation	Recommended	Required	N/A
Institutional Effectiveness	Recommended	Required	N/A
Irish Semester Programs	Recommended	Required	Required
Library	Recommended	Required	N/A
Registrar	Recommended	Required	N/A
Student Support Services	Recommended	Required	N/A
Select Student Development areas*	N/A	N/A	Required

*The VP of Student Development oversees most assessment-related reports, but selected areas will use SLO Assessment in the same way as academic areas.

Assessment

Assessment is “the process of providing credible evidence of resources, implementation actions, and outcomes undertaken for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of instruction, programs, and services” at JBU. (Banta & Palomba, 2015)

Types of Assessment

The Assessment Committee oversees two types of assessment:

- Operational Effectiveness Assessment: Occurs at the institution, college, and department levels and is focused on process and service. All colleges, academic departments, and academic areas participate in the annual Operational Effectiveness Assessment process.
- Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Occurs at the program and course levels and is focused on student learning. All academic programs and selected student development programs participate in the annual Student Learning Outcomes Assessment process.

Mission and Values Statements

A mission statement is a concise statement of the guiding purpose of the university, college, department, or other institutional unit. Values represent the core priorities in the unit's culture—the things that drive the faculty and staff members' priorities. Mission statements provide a foundation for developing goals, competencies, objectives and outcomes.

Each college should have a mission and values statement that flows from and provides support to the University Mission. Missions statements are recommended for Academic Departments and other academic areas. Programs may also choose to have mission statements. All mission statements these should flow from and provide support to the higher-level mission statements (Institution > College > Department > Program). Mission statements should appear on the web site and in the course catalog. Values statements are optional.

Goals

All goals flow from the mission. Operational goals are **broad** categories encompassing what the unit intends to accomplish. Student learning goals are **broad** concepts or categories of expected learning.

Institutional Learning Competencies

Competencies are general statements of student learning which lack context and are unmeasurable. Undergraduate programs have three primary educational goals from which flow the Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs). The core curriculum and major undergraduate programs have distinct lists of competencies enumerated in the course catalog. These Educational Goals and ILCs should be reflected in program mission statements, objectives, and/or outcomes. The ILCs were developed by the JBU faculty and initially adopted by the faculty on April 15, 2015.

Objectives

Objectives describe the process and means by which the outcomes will be achieved. Program and unit objectives provide the framework from which the specific outcomes are derived and should be consistent with the department's or unit's mission. Course objectives are more instructor-focused and describe what the instructor hopes to accomplish in the course.

Operational Examples

- Unit Objective — Prepare students to use the library resources for research.
 - Unit Outcome — Have all new students attend a one-hour introduction to the library.

- Program Objective — Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to present original research.
 - Program Outcome — Publish journal of student work each year.
 - Program Outcome — Have each faculty member in the department present a paper at a regional or national conference at least once in a three-year period.

Student Learning Example

- Course Objective — To demonstrate the application of molecular graphics to drug design.
 - Course Outcome — Students will be able to apply the principles underpinning the use of molecular graphics in the design of drugs to illustrate general and specific cases through a computer-based presentation.

Both programs and units should have objectives specified.

Courses may have objectives specified.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the point at which the mission and objectives actually bear fruit. Program and curriculum design, content, delivery, and assessment are all based on the outcomes. Outcomes should be specific and measurable, and they should inform and guide the faculty, staff, and students.

- Operational outcomes describe the specific desired results of the program’s or unit’s activities.
- Student Learning Outcomes and course outcomes are student-centered and identify what students will know and be able to do by the end of the program or course. These outcome statements have the student as the subject and a measurable action verb that calls for skills, behavior, competencies, and knowledge to be demonstrated by students who complete the program or course successfully. A detailed template for writing Student Learning Outcomes is available on EagleNet [here](#) or by searching for “SLO Assessment” and following the link to “SLO Assessment Policies and Procedures”.

All programs should have both program outcomes and student learning outcomes specified. Student learning outcomes should appear on the web site and in the course catalog. Units that don’t have academic programs should have unit outcomes specified. All courses should have outcomes specified. Course outcomes should appear in the course syllabus.

Assessment Process

The purpose of this document is to provide definitions for assessment terminology. Details on the Assessment Process at JBU are available on the Institutional Effectiveness EagleNet page (search for “Institutional Effectiveness”).

Works Cited

Banta, T. W., & Palomba, C. A. (2015). *Assessment Essentials: planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.