

# Memorandum



To: Deans, Department Heads, Graduate CARC members,  
University Assessment Facilitators, Graduate Program Directors

From: M. Duane Nellis, Provost and Senior Vice President

Date: March 10, 2009

Re: Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) for Graduate Programs

Office of the Provost

106 Anderson Hall

Manhattan, KS 66506-0113

785-532-6224

Fax: 785-532-6507

As of 2008, the Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) reports for **graduate degree programs and graduate certificates** are to be submitted as part of the program's full KBOR review and mid-cycle review processes. Based on this schedule, graduate programs will submit their ASL reports every four years, along with their program review report. This is in contrast to the earlier procedure where the ASL reports were due every year (as is still the case for all undergraduate programs).

In an effort to more clearly communicate the requirements necessary for Undergraduate and ALL Graduate programs (not just those Graduate Programs completing the KBOR Program Review cycle this year), this memo will review the specific Assessment requirements for all graduate programs (including graduate certificate programs) at Kansas State University.

In an attempt to continue the process of *transparency* and *alignment*, we ask, if you have not already done so, **all** Graduate programs to post by **June 15, 2009** the following items on program/department web sites so that they are easily accessible (**within two clicks of the department front page**):

- **The student learning outcomes (graduate SLOs) for each graduate degree program**
- **An "Alignment Matrix" for each Graduate degree program. (A sample matrix and a blank worksheet for Graduate programs are available on the Office of Assessment web site: <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/process/index.htm>.)**
- **A SUMMARY (approximately one paragraph) of the progress made since 2004 on assessment of student learning for each graduate degree program and graduate certificate.**

The outline of the detailed ASL report, the outline of the summarized ASL report (2 page) and the evaluation rubric used by the Graduate Council Assessment and Review Committee have been revised for consistency to prevent confusion in preparing the reports. These documents are available on-line at:

Office of Assessment:

<http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/process/index.htm>

Graduate School:

[http://www.k-state.edu/grad/gresources/program\\_review.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/grad/gresources/program_review.htm)

The Graduate School (2-6191) and the Office of Assessment (2-5712) are available for consultation when ASL reports are being prepared. If you need assistance, please contact Kevin Lease ([lease@ksu.edu](mailto:lease@ksu.edu)) in the Graduate School, or Briana Nelson Goff ([bnelson@ksu.edu](mailto:bnelson@ksu.edu)) or Steve Hawks ([sjhawks2@ksu.edu](mailto:sjhawks2@ksu.edu)) in the Office of Assessment to set up an appointment.

Your continued attention to the improvement of student learning is appreciated.

# Assessment of Student Learning

## Recommended actions to begin or continue:

- Focus on *degree program*, rather than individual course, assessment
- Document changes made in *response* to assessment results/data
- Use outside evaluators for student work (other faculty or relevant professionals)
- Look to professional societies for assessment instruments or exam items
- Assess student work using an agreed-upon rubric
- State student learning outcomes on course syllabi (maybe connected to a subset of degree program student learning outcomes)
- Set desirable standards for performance (both individual and aggregate)
- Discuss assessment results widely
- Include students in the process

## Recommendations of things to avoid in assessment of student learning:

- Use of student grades in courses or GPA as measures of learning
- Use of all or mostly indirect measures of learning (e.g., student satisfaction surveys, student self-report of learning, employer satisfaction surveys)

## Key assessment concepts:

**Transparency** – Students and public should be informed about intended student learning outcomes and student achievement of those outcomes.

**Accountability** – We should be able to state for every degree program what it is that students will know and be able to do when they graduate, and we should be showing evidence of student knowledge and ability.

**Integration** – Teaching and learning of outcomes in the major should culminate in a student being able to integrate all the learning in a demonstration of application, preferably in a situation with “unscripted” challenges.

**Alignment** – The student learning outcomes are aligned with the university, college, and program missions and it is clear that students are provided with the opportunity both to learn and to demonstrate the learning of each of the outcomes.

**Alignment Matrix for Graduate Programs** – For each stated student learning outcome, where does the student have the opportunity to learn the outcome (e.g., specific courses, multiple courses, or other program requirements) and where is student achievement of the outcome is assessed (e.g., assignments in courses, evaluation of final thesis, report, dissertation)?

SLO/Required Courses/experiences	Course Number(s)	Course Number(s)	Course Number(s)	Other Experience	Preliminary Exams	Thesis/ Report/ Dissertation
<b>Degree program SLOs</b>						
<b>University SLOs (Graduate Programs)</b>						
Knowledge						
Skills						
Attitudes and Professional Conduct						

- Place an “X” for courses or experiences in which students have the opportunity to learn the outcome (coursework, other program requirements).
- Place an “A” for courses or experiences in which student performance is used for program level assessment of the outcome. (assignments in courses, evaluation of final thesis, report, dissertation)