

## Keeping it Simple . . .

This brochure is intended to help faculty and programs put Learning Outcomes in a more practical context, briefly explaining the Why, the What and How of assessing your course/program, and putting the information gained to good use — helping you to demonstrate what your students do best, while improving the quality of your course/program.

## What is a Rubric?

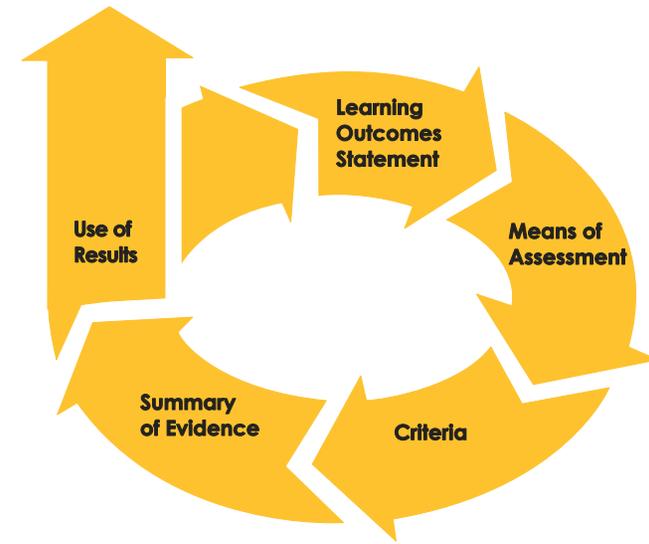
Simply defined, a rubric is a set of criteria to guide the evaluation of student work. Rubrics take various forms, but often they describe the characteristics of student achievement along a continuum. For instance, a 0-3 scoring rubric might look like this:

0—No Achievement: Student did not participate or complete the activity.

1-Inadequate: Student work did not meet minimum learning expectations.

2-Adequate: Student work met the minimum learning expectations.

3-Excellent: Student work exceeded expectations; mastery or near mastery of learning outcome.



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SLOS  
MADE  
SIMPLE

# Assessing SLOs ... Step-by-step.

## What Are SLOs, and Why Do We Assess Them?

Student Learning Outcomes, or “SLOs” are statements that describe what students are expected to know, think, feel, or do at the end of a course/program. One of the purposes of SLOs is to find common measures for learning while respecting differences in instructor grading. Measuring the degree that students can actually demonstrate their knowledge or mastery of the SLOs gives us an indication of how effective the course or program is, and can indicate what changes may be needed to improve student learning.

### STEP I: Write/Revise SLO Statements:

A well-crafted SLO will indicate what a student will be expected to know, think, feel, or do and how they will demonstrate it.

#### EXAMPLES:

“The student can analyze a geological event to identify its root causes based on an understanding of plate tectonics.”

“The student can compose a college-level essay, that is organized, free of errors and follows MLA format.”

### Step II: Choose a method to measure the student learning outcome:

This step pertains to how students demonstrate what they’ve actually learned, and involves developing a strategy for assessing the learning outcome. The method of assessment can be embedded in a current assignment or course activity. It can also include a specific set of exam questions, written assignments, teamwork activities, “clicker” responses, performances and/or skill demonstrations, etc. When the activity is grounded in a “real world” application of the knowledge or skill learned, this is what is known as “authentic assessment.”

### Step III: Set a benchmark:

A benchmark is a goal or criterion set by the program, faculty, or staff involved in the development of the outcome. Setting the criteria helps establish the relationship between evidence and the learning outcome specified in Step I. For instance, the program may set the following criterion: 70% of students will be rated as 2 or higher on the rubric. Some CHC departments, such as career/technical programs, have external benchmarks to meet, while other programs may choose not to establish benchmarks, and may take a “continuous improvement” approach, striving for improvement over previous assessment cycles.

### Step IV: Carry out the assessment, and collect evidence:

Once you’ve defined the learning outcome(s) and the means to measure it, you carry out the activity, and evaluate student work, which produces evidence of student learning. Collecting this evidence can occur in various ways, but in most cases, you will end up with totals of students who have achieved at differ-

ent levels of the rubric you created. This is called “aggregated evidence.”

### Step V: Discuss the evidence, and use the results to report learning achievement, as well as to identify areas for improvement of your course/program:

**The evidence you’ve collected provides a great snapshot of how your students are learning. The next step in the process is to discuss the evidence in terms of:**

- What elements did students perform well?
- What elements did students struggle with?
- What changes, if any, do you believe are necessary to improve student learning in the following areas:
  - Instructional approach
  - Course content (texts, resources, etc.)
  - Course/Program structure (curricular & co-curricular elements).

This conversation can illuminate what elements of the course/program work well, and what elements might need to change to improve student achievement of the outcomes. **Record the details of this conversation so that there is a record of what findings and recommendations were reached.** This record is maintained in the Office of Research and Planning and can be captured in the following ways:

- Using eLumen Achievement Software
- Using a web-based template: <http://depts.craftonhills.edu/Research/SLO/slotrack.htm>
- Using a paper-based template (<http://www.craftonhills.edu/~media/Files/SBCCD/CHC/About%20CHC/Research%20and%20Planning/ClosingTheLoopForm.ashx>) that is emailed to the Instructional Specialist at [gwilliams@craftonhills.edu](mailto:gwilliams@craftonhills.edu):

**Gary Williams, Assessment Specialist, can help you create a method that works best for you.**