

## Guiding Statement on Student Learning Outcomes

The CACREP Board does not advocate a single model or one size fits all approach to assessment of SLOs. Development is occurring within the Counselor Education community surrounding SLOs and many different approaches will emerge. Programs that have already made significant progress in the delineation and assessment of SLOs are coming forward to share with other programs their challenges and successes. In recognition of the transitions in understanding and implementation of SLOs, the CACREP Board has issued a series of Guiding Statements on Student Learning Outcomes.

- CACREP's focus is not to determine that every single student has obtained the knowledge and can demonstrate the skills outlined in the Standards. Rather CACREP's focus is to verify that the program has the tools to determine that every student has either learned or not learned the necessary knowledge and skills to be an effective counselor.

A major focus of the program review will be the assessment plan a program presents indicating where and how SLOs are assessed. The assessment plans should be comprehensive in scope addressing the continuous systematic program evaluation processes detailed in Section I Standard AA and the assessment of student learning outcomes processes required for each program area for which accreditation is sought. The assessment plan should include all points throughout a student's program of study where assessment will occur; the means by which assessment will occur; the assessment measures and formats that will be utilized; processes by which remediation will occur following summative assessments; and the means by which data will be collected, analyzed, and utilized for curriculum and program improvement. Programs will be reviewed in relation to the comprehensiveness of the assessment plan and the degree to which the plan is being fully implemented. Programs which have not fully implemented their assessment plans may be eligible to receive a two-year accreditation, based on a full accreditation review in relation to all standards. If a two-year accreditation status is granted, the implementation of the assessment plan, along with any other cited standards, will be re-evaluated during the review of the Interim Report at the end of the two-year period.

- The self-study documents should provide narrative for each and every standard listed. This narrative provides the context for the documentation that is included as evidence. Thus, even if an assessment plan is submitted as documentation for a large number of standards, the program should provide a narrative context for how the knowledge or skill area focused on in each standard is being measured across students with the assessment plan provided as documentation for how this will occur.

The role of the initial reviewers is to determine if standards appear to be met based on a paper review of the narrative responses and supporting documentation programs provide

in their self-studies. One means by which initial reviewers will make this determination is by reviewing the program's assessment plan. The assessment plans programs present should be detailed at the curricular level. When addressing the program area standards in the self-study, programs should excerpt details from the assessment plan and provide additional specifics, if necessary, for each program area standard to show how it is met in relation to the specified SLOs.

- Global assessments alone are not acceptable. Programs cannot rely on single broad measures, such as student pass rates on the National Counselor Examination, to demonstrate student learning outcomes. Assessments should be tied to specific individual standards.

Broad indicators, such as the NCE, can serve as indicators of certain types of students learning. However, the lack of specificity in the results reporting limits the utility of the results in demonstrating that the specifics of a standard have been met. One goal of the move to SLOs is for programs to put procedures in place through which direct evidence of student learning is generated. Oftentimes, programs have relied on indirect evidence, such as curriculum content, retention rates, graduation rates, and licensure exam passage rates to demonstrate that student learning has occurred. While this kind of data is ideally tied to student learning, it does not provide direct and specific evidence that student knowledge and skill development has occurred.

- Assessment of SLOs should take a multi-pronged approach. Programs should be able to demonstrate multiple ways of measuring student knowledge and multiple ways of assessing student skills.

Best practices in assessment dictate the use of multiple measures. The use of multiple measures accommodates differences in student learning as well as the different types of desired knowledge and skills.

- Assessment of SLOs for the program area standards (e.g., school counseling, clinical mental health counseling) will require faculty concretely defining the skills they wish to see developed and to observe in each student as they progress through the program. This will, in turn, require diligence in monitoring the placement opportunities provided to students to assure that students have appropriate opportunities to develop the required skills.

The program area standards provide statements on what students should know and be able to do in relation to the specific program areas. The next step for programs is to operationalize these concepts within the context, mission, and objectives of their

individual programs. This process includes program faculty working toward agreement on the indicators that successful learning and skill development has occurred in relation to each standard and refining or developing measures that incorporate these indicators.

- While course syllabi should document where and when student assessment will occur in the specific courses, classroom assessments are considered only one part of a program's comprehensive assessment plan. CACREP believes that assessment must be integrated across the curriculum.

This point underscores the idea that programs own the courses in their curricula. This is not meant to indicate that individual academic freedom is not important. Faculty should certainly have the freedom to bring their knowledge, skills, and creativity to bear in terms of designing and delivering a course. This delivery should occur, however, within the context of the program's overall curriculum. Program faculty should consider whether certain assessments should be embedded within particular courses, based upon the purposes of these course within the curriculum, or perhaps seek to ensure that particular topics or skills are included in the assessments faculty utilize within their courses. This consideration is especially important in instances when there are multiple sections of courses offered.

CACREP recognizes that there are a variety of approaches to assessment and that assessment plans should take into account a program's mission and objectives in order to be useful. Therefore, CACREP encourages programs to choose models of assessment that provide the type of feedback that will lead to continued excellence in their own programs' offerings.