

**Modesto Junior College Academic Senate
Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Modesto Junior College Academic Senate and Modesto Junior College administrative leadership agree that the following statements reflect a mutual understanding of an assessment philosophy and related activities at the college:

Why Assess Student Learning Outcomes?

Curriculum reform is useless if students do not learn what faculty teach. Assessment of student learning allows us to observe what and how well our students learn. When we identify student learning outcomes for our courses and share them with our students, we encourage students to become more actively involved in their own learning process. When we assess our students' learning, we are able to identify which of our teaching practices have been successful and which have not, thus enabling us to modify our teaching practices in order to increase success. Effective assessment of student learning outcomes serves to improve both teaching and learning.

What is assessment?

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. Assessment helps us create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

(AAHE Bulletin 1995)

Thus, assessment is not a single cycle of actions, but an **ongoing process**, which ideally permeates the institution. The assessment process involves **both gathering information and using that information** to modify and improve teaching and student learning.

This assessment is not for the purpose of evaluating an individual student or a faculty member's performance. It should be noted, however, that conducting outcomes assessment is a responsibility of each faculty member.

Student learning outcomes assessment information will be reported in collective form and not in a way that would be attributable to an individual faculty member.

Who will conduct outcomes assessment?

The faculty of Modesto Junior College, in consultation with the entire college community, will shape, design, and disseminate institutional assessment activities and will identify the core knowledge and skills that our students need to master.

Who will develop the processes of assessment?

The faculty of Modesto Junior College will develop the criteria by which student progress may be evaluated. These will be ongoing processes, open to modification and improvement. Not all assessment need be done in individual classes, and not every faculty member need assess all of the core learning. Faculty shall maintain ownership of student learning outcomes and assessment processes.

What will assessment be used for?

At Modesto Junior College, we will use assessment of student learning outcomes primarily to understand, and thereby improve, student learning through informed decision making and planning. More specifically, assessment can serve the following roles in the institution:

To improve services, feedback, guidance, and mentoring to students in order to help them better plan and execute their educational programs

To help design and improve programs and courses to better promote student learning and success.

To identify shared definitions and measurable benchmarks for evaluating student abilities to more coherently and effectively promote student learning.

To help us understand how groups of students experience the college differently so as respond appropriately to the needs of all students.

To help us understand how our different courses and programs affect students over time so that we can better coordinate and sequence the student's experience to produce more and deeper learning.

To provide staff and students with opportunities to reflect on their practice and their learning.

What will assessment not be used for?

Individual institutions make individual choices about how they will use the tools of student learning assessment. Modesto Junior College will not use the tools of assessment in any of the following ways:

We will not use assessment of student learning as an end in itself. Assessment that does not help us to promote student learning is a waste of time.

We will not use assessment of student learning punitively or as a means of determining faculty or staff salaries or rewards. The purpose of assessment is to evaluate student learning, not to reward or punish faculty or staff.

We will not use any single mode of assessment to answer all questions or strictly determine program decisions.

We will not use assessment in a way that will impinge upon the academic freedom or professional rights of faculty. Individual faculty members must continue to exercise their best professional judgment in matters of grading and discipline.

We will not assume that assessment can answer all questions about all students. We need not directly assess all students in order to learn about the effectiveness of our programs and policies.

We will not assume that assessment is only quantitative. While numerical scales or rubrics (such as the four-point grading scale) can be useful, their accuracy always depends on the clear understanding of the concepts behind the numbers. Indicators of student learning can be expressed as narratives, a performance or numbers.

We will not use assessment only to evaluate the end of the student's experience or merely to be accountable to outside parties.

We will not assume that assessment is only grading.

Student learning outcomes will not be used for evaluation of faculty.

What is the college's role in assessing student learning?

The college will provide the necessary support structure, including, but not limited to, release time for a faculty SLO coordinator, office space, support staff and an activities budget.

How will we use assessment of student learning?

The following guidelines will govern the methodology and approach we will employ at Modesto Junior College to promote assessment of student learning:

We will always seek multiple methods of assessing student learning rather than relying on any single method.

We will assess those skills, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge that our faculty, in consultation with the entire college community, judges to be important and valuable.

We will assess the ongoing progress of students throughout their experience at the college.

We will use assessment processes and instruments to accommodate and encourage creativity and originality shown by students.

We will clearly explain the purposes of assessment so that staff, students, and the community can clearly see why assessment is being used, as well as the rationale for choosing each individual form of assessment in its particular context.

This document is based on the work done by Palomar College.

Signed:

MJC President

Date

Vice President of Instruction

Date

MJC Academic Senate President

Date

Approved