



## GRADUATE PROGRAMS OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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### INTRODUCTION

The assessment of learning outcomes in graduate programs is governed by the Institutional Assessment and Program Review Policy and is conducted following procedures and timeframes stipulated in the Athens State University Outcomes Assessment System. This evaluative process is systematic, integrated, and is an integral part of the ongoing institutional effectiveness model.

Like any other academic degree program in the institution, graduate program assessments focus on the formulation and measurement of student learning outcomes. However, additional outcomes associated with the overall performance of each program but not directly connected to learning, namely program-operational outcomes, are also formulated and measured.

Responsibility for the formulation and evaluation of learning outcomes fall on the program's graduate faculty, in coordination with the Graduate Education Council, the Executive Assessment Committee, and the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is responsible for the coordination of assessment activities and data analysis.

Every graduate program must formulate and publish student learning outcomes, implement these outcomes in the faculty-developed Annual Assessment Plan (AAP) at the beginning of the academic year, and report results through the Annual Assessment Report (AAR). Action Plans must be submitted as needed based on assessment findings. The Office of the Provost, with input from the Graduate Education Council and recommendations from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment may specify other requirements to support useful assessment and meet accreditation standards.

Annual assessment findings are shared with the program's graduate faculty and College Deans, who will be responsible for reporting to the Provost. Annually, the Provost reviews and shares the status of assessment with the President and other senior-level constituencies. Graduate education learning outcomes are communicated to students on the Graduate Programs webpage and the Graduate Programs Catalog.

### I. DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ALL GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The rigor of a graduate education commands more than the acquisition of basic knowledge. Therefore, it is expected that graduate instruction provides a higher level of content knowledge and advanced analytical and communication skills conducive to the ability of graduates to make contributions of original and independent value to the discipline.

#### **Formulation of Learning Outcomes:**

In formulating learning outcomes the following standards must be met:

- Outcomes must be stated operationally (i.e. expected student behaviors/achievements) including evaluation parameters for measuring student development.
- Outcomes must be aggregate, focusing on the program and not on individual students or courses.

- Outcomes must specify the advanced skills, competencies, understandings, and values that students should have acquired as a result of having completed the graduate program of study.

While specific learning goals reside within the individual graduate programs, a set of fundamental areas (FA) representing the transformative nature of a graduate education provide the foundation for the development of learning outcomes. A series of learning outcomes (LO) within each area can be customized to represent the unique perspective of each graduate program. Descriptors associated with each fundamental area illustrate the types of learning outcomes that a program may use. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive: outcomes can be modified and/or new ones added as needed by each graduate program.

**FA1: Scholarly Development:**

May include: advanced knowledge of disciplinary core; in-depth knowledge of specific areas of inquiry; competency in research and scholarly methods; demonstrated ability to conduct research or pursue scholarship in the field of study.

**LO1: Advanced Core Knowledge in \_\_\_\_ *[specialized areas of the discipline]* evidenced by demonstrated command of the knowledge and literature in the discipline.**

*(Introductory and Advanced Core Knowledge should be measured separately)*

**LO2: Research and Methodological Skills evidenced by demonstrated command of one or more relevant research methodologies appropriate to the discipline.**

*(Introductory and Advanced Research and Methodological Skills should be measured separately)*

**FA2: Advanced Communication**

May include: skill in written and oral communication; ability to communicate to audiences of experts within the field of study as well as broader audiences of non-experts

**LO3: Written and Oral Communication Skills including communication of research findings.**

**FA3: Professional Responsibility, Leadership, and Management Skills**

May include: commitment to conducting research and managing projects and operations in ethical and responsible manner; integrity in participation in the intellectual and organizational aspects of the profession; ability to work independently and collaboratively;

**LO4: Demonstrated diligence in the application of ethical, legal, and institutional policy standards in the conduct of research applicable to the discipline**

**LO5: Demonstrated diligence in the application of ethical, legal, and institutional policy standards in managing projects, operations, or formulating strategies applicable to the discipline**

**FA4: Practical Application of Knowledge**

May include: above average performance in case analysis resolution evidenced by problem solving; correct usage of procedures; application of theoretical constructs to explain trends, incidents and/or events.

**LO6: Demonstrated ability to apply discipline-specific theoretical knowledge (methods, processes, concepts, principles, and theories) to new and practical situations.**

**FA5: Pedagogy and Training (applicable to education programs)**

**LO7: Demonstrated ability to create an environment that supports learning through teaching, collaborative inquiry, mentoring, and demonstration**

**Assessment of Learning Outcomes:**

Graduate faculty in each program assesses student performance through a variety of direct (evidence-based) and indirect measures, applied in strategically selected courses throughout the curriculum.

Assessment instruments vary by program and may include:

- Direct (Evidence-Based):
  - Entrance and Comprehensive (Exit) Exams
  - Course-embedded exams, assignments, projects, and simulations
  - Written and oral presentations of research projects
  - Thesis Proposal and Defense
  - Student Publications
  - Presentations at professional conferences
  - Participation in department or other University venue research/discussion seminars
  - Teaching assignments (applicable to education programs)
- Indirect:
  - Graduate Student Surveys (at graduation and follow-ups)
  - Third-party surveys (i.e. employers)

**Curricular Map:**

The curricular map connects each learning outcome to related coursework and to additional requirements for the program.

<i>[Program Title]</i> CURRICULAR MAP							
Coursework	LO 1 <sup>(1)</sup>	LO 2	LO 3	LO 4	LO 5	LO 6	LO 7
Core Course 1							
Core Course 2							
Core Course 3							
Core Course 4							
Core Course 5							
Core Course 6							
<b>Other Graduate Requirements (as applicable)</b>							
Pre-Candidacy Project							
Thesis Proposal and Defense							
Teaching Assignments							
Professional Development Activities							
Publications							
Service Activities							

<sup>(1)</sup> Core Knowledge and Research-based objectives should measure "Introductory" and "Advanced" content coded as I= Introductory; A=Advanced in the respective course or other requirement where the outcome is measured.

## II. DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM-OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Program-Operational outcomes reflect the effectiveness of the program based on what is to be achieved. These outcomes are components of institutional effectiveness and are aligned with institutional goals. Measurable indicators include the impact of the program on specific constituents (e.g. students, employers) and the university as a whole (i.e. enrollment sustainability).

Data gathering methods and techniques used are typically based on the analysis of institutional data (evidence-based) and surveys of students and other relevant constituencies.

### **Formulation of Program-Operational (Performance) Outcomes for Graduate Programs:**

In formulating program-operational outcomes (PO) the following standards must be met:

- Outcomes must be stated operationally (i.e. expected student behaviors/achievements) including evaluation parameters for measuring performance metrics.
- Outcomes must be aggregate, focusing on the program and not on individual students or courses.

Performance indicators for graduate programs are based on (1) Student Achievement of Educational Goals, and (2) Program Quality, Sustainability, and Viability. Both set of indicators serves as the basis for formulating program-operational outcomes. Additional outcomes may be added as determined by each individual graduate program.

### **Program Effectiveness: Student Achievement of Educational Goals**

**PO1: Program Graduation Rate** *(measured for both full time and part time student enrollment status)*

Include: Graduation rate up to 4 years for FT and 6 years for PT students

**PO2: Program Retention Rate** *(measured for both full time and part time student enrollment status)*

Include: 1 yr and 2 Yr Fall-to Fall Retention for FT students; 1 yr to 6 years Fall-to-Fall Retention for PT students

**PO3: Time-to Degree**

**PO4: Student Employment Status (*Post completion of Graduate Program*)**

May include: job placement rates (in/outside discipline); job characteristics; job compensation;

**PO5: Student Continuing Education (Post Master's)**

May include: admission to further studies, e.g. doctorate or professional degrees);

**Program Effectiveness: Program Quality, Sustainability, and, Viability**

**PO6: Indicators of program's impact and transformation**

May include: local; regional, national program reputation; program ranking (if available); discipline-specific accreditation (if applicable); students' perception of program quality;

**PO7: Teaching Effectiveness (*performance indicators regarding instructors are formulated by graduate faculty and approved by College Deans and Provost*)**

May include: quality indicators for instruction; class size; faculty-student ratio; student evaluations of teaching effectiveness; faculty qualifications; faculty resources (number and productivity ratios);

**PO8: Sustainable Growth: Enrollment capability to: (1) generate needed financial resources to support the program; and (2) produce a viable number of graduates per year**

May include: program's credit hour production; completions; demand/supply-admission applications/admissions rate/ yield rate; productivity gains (e.g. recruitment, instructional delivery systems, ratio of tuition revenue to program's cost, etc.

**Assessment of Program-Operational Outcomes:**

- **Direct (Evidence-based)**
  - **Institutional Research Statistical Reports**
  - **Discipline-specific accreditation records (as available)**
  - **Career Services Students and Employers Employment Records (as available)**
  - **Recruitment Records**
  - **Program Internal Student Records (publications)**
  - **Business Office analytical reports (as available)**
- **Indirect:**
  - **Surveys of Graduates (at time of graduation and follow-up)**
  - **Employers Surveys**