

Assurance of Student Learning Reflection 2024-2025

<i>Ogden College of Science and Engineering</i>	<i>Department of Biological Sciences</i>
<i>Biology (0493)</i>	
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Is this an online program? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Please make sure the Program Learning Outcomes listed match those in CourseLeaf. Indicate verification here ☒ Yes, they match! (If they don't match, explain on this page under Evaluation)

Instructions: For the 2024-25 assessment, we are asking you to reflect on the last three-year cycle rather than collect data. It's important to take time to look over the results from the last assessment cycle and really focus on a data-informed direction going forward. In collaboration with your assessment team and program faculty, review each submitted template from 2021-2024 and consider the following for each Program Learning Outcome, add your narrative to the template, and submit the draft to your **ASL Rep** by **May 15, 2025**.

Program Student Learning Outcome 1

Program Student Learning Outcome	Graduates will demonstrate a level of biological content knowledge appropriate to their degree level.
Evaluation	This Student Learning Outcome (SLO) remains relevant as it assesses students' content knowledge within the discipline. Students are not only expected to demonstrate foundational factual understanding, but also to apply and synthesize this knowledge as they advance through the program. This ensures they are well-prepared for entry into the workforce or for pursuing graduate and professional education upon graduation. The SLO is effectively measured by the Biology Assessment Exam, which is designed to assess both introductory and higher-order cognitive skills, aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy. The exam provides valuable insights into curricular and programmatic strengths and weaknesses, offering a data-driven foundation for informed improvements. The Biology Assessment Exam measures content knowledge associated with Student Learning Outcome 1 (SLO1) and serves as a valuable tool for informing future curricular revisions. To further strengthen the program's scaffolding, a closer analysis comparing the content emphasis in introductory courses with the content demands of 200- and 300-level courses could help identify potential gaps or misalignments. This analysis may also reveal whether revisions to the exam itself are warranted. For now, we plan to continue using the current version of the exam to collect additional data before making any changes.
Measurement Instruments	Biology Assessment Exam The Biology Assessment Exam is an instrument, newly developed in 2020-21, designed to assess content knowledge within the program discipline. The exam is constructed around 14 vignettes, 2 each representing the six major areas of emphasis in our core curriculum (Cells, Metabolism, Genetics, Ecology, Evolution, Diversity); in 2022-23, the assessment exam was expanded to also include 2 vignettes addressing topics related to molecular biotechnology, immunology, and microbiology. These major areas are literally the elements introduced in our required introductory course sequence (BIOL 120/121 and BIOL 122-123), and reinforced in our restricted elective core choices at the 200-level (BIOL 222/223, 224/225, or 226/227) and 300-level (BIOL 319/322 or 327/337 and BIOL 315 or 316). Free elective courses at the 300- and 400-levels provide students the opportunity to further master these topics in more specific contexts aligned with their individual professional interests.

	Within each area of emphasis, there are 2 vignettes that are associated with 9 multiple-choice questions. Three (3) questions each test student content knowledge at the introductory, developing, and mastery level, based on Bloom's Taxonomy. In each area, several questions require interpretation of tables and/or figures, and assess students' ability to apply the scientific process. This exam design allows for redundant assessment of knowledge by area of emphasis as well as mastery level; in addition, it provides the ability to carry out a meta-analysis of higher-order knowledge and skills such as correct interpretation of data and application of the scientific process. The exam is given either electronically or in-person as part of BIOL 489, our required program capstone course that is taken by students during their final semester at WKU prior to graduation.
Criteria & Targets	Criterion for Student Success: Students will score at least 50% or higher, with the score on Introductory-level items at least 60%. Program Target: At least 75% of students will attain the criterion level of success. The criterion for this SLO offered insight into student content knowledge at introductory and mastery levels, so it was successful. However, the assessment instrument has been utilized through only 2 assessment cycles (and modified in-between in accordance with follow-up activities derived from analysis of the 2020-21 assessment results), and so we are reluctant to draw too many conclusions or implications from patterns in the scores within and among content areas or to change the current criteria or targets. We want to continue with our current exam and targets before drawing too many conclusions.
Results & Conclusions	There are small perceived differences in student responses to introductory level questions as compared to intermediate and higher level courses as categorized by Bloom's taxonomy, however, the current data set remains limited in scope and sample size. We are reluctant to draw broad conclusions from this data at this time but believe that continuing to measure this SLO (SLO3) using the Assessment Exam remains relevant and valuable. We have revised the exam to better align with the content expectations of our program but we have not yet conducted an in-depth analysis to determine whether the assessment accurately reflects the core knowledge essential to our curriculum. Our three-year plan aims to examine how content is scaffolded across course levels and to identify any gaps in the curriculum. This process will help evaluate whether the Assessment Exam effectively measures the intended learning objectives.
<u>**IMPORTANT - Plans for Next Assessment Cycle:</u>	While we intend to continue using the Biology Assessment Exam as the primary measure for this Student Learning Outcome (SLO), we also recognize the need to enhance our assessment practices to ensure they are both meaningful and effective. To that end, we have developed a three-year plan to improve the alignment between the assessment and the curriculum: 1. Year 1 – Develop and present a proposal to the faculty that outlines a strategy for ensuring alignment between the curriculum at introductory, 200, and 300-level courses and exam content (See Year 2). 2. Year 2 – If the plan is approved, implement the strategy. This may include self-evaluations by faculty to compare the content of introductory courses with the learning expectations of 200- and 300-level courses. 3. Year 3 – Analyze the data collected during implementation and, based on the findings, recommend revisions to the curriculum, the assessment exam, or the overall program scaffolding as necessary.