

General Education Proposal Guide and Review Rubric

Here is a brief proposal guide/review rubric to help people with proposal preparation and reviews.

The following sections are contained within this summary:

Section I: Overview of review process

Section II: Brief outline of standards-based education

- 1) How to connect activities and assessments to each SLO

Section III: Proposal review rubric and examples

- 1) SLOs and descriptions of activities and assessments

Section IV: Best practices for proposals

Section I: Reviewing Proposals

The LDCC and UDCC reviews course proposals to ensure new courses, and those seeking re-certification, will adequately provide learning experiences and assessments that produce evidence for the students meeting the specific SLOs.

In general, more detail on the proposal is better; however, relevant detail is required. The three areas in which we are evaluating the proposals are:

1. **Input:** What is the instructor providing to create opportunities for student learning? This includes a description of the material (e.g., readings, videos), presentation format (e.g., lecture, video), and how the input is related to the course topic and individual SLO
2. **Activity:** What is the instructor doing to facilitate student engagement that aligns with the goal of the SLO? This includes in-class activities (e.g., small-group discussions, debates), homework or practice trials, or other informal tasks to provide feedback for learning.
3. **Assessment:** How will the instructor collect data on the ability of the student to meet the objectives of the standard? This includes formal and summative assessments (e.g., exams, essays, portfolios, presentations, group performances) that align with the nature of the SLO.

A common fault within proposals is an overemphasis on the input and a description of the importance and a justification for why it is there; but, little (if any) explanation of how these materials will be used for student activities that lead to relevant assessments.

The committees review each SLO individually, as some are written better than others, and make recommendations for approval, or a request for edits and more information, for each SLO. The purpose of the review process is to provide feedback for the instructors to make improvements to the course content, activities and assessments to maximize the chance for students to meet the goals of the specific SLOs. If the course, or course elements do not align with a particular outcomes, the instructors are able to revise and resubmit. We will work with you until the course is approved, or you choose not to submit any revisions, to which the course will not be approved for the area or overlay.

We vote as a committee on each SLO and a majority vote is needed for approval of each individual SLO. To have a course included within GE, all SLOs must be individually approved.

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Therefore, each course proposal can be (a) approved across all SLOs and so approved for the GE or overlay area, (b) approved for specific SLOs with the SLOs that are not approved requiring revisions and resubmissions, or (c) approved for no SLOs, requiring a full-scale rework or resubmission to another area (e.g., C1 v. C2). Cases b and c require resubmission and a second review by the committee. If the course is not revised after feedback has been provided, the course will not be eligible for GE within a content area or SF State Studies overlay. The committees strongly recommend that the course is revised and resubmitted in the same semester as the initial review took place, and no later than the semester following the initial review.

Other general elements that we look for are a detailed breakdown of the assignments, the number of points earned for each task, a relative contribution of each assignment/task to the total (e.g., 10 discussions each work 5 points for a total of 50, that translates to 25% of the course total), a course schedule and topics list, and a summary of the readings/materials being used in the course.

Section II: Standards-based Education

General Education at San Francisco State University has been implemented to ensure students graduate with a breadth of knowledge, skills, and values that connect various academic disciplines and subject areas in preparation for life beyond undergraduate education (<http://bulletin.sfsu.edu/undergraduate-education/#IGE>). As such, the SLOs for each area of GE are performance indicators that, if met, serve as evidence that students are ready to use these knowledge and skills in future experiences. Think of the GE SLOs as checkboxes on a driver's test: Earning checkboxes and passing the driver's test indicates readiness for someone to drive "in the real-world."

Standards-based Education (SBE) was implemented to provide guidance and structure to education in a similar way as there are engineering and building standards.¹ The idea was that, just like requiring high standards for building bridges and airplanes can increase the quality of these products, so to would requiring standards increase the quality of education. Many SLOs are written using terminology found in Bloom's taxonomy² and outline that level of student performance that is required.

¹ Marzano, R. J., & Kendall, J. S. (1996). The Fall and Rise of Standards-Based Education. Issues in Brief. *NASBE Publications*.

² Krathwohl, D. R. (2002). A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: An overview. *Theory into practice*, 41(4), 212-218.

Bloom's Taxonomy

<https://www.krausanderson.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Bloom.jpg>

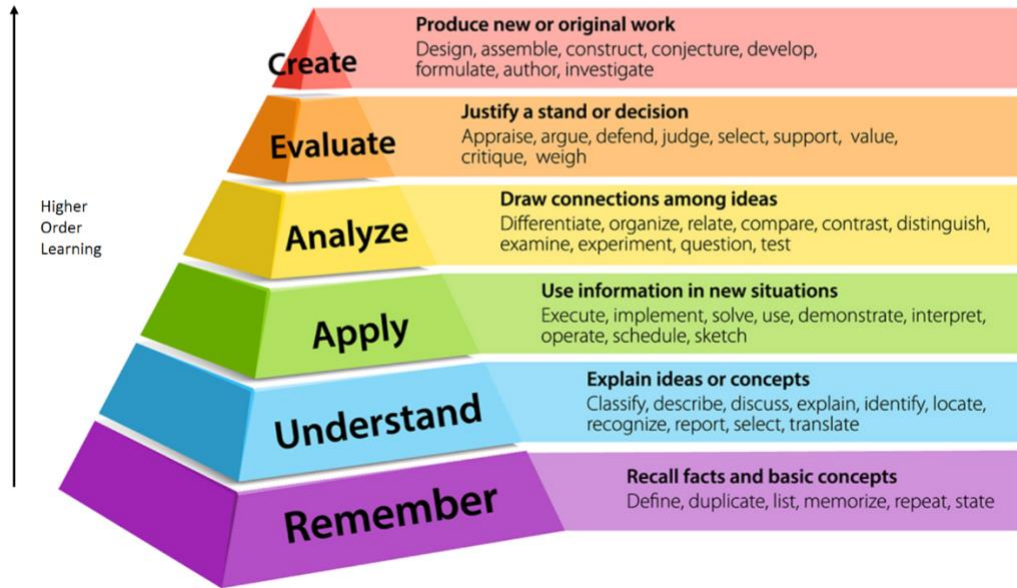


Figure 1. Bloom's taxonomy.

Section II.1.

For example:

Student Learning Outcomes for Lower Division Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning (B4) (3 units)

After completion of a lower division general education course in mathematics/quantitative reasoning, **students will be able to:**

1. Interpret mathematical models such as formulae, graphs, tables, and schematics, and draw inferences from them; represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally;

Our guiding principle when reviewing proposals is to verify there is appropriate information about how the instructor will go about creating learning experiences that provide **observable and measureable student outcomes, behaviors, and performances**. Course assessments are the evidence that students are able to produce the required output needed to meet each SLO. Therefore, when reviewing proposals, we are looking for three key elements:

1. Detailed description of the materials and techniques used by the instructor to provide the **input** needed for students to meet the SLO

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2. Detailed description of the **activity** the instructor provides to allow students to engage and internalize the content
3. Detailed description of the **assessment** the instructor creates that allows for an observable and measurable evaluation of student performance that matches the standard

Note: The term “performance” is a general term that is being used to describe how the student will produce a product that demonstrates their learning. It could be in the form of quizzes, essays, discussions, presentations, or projects of various forms; however, the key feature for all of these are they are tangible products created by the student in alignment with the SLO.

The descriptions of the level (e.g., apply) determine the nature of the assessment, but also the structure of the learning activity.

If we return to our example of B4.1:

1. Interpret mathematical models such as formulae, graphs, tables, and schematics, and draw inferences from them; represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally;

The key word is “interpret” as it frames the intended level of performance required by the student, and thus the observable outcome as part of the assessment. Looking at Bloom’s taxonomy and B4.1, you can see that “interpret” and “draw inferences” are important ideas that need to be shown in student work. For example, an instructor can provide a graph about sales figures and have them write a short script for how they might present this information in a meeting that proposes new solutions to increase sales. Note how the SLO is not about creating the graph (that would be a different standard), but is about how the student uses that information to draw and communicate conclusions.

What can be a challenge for instructors is designing learning activities and assessments that match the standards. In the previous example, it may be the course spends more time on how to create the graph, but when it comes to application or interpretations of those data, there is far less time or intention spent on learning what the data mean.

This leads to the next main idea of SBE: different levels of performances require different learning and assessment techniques. There are three main types of standards: Performance, Cognitive, and Reflective, which are based upon other domains of learning (e.g., motor skills, cognitive skills, affective (social-emotional) skills; *California Standards for K-12 Physical Education*).

Performance Standards are generally lower-level skills that require students to produce solutions to problems, answer questions, or remember definitions. Creating a graph would be considered a Performance Standard.

Cognitive Standards are generally higher-level skills that require students to use knowledge or skills to apply, evaluate, or create new products. Interpreting a graph and communicating conclusions would be considered a Cognitive Standard.

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Reflective Standards are generally centered on personal meaning and experiences that allow students to express themselves and to identify their personal relationship with the content. A short reflection essay on how misinterpretation of graphical data can potentially create issues with equity and justice is an example of a Reflective Standard.

As you can see, each standard is centered on one topic (visual presentation of data); however, the nature of each standard requires different activities and assessments to truly identify if students have the skills outlined by the SLO.

Within the GE proposal document, the instructor should outline and describe the relevant activities connected to an individual SLO in the activity prompt (e.g., viewing a series of videos with an accompanying worksheet). In the assessment prompt, a description of the assignment(s) that are being completed by the students to gather and record evidence of student learning (e.g., written essay), and a summary of the evaluation process (e.g., grading rubric) should be provided for each SLO.

Section III: Review Procedure and Rubric

Review Procedure

Each SLO has two prompts: an activity used to introduce and refine the related knowledge and skills, and the assessments used to collect and record evidence of student learning.

The Committee will read and evaluate the responses to each prompt for every SLO using the rubric below and then discuss any recommendations, additions, and comment. If the SLO is rated as *Proficient*, the Committee will vote to approve that individual SLO. The proposal is deemed “Approved” when all of the SLOs have been successfully voted upon.

If the SLO is rated as *Approaching*, the Committee will make comments and suggestions for improvements and to create a stronger connection between the activities and assessments and the intended student output related to the SLO. These comments are given to the Faculty Director of GE who will pass these along to the instructors through the CourseLeaf system.

For SLOs that receive a *Deficient* rating, the process is similar to those receiving an *Approaching* evaluation. The main difference is the level of revision and the amount of details or descriptions that are requested to move towards *Approaching* or *Proficient* ratings. The Committees will still provide feedback, comments and suggestions for improvements, and the instructor can choose to forego resubmission and not have the course certified/recertified for GE.

Please see Section I for overview of the review process and note the deadlines and timelines for proposal submissions, review and revisions.

Section III.1 Review Rubric

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Proposal Prompt 1: Describe the activities (lectures, class discussion, projects, papers etc.) that students will engage in to acquire the knowledge or skills necessary to meet the goals of the SLO. Sufficient detail should be provided so that the committee reviewing the proposal can easily discern how engaging in the activity or activities allows students to acquire the skills or concepts addressed in the SLO.

<i>Deficient</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Proficient</i>
Response does not contain any details and descriptions of the activities that student will engage in during the class, or on their own. Response focuses heavily on listing what the instructor does, but does not outline how this create opportunities for students to engage or participate in tasks related to the SLO.	Response provides limited details and descriptions of the activities that student will engage in during the class, or on their own. The response may contain a general list or summary statement of activities; however, these descriptions do not articulate the ways in which students will actively participate in the activities and how this provide opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills listed in the SLO.	Response provides complete details and descriptions of the activities that students will engage in during the class that provide clear connections between student engagement and the intended goals from the SLO.

Proposal Prompt 2: Describe specifically how you will assess student progress towards meeting the goals of the SLO. Sufficient detail should be provided so that the committee reviewing the proposal can easily discern how the assignment allows for the assessment of student progress towards the goals of the SLO. Providing examples of writing prompts, instructions for assignments or sample test questions, for example, are helpful to the committee assessing the proposal and are strongly encouraged. If group discussion is used as a form of assessment, please include in your description of the discussion how you will ensure that all students participate and how you will assess their contributions relative to the goals of the SLO.

<i>Deficient</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Proficient</i>
Response does not contain any details and descriptions of the assessments that will be used to monitor student progress towards the SLO. No evidence of specific data collection, or response is limited to general statements related to attendance, participation or class discussions.	Response provides limited details and descriptions of the assessments that will be used to monitor student progress towards the intended SLOs. Concomitantly, the response may provide a general or superficial list of tasks that are copied across multiple SLOs that do not highlight or address the specific	Response provides complete details and descriptions of the assessments that instructors will use to monitor and report on the observable and measureable characteristics that demonstrate student proficiency with the intended goals from the SLO.

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	observable and measureable outcomes.	
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Example of *Proficient* (approved) response (TH A 201).

Note the highlighted text in the example matches elements within the text to identify how the response should align with the prompt and specific elements within each SLO. For example, the **green** highlight outlines the activities related to how students' will interpret and evaluate artistic works, whereas the **cyan** text highlights the cognitive or reflective elements of the SLO.

SLO 1. Appreciate and reflect on specific ways of knowing the world involved in the creation, interpretation, and evaluation of artistic works and performances.

Prompt 1: Describe the activities (lectures, class discussion, projects, papers etc.) that students will engage in to acquire the knowledge or skills necessary to meet the goals of the SLO. Sufficient detail should be provided so that the committee reviewing the proposal can easily discern how engaging in the activity or activities allows students to acquire the skills or concepts addressed in the SLO.

Response 1. We will read and, in some cases, watch stage versions of the various plays assigned. In each instance, we will discuss the role of actor, director and designer in shaping the vision, and how these elements alter and affect meaning. (Using Hamlet as an example of assignment questions in each step of this course proposal for consistency, though the process will be similar for each play). EXAMPLE QUESTION HAMLET: We will read and then watch two interpretations of Hamlet directed from different points of view, portraying the nature of Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude and Ophelia differently. Students will examine how the issue of romantic love and betrayals vary in both interpretations, noting the role of the director and actor in shaping the story to reflect very different meanings and relationships. We will do this for each of the assigned plays, encouraging students to view the work with an active, critical eye.

Prompt 2: Describe specifically how you will assess student progress towards meeting the goals of the SLO. Sufficient detail should be provided so that the committee reviewing the proposal can easily discern how the assignment allows for the assessment of student progress towards the goals of the SLO. Providing examples of writing prompts, instructions for assignments or sample test questions, for example, are helpful to the committee assessing the proposal and are strongly encouraged. If group discussion is used as a form of assessment, please include in your description of the discussion how you will ensure that all students participate and how you will assess their contributions relative to the goals of the SLO.

Response 2: For each play read, students will be given a list of prompts to respond to. We will discuss each play as a group, but then students will have individual written assignments consisting of two parts (for each play read). Part 1 will consider thematic questions and Part 2 will require a creative response.

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EXAMPLE QUESTION HAMLET Part 1: Hamlet experiences a deep sense of betrayal in the play. Does he feel betrayed by Ophelia in a similar way to the betrayal he feels by Gertrude, or is the nature of this betrayal different? Does the betrayal that Hamlet feels at the hands of men (Claudius) feel similar or different to the betrayal he experiences from the women in his life? Which is more powerful?

EXAMPLE QUESTION HAMLET Part 2: Write a letter (as Hamlet) to Ophelia explaining your behavior in the Get Thee to a Nunnery scene. What were you experiencing? Why did you do that? Do you regret it, or were you justified? You can also write her a poem or a song if you prefer (songs should be recorded and submitted). **Student progress will be assessed through a point system with a clearly provided rubric for each assignment.** Factors considered in the grading rubric (with points assigned in each category) will examine factors such as: does the student demonstrate command of the material (i.e., did they read and understand the play, and is the demonstrated by the clarity of thought of the writing), does the student demonstrate an understanding of themes as discussed in class, does the student demonstrate critical thinking skills in their approach to the scene etc. Prompt grading of assignments will allow students to assess their progress throughout the course with ample time to adjust performance.

Note: A further detail that would strengthen this response would be an idea of how the writing assignments will contribute to the overall grade in the course, either by a point total or percentage of final grade that connects to the grading list at the beginning of the proposal. This is important for SF State Studies SLOs to ensure that content is distributed throughout the course and not a “topic of the week” with limited time for development and progression of student outcomes.

Section IV: Best Practices

Here are some ideas or strategies that have been found to improve the quality of proposal and increase the efficiency of the review process.

- Remember to write your proposal for the review process. The Committees are less concerned about the content and the theoretical justification of what you have included in your course. Our primary concern is whether the content, activities and assessments align with the intended knowledge and skills outlined by the SLOs.
- Include details from your syllabus within the proposal itself.
- Provide a list of resources, readings, and topics that you intend to include in your course.
- Provide a detailed breakdown of the assignments that will be used to form the final grade, and include a point and/or percentage breakdown. This is particularly important for proposals that include SF State Studies overlays to outline how this content is distributed in a meaningful way throughout the course.
- Include specific and unique responses to the prompts for each SLO. You will be tempted to copy and paste information that is common; however, remember that each SLO itself outlines specific and unique outcomes that need to be addressed. Include the common content or tasks, but also highlight any details or differences that directly relate to a specific SLO.
- Focus on what the students are doing. Often proposals get stuck on what the instructor does and how that relates to the outcomes, but these are SLOs...Student Learning

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Outcomes. Outline and describe how your input (e.g., lectures, readings) will create opportunities for the students to practice and engage (e.g., discussions, blog posts, laboratory experiments, art/dance performances) and how you will collect data on how well those activities/performances demonstrate proficiency and skill related to the intended goals of the SLO (e.g., quizzes, essays, presentations). Your input is vital, but the review process is intended to confirm that students will finish your classes with the relevant knowledge and skills that meet the standards for General Education at SFSU.