# Blackboard Outcomes Faculty Guide:

*Conducting Program and Institutional Level Assessment of Student Work Using Blackboard Outcomes*

Academic Programs and Graduate Studies

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Introduction to Conducting Secondary Assessment of Samples of Student Work Using Blackboard Outcomes

What Is the Purpose of this Guide?

This is a summary of relevant background information and useful best practices to help faculty who want to use the Blackboard Outcomes tool for assessment of student work. Please refer to the Student Learning Assessment Guide for a deeper understanding of the assessment process at CSU East Bay.

What Is Blackboard (Bb) Outcomes?

CSU East Bay selected and installed Blackboard Outcomes in the Blackboard learning management system in the summer of 2013 after a careful review of a number of electronic learning assessment platforms. This was in direct response to faculty requests to simplify the process of sampling student work and analyzing the results to assess achievement of student learning outcomes across programs (undergraduate, graduate, and credential programs as well as student services and in administrative units).

Blackboard Outcomes allows groups of faculty to sample student work for program assessment and create reports for analysis and curriculum improvement.

The system allows faculty to use an agreed-upon rubric to assess collected evidence and aggregate the results. These assessments can be done at either the program level (Program Learning Outcomes, or PLOs) or the institutional level (Institutional Learning Outcomes, or ILOs).

What Is the Purpose of Assessment?

The purpose of student learning assessment at California State University East Bay (CSUEB) is to continually improve the quality of our academic and co-curricular programs to ensure that students are achieving our stated outcomes.
How Will (Bb) Outcomes Be Used for Assessment?

CSU East Bay Institutional Learning Outcomes, developed in 2011-12 by University faculty and approved unanimously by the Academic Senate in May 2012, will continue to be assessed using Bb Outcomes. However, it is entirely up to program faculty whether they want to use Blackboard Outcomes to assess Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) or to use other approaches to assess PLOs.

How Will Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) Be Assessed Using Bb Outcomes?

Our six CSU East Bay Institutional Learning outcomes of thinking and reasoning, communication, diversity, collaboration, sustainability, and specialized education express a shared, campus-wide articulation of expectations for all degree recipients. Through development of the higher order capacities represented by the CSUEB ILOs, students acquire the habits of lifelong learning and community engagement that prepare them to effectively apply their skills personally and professionally.

Beginning in the fall of 2013, faculty teams started assessing ILOs campus-wide using Bb Outcomes. These teams (the ILO Subcommittee, the GE Subcommittee and volunteer members of appropriate Faculty Learning Communities) began collaborating on the development of shared rubrics and then applied the rubrics to a sampling of assignments from courses identified by faculty as addressing the particular ILO.

Will Use of Bb Outcomes for Assessment Impact Faculty Evaluations?

As part of its culture of assessment, CSUEB faculty conducts periodic second-level reviews of selected student work on key assignments. This is entirely for the purpose of program improvement and does not affect personnel decisions related to faculty including those related to retention, promotion, or tenure.

Will Use of Bb Outcomes for Assessment Impact Student Grades?

Second level review of student work for program improvement is entirely separate from course grading by the instructor, and there is no impact on student grades. Student work is not identified by name in the Outcomes system when generating evaluations or reports.

What Are Rubrics?

A rubric is a guide for use in assessing student work along specific criteria. Rubrics can be developed for virtually any student work (e.g., paper, audio or video presentation or performance, portfolio, blog, etc.).

There are many rubrics available for adoption or adaptation. This includes a “University Rubrics” organization created for faculty in Blackboard which has a simple interface for developing or importing a rubric.
At What Levels Can Rubrics Be Used?
At the student learning outcome (SLO) level by course faculty assessing student work to use in grading.

At the program learning outcome (PLO) by department faculty assessing sampled student work to reflect on possible changes to improve student learning.

At the institutional learning outcome (ILO) level by university faculty assessing sampled student work to be used for institutional assessment.

Assessing Program Learning Outcomes

Getting Started
It is entirely the choice of Colleges and programs whether to use Bb Outcomes for program level assessment or to use another approach. Faculty who are planning to use Blackboard Outcomes who would like an overview of the process are encouraged to contact:

Academic Programs & Graduate Studies:
   Donna Wiley, Sr. Director of Academic Programs & Graduate Studies, donna.wiley@csueastbay.edu
   Julie Stein, Instructional Design Specialist, julie.stein@csueastbay.edu, (510) 885-3718

Online and Blackboard Support Services:
   Bernie Salvador, bernie.salvador@csueastbay.edu, (510) 885-2562

Selecting and Aligning Assignments
Program faculty who use Blackboard Outcomes for program assessment have the opportunity to participate in a collaborative process of rubric identification/development to apply the rubric to assess sampled student work, and to use what is learned in “closing the loop.” Training is available to show faculty how to “align” an assignment in a course to one or more program (and / or institutional) learning outcomes. There is also training available on rubric development, designing quality assignments (samples on pages 9-11) and providing instructions that will elicit students’ best work. Different kinds of student work, not just written papers, may be assessed. These include photos, PowerPoint slides, videos, webpages, oral presentations, blogs, etc. Two important things to keep in mind are that 1) the student work must be submitted as an “assignment” in the system and 2) it must be submitted within Blackboard. Faculty using Turnitin will need students to submit the assignment a second time, directly to the Blackboard assignment.

Features of an Effective Rubric in Blackboard Outcomes
Using a four-point scale for the rubric is recommended – but not required. The rubric should identify the most important performance standards for the learning outcome(s), be succinct, and clearly differentiate levels of student performance. It is a best practice and highly recommended to
both make the rubric available to students and include assignment prompts directed at the criteria in the rubric. The critical thinking rubric recently developed by CSUEB faculty along with sample assignment instructions is included on pages 9-11.

**Importance of Quality Assignment Instructions**

Good quality assignment instructions help students understand the parameters for their work and will assist secondary assessors in accurate assessment. Exemplary assignment instructions will identify specific goals that align with the learning outcomes, and will have carefully crafted prompts and meaningful tasks that synchronize with the rubric (see samples pages 9-11).

**Well Designed Learning-Centered Assignments**

- Are linked to course & program learning outcomes
- Incorporate meaningful tasks
- Include carefully crafted prompts
- Allow students to demonstrate applied learning
- Have clear instructions
- Break apart large assignments (scaffold)
- Use rubrics that are available to students

**Faculty Notice to Students**

If Bb Outcomes is used for secondary assessment (meaning in addition to grading), it is appropriate for faculty to advise students that their assignment might be sampled for assessment. The following language could be included in a syllabus:

As part of the ongoing commitment to continually improve our instructional programs, CSUEB periodically conducts *secondary* reviews of *randomly* selected student work on *key assignments*. This is only to help faculty improve the curriculum and will not affect your grades. To preserve your privacy, you are asked to submit your assignments without your name. Omitting your name ensures that, while your instructor will be able to identify the work in this course as yours through the Blackboard submission process, any additional *faculty* reviewers will see your work as an anonymous submission.

**Selecting and Training Faculty to Assess Assignments**

Faculty are the curriculum designers and are in the best position to evaluate student and program performance. Faculty assessors would normally either have particular disciplinary knowledge of the assignments being assessed or receive advance training. Prior to assessment, assessors are encouraged to participate in “norming” or “scoring” sessions facilitated by an experienced faculty member to establish inter-rater reliability – ideally using a range of representative student work.

**Setting up the Assessment in Blackboard**

Ideally, one faculty member should be named the assessment coordinator for the program. This person should set up the assessment to include a “collection” of the assigned student work to
assess, the assignment of the assessors, and the additional parameters such as the courses, timeframe, and sample size. Each student work sample should be scored independently by two different assessors.

**Example of One Option for Selecting Student Sample Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population size</th>
<th>95%</th>
<th>90%</th>
<th>Population size</th>
<th>95%</th>
<th>90%</th>
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<td>154</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creating Reports**

Blackboard Outcomes provides basic reports on overall rubric performance and frequency distributions of assigned rubric scores. It is expected that additional statistical reports will be made available in future releases of Blackboard Outcomes. Here is an example from the Critical Thinking Assessment Project pilot:
Closing the Loop of the Assessment

After assessing the student work, the analyzed results should be shared with program faculty who may decide to make curriculum changes, instructional revisions, or enhancements in student support services. Findings for curriculum improvements may include refining or creating assignments that clearly link to the rubric criteria.

Faculty Instructions for Aligning an Assignment to Blackboard Outcomes

Import a Rubric File into Your Course

1. Open two windows, one with the location of the rubric you want to download, and the second with your Blackboard course in which the rubric will be applied.
2. Create a "Rubric" folder on your desktop to download the rubric into.
3. From the location of the rubric, download the rubric zip file to the "Rubric" folder on your desktop (but do not open the file).
4. Next, from the "Course Management" section in your course on the left panel, first select "Course Tools" then click on "Rubrics"
5. Click "Import Rubric"
6. Select "Browse My Computer" and select the rubric file from the "Rubrics" folder on your desktop.
7. Click "Open" and then "Submit" which will result in a rubric import result message confirming the download.
8. Click "Okay" in the lower right corner to next see that the rubric is now in your course.

Create an Assignment and Associate it to the Rubric
1. Start by opening a content area in the Blackboard course where you are creating your assignment - usually in the course materials section in the folder for the week of your assignment.
2. Point to "Assessment" and select "Assignment" to create an Assignment.
3. Complete the Assignment Information including the "Name of Assignment" and "Instructions" which should include criteria from the rubric that you are assessing. Assessors should see the same detailed assignment instructions provided to students.
4. Next, in the grading section, enter the total points possible.
5. Click on "Add rubric" and then the option "Select rubric."
6. Select the rubric and submit.
7. The best practice recommended is to "Show rubric to students" option selecting, the "Yes" (with rubric scores) option.
8. Complete the "Availability," "Due dates," and "Recipients" sections as needed and click submit.
9. You can then go back into the assignment selecting the "Edit" option to add points to the assessment as well as rows for additional criteria you choose to add to the rubric.

Align Course Assignment to Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO)
1. Go to the section of the course in which you have set up the assignment and mouse over the title (the line that starts with the icon with the ruler and pencil). You will see an arrow appear for a drop-down menu. From that menu select, “Add Alignments” from the right side of your assignment on the pull-down menu.
2. From the "Discover Goals" screen that opens, on the left panel titled “Goal Set Type” select the “All Institutional Learning Outcomes” option.
4. On the right side of the screen, under “Criteria Summary” select the Institutional Learning Outcome for your course.
5. Finally on the lower right of the screen, select the gray colored “Submit” button. “Active Goals” will appear on the front of the assignment verifying the alignment to the ILO.
Align Course Assignment to Program Learning Outcome(s)

1. From the same section of the course that you just aligned the assignment to the ILO, select “Add Alignments” again.
2. On the left panel titled “Goal Set Type” select your college.
3. Under “Goal Set” select your department.
4. On the right side of the screen, under “Criteria Summary” select your department’s program learning outcome(s) associated with the course.
5. Finally on the lower right of the screen, select the gray colored “Submit” button. “Active Goals” will appear on the front of the assignment verifying the alignment to the department PLO(s).

Sample Critical Thinking Rubric & Assignment from CSUEB Pilot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Thinking Assessment Project</th>
<th>Rubric Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description: Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation of Issues</th>
<th>Issues are stated clearly providing all relevant information necessary for full understanding.</th>
<th>Issues are stated providing sufficiently relevant information necessary for full understanding.</th>
<th>Issues are stated providing some relevant information necessary for full understanding.</th>
<th>Issues are not clearly stated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Evidence</td>
<td>Provides information from appropriate source(s) to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis.</td>
<td>Provides information from appropriate source(s) for an adequate analysis or synthesis.</td>
<td>Provides little information from appropriate source(s) for analysis or synthesis.</td>
<td>Lacks information from appropriate source(s) for analysis or synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context, assumptions, and alternative viewpoints</td>
<td>Thoroughly analyzes strengths and weaknesses of one’s own and others’ assumptions; carefully evaluates context and alternative viewpoints.</td>
<td>Analyzes strengths and weaknesses of one’s own and others’ assumptions; evaluates context and alternative viewpoints.</td>
<td>Minimally analyzes strengths and weaknesses of one’s own and others’ assumptions; does not evaluate context and alternative viewpoints.</td>
<td>Fails to analyze strengths and weaknesses of one’s own and others’ assumptions; does not evaluate context and alternative viewpoints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions, implications, and consequences</td>
<td>Conclusions, implications, and consequences flow from student’s analysis.</td>
<td>Conclusions, implications, and consequences generally flow from student’s analysis.</td>
<td>Conclusions, implications, and consequences minimally flow from student’s analysis.</td>
<td>Conclusions, implications, and consequences do not flow from student’s analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Assignment Instructions

#1 Sample Critical Thinking Assignment (Jen Eagan, PHIL 3601, Plato’s Symposium, Fall 2013)

To complete this paper, you will do the following tasks:

Read a complex text (Plato’s Symposium)

Present opposing viewpoints fairly and analyze the arguments of others (both the argument of Socrates and one other interlocutor in the dialogue on the nature of love)
Express your criticisms of each view in writing, and develop your own original arguments in response to the debate.

In this paper you will be asked to present two arguments about the nature of love from Plato’s *Symposium*. One will be the argument that Socrates provides in “The Speech of Diotima” and the other will be one of the other speeches in the dialogue of your choice. After presenting each argument in detail, evaluate each argument for both content and form, you will develop your own views on love in response to this examination.

This paper will be written in multiple drafts and demand that you really focus on creating a sophisticated academic paper, with clear and fair presentations of each opposing argument, serious analysis of these arguments, and the development of an original argument in response to their study of Plato.

Ultimately, the best papers will be thoughtful, accurate, and clearly written. The best papers will illustrate the arguments about love in all their complexity, and make a convincing case for your position. The best papers will cite the text, but explain the author discussed in your words.

Each stage of this paper and the final version must be submitted electronically in MS Word or .rtf format through the “Assignments” page on Blackboard.

**Stage 1: Summarize and analyze one speech from the Symposium (Due Thursday, October 17 by 11:59pm)**

   A) A clear exposition or recounting of the speech, using your own words and using details from the text. Your job in this portion of the paper is to show me that you have read and understood the text well. Express your chosen speakers’ view in terms of argumentation.

   B) An analysis of the speech. What do you think of this speaker’s position on love? What are some potential problems with his view? What might be a better or more accurate view of love? Your job is this section of your paper is to provide your views on the speech and on the topic of love generally, supported by argumentation.

**Stage 2: Summarize and analyze Socrates’ “The Speech of Diotima” from the Symposium (Due Thursday, November 7 by 11:59pm)**

   A) A clear exposition or recounting of the speech, using your own words and using details from the text. Your job in this portion of the paper is to show me that you have read and understood the text well. Express Diotima’s/ Socrates’ view in terms of argumentation.

   B) An analysis of the speech. What do you think of Socrates’ position on love? What are some potential problems with his view? What might be a better or more accurate view of love? Your job is this section of your paper is to provide your views on the speech and on the topic of love generally, supported by argumentation.
Stage 3: Develop you own view of love in relation to your analyses from the \textit{Symposium}. Argue for why your view of love is true. (Due Thursday, November 21 by 11:59pm)

Final Paper with all of the elements (including and introduction, a conclusion, and research) woven together is due Thursday December 5 by 11:59pm. More details, advice, research, and a grading rubric to follow.

\textbf{Additional Specifications:}

Think in terms of arguments (see "Analyzing and Creating Arguments").

Think about how to define a term, determine what it is in all of its complexity rather than examples of it or a characterization that just sounds good but skims the surface.

For this paper, you must add the Hadot book as an outside source, and at least two other outside sources (no Wikipedia or encyclopedia, only peer reviewed sources or published books) and cite these using MLA style citation (see "Writing Guide").

Include an introductory paragraph, transitions from one section of the paper to the next, and a conclusion that ties in all together.

\textbf{#2 Sample Critical Thinking Assignment (Chandra Ganesh, Health Sciences)}

\textbf{Policy Memo:}

The purpose of the policy memo is to get a comprehensive understanding of the topic you have selected, reflect critically on the material we cover in class and relate it to the external readings (Daily Health Policy Reports and Paul Starr book).

\textbf{Policy Memo-2 due on Thursday, Mar 13 by 2pm}

Each policy memo must be 5 pages long (4 pages of text and 1 page of citations)

1 inch margins

11 point Times New Roman font

1.5 spacing

Your policy memo will have 5 main parts:

Problem Statement (Pg-1)

Background (Pg-1)

Landscape (Pg-2)

Options (Pg-3)

Recommendations (Pg-4)
The following descriptions are taken from Chapter-13.

**Problem Statement:** The problem statement defines the problem being addressed in the analysis. How a problem is framed is one of the most important steps in a policy analysis. The problem statement is generally 1-2 sentences, usually in the form of a question. Be as specific as possible. The problem statement may be neutral or value-laden. It is important that the problem statement lead to the possibility of several policy options (policy options are basically solutions). You must not include recommendation in problem statement (save this for the recommendations).

**Background:** The background informs the reader why a problem has been chosen for analysis. It provides much of the facts and information necessary to understand the problem being addressed. The information provided must be factual (not argumentative or persuasive).

**Landscape:** The landscape provides the overall context of the analysis by identifying key stakeholders interested in the problem and the issues that must be considered when analyzing the problem. The type of stakeholders who must be included depends on the issue at hand and the phrasing of the problem statement. Some examples of the aspects of a problem that a policy analyst may consider include: Political factors, Social factors, Economic factors, Legal factors, Practical factors.

**Options:** The policy analysis should provide 3–5 options that are solutions to your policy problem. The options must be within the power of the client to do, be consistent with the client’s values, and it must address the issue identified in the problem statement. You should identify criteria that will be used to evaluate the option. You will be able to identify options in: media reports, scholarly articles, interest group recommendations, think tanks/experts, legislation, agency reports, and Congressional testimony. You must identify pros and cons for each option. Remember that there is no perfect option. It would be easier to analyze your options if you use a side-by-side table to assist in compare the options. You can use descriptive and/or analytical tables.

**Recommendation:** Choose one of the options as the recommended course of action for the policy problem. Do remember that status quo/inaction may be an option for your specific policy problem. You must discuss why this option is better than the others despite the cons associated with the option. You must identify any action that may be taken to ameliorate the cons associated with the option. In almost all cases do not choose a hybrid option that mixes two or more of your options.

Please review the rubric provided that will be used to evaluate this memo.