

# Using the SLOlutions Software: A Primer

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This handout provides a basic introduction to the SLOlutions software, which we will be using at Rio Hondo College to assess student learning outcomes (SLOs) and to respond to the results. Work on the software is almost complete; all features should be completely functional by the beginning of Spring Break, 2010.

## Accessing the SLOlutions System

The system can be accessed using a web browser at the location below:

<http://rio.slolutions.com> (note that there is no “www” in the URL!)

You are directed to enter a username and password at the login page. Your username is the first letter of your first name combined with your full last name (for example, George Jetson would be gjetson). If your last name is fairly common, there may be a number attached to the end of the username (for example, jsmith2, jsmith3, etc.) In any case, you can always email Matt Koutroulis ([mkoutroulis@riohondo.edu](mailto:mkoutroulis@riohondo.edu)) to verify this and/or change your username to something more convenient.

Everyone’s password is initially set to their 9-digit employee ID (this is the *username* you use to get into Banner – it is not your PIN nor is it your Rio Hondo email password). All system passwords have been reset to these values, regardless of whether or not they were changed in the system in the past. Changing your password is easy to do; simply click on the “Your Account” link, and then the “Change your password” link and follow the provided instructions.<sup>1</sup> All users should also click on the “Update Your Information” link to ensure that their name and primary email is correctly entered into the system.

You may return to the homepage at any time by clicking on “Home” at the upper-left of the page. Also, you may log out by clicking on “Logout”; these links are built into every page in the system. The “About” and “Contact Us” links are not currently active but will be updated in the near future.

## The Course Outcomes Menu

The “Course Outcomes” menu is accessed by clicking the corresponding link on the sidebar to the left or on the homepage. Each option on this menu is explained below.

### *Viewing SLOs for a Course*

All users may view the SLOs for any course by clicking on “View SLOs for a Course.”<sup>2</sup> You may then select a department and a course to view these outcomes. *Only the text of the outcomes is shown here; rubrics, assessment methods, and additional comments are hidden.* You may print out a list of all SLOs

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<sup>1</sup> In the near future I intend to have the site automatically direct users to change their password if they have not changed it from their 9-digit ID. At this point, you should email Matt if you need your password to be reset.

<sup>2</sup> Soon it will be possible for anyone on the web to access the SLOs, although I have not yet activated this feature.

for the course as a .pdf file by clicking the “Create PDF” button. This allows you to quickly generate an SLO page to attach to a course syllabus.

### *Viewing SLOs for your Courses*

Any faculty member may view the SLOs for courses they are teaching or have taught in the past (assuming these outcomes have been put into the system).<sup>3</sup> Begin by selecting the term, and then click on the section for which you would like to view the outcomes. Note that, although multiple sections of the same course may appear, the SLOs will be the same for each. Those outcomes which are currently designated as “active” (that is, currently being assessed) appear in yellow; those which are inactive appear in pink. Clicking on the SLO brings up additional information about the outcome, including assessment methods, additional comments, and access to the rubric if it exists. You may also render this information as an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) document.

### *Entering Assessment Data for Courses*

Each faculty member may enter assessment results for their courses by clicking on the corresponding link. Begin by selecting the term and then the section for which you would like to enter data. Finally, click on the text of the SLO. This will take you to a copy of the rubric containing embedded textboxes. In each box, enter the number of students who assessed at the given level for each proficiency standard. Enter a zero (0) if no students fall under the given category. Do not leave any boxes blank, or you will not be allowed to submit your results! The data values are stored in the system and may be updated by revisiting the section and SLO where you may view the data you entered before.

When the faculty member in charge for a given course begins work on an assessment report for the outcome, the submitted values will be locked to prevent any future changes to the data.

### *Emailing Other Users Teaching a Course*

Clicking on this link will allow you to either send an email to all faculty teaching a course that you are teaching in a given term or to prepare a quick distribution list with their email addresses which you may copy and paste into some other email program. Users with “faculty in charge” permissions and administrators may also email any faculty teaching a particular course for which they have access or selectively send a reminder email to those users who have not yet submitted assessment results for a given term.

***All remaining features require some level of administrative credentials. Users designated as a “Faculty in Charge” (FIC) may carry out these tasks for specific, assigned courses, while users with administrative access may perform them for all courses in a given department and/or division.***

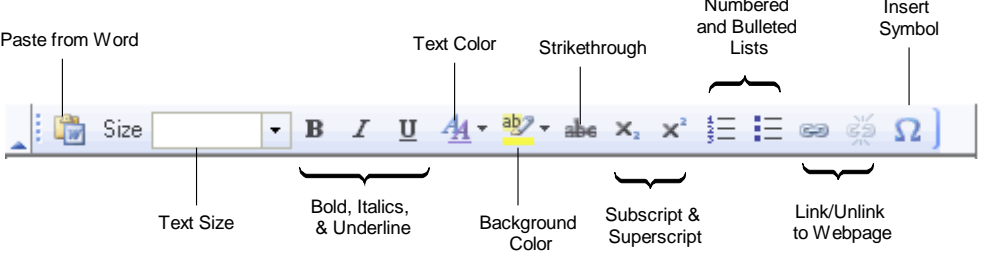
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<sup>3</sup> The schedules for instructors in the Arts, Math/Sciences, and Social Sciences divisions go back to Fall 2009; all others begin from Spring 2010. Winter classes are not currently included, but summer classes will be added soon.

### Create a New Course SLO

Begin by selecting the department and course from the provided drop down lists. Enter the text of the outcome, assessment methods, and any additional comments in the boxes provided (comments are optional). Determine whether or not you would like to designate this outcome as “active”, meaning that all sections of this course must collect assessment data on this outcome. If the checkbox is left blank, the SLO is created without a rubric and is left inactive. If the checkbox is checked, you will be reminded that a rubric must be created for the outcome in order for it to be active. If you elect to create a rubric, the outcome will be saved in the system and you will be redirected to a web page for creating the rubric. The SLO will not be made active unless the rubric is submitted, since it is not possible for faculty to enter assessment data without it. Rubric creation is described in a subsequent section; *please completely review the section on rubric creation before creating an SLO!*

**The Rich-Text Toolbar**



In most cases it will not be necessary to use the buttons on the rich-text toolbar. However, some users may find these buttons to be useful when non-standard text is required, including bulleted and numbered lists, mathematical and chemical formulas, references to web sites, etc. The function of most of these buttons should be familiar to users of Microsoft Office applications.

The Paste from Word button requires some explanation. Certain characters generated in Microsoft Word will not automatically render properly on web pages, including directional quotation marks and hyphens. The Paste from Word button allows you to copy text from a Word document and render the text so that it appears correctly online. Simply select and copy the text you need in Word, then click in the textbox on the SLOlutions web page. Click the Paste from Word button and you're done!

### Edit or Delete an Existing Course SLO

This operation is similar to the creation of a new course SLO. Upon clicking on the outcome, you will be presented with the outcome text, assessment methods, and comments. These may be changed and

saved, or the outcome may be deleted entirely.<sup>4</sup> The text of the original outcome is not saved in either case. If you wish to keep a record of these changes, simply copy and paste the old outcome text into the “Comments” box. Note that it is not possible to edit or delete a program level outcome (e.g. General Education, Basic Skills, Degree, etc.) using this link, even if they are associated with this course. These changes must be made under the “Program/Institutional Outcomes” section by a user with the necessary administrative credentials.

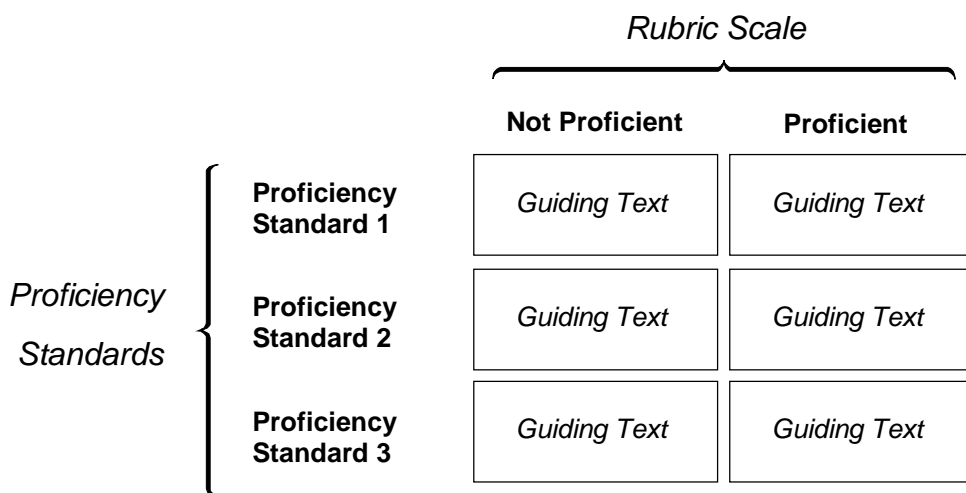
*Create, Edit, or Delete a Rubric/Proficiency Standards for an Existing Course SLO*

Rubric creation is accomplished in a series of steps. Once the department, course, and outcome have been selected, a rubric scale must be selected. Note that users who have just written a new SLO and wish to activate it begin here. The system contains some generic rubric scales which may be used, the simplest of which is “Not Proficient, Proficient”. You may use one of the scales already in the system or create your own. If you create your own scale it will be saved and you will be able to use it again for other rubrics (it should appear in your list of available rubrics). If other users wish to use this scale for their own outcomes and rubrics they must create it themselves in the system.

**Three Rubric Scales in the Current SLOolutions System:**

- a. Not Proficient, Proficient
- b. Not Proficient, Near Proficient, Proficient, Exceeds Expectations
- c. Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Excellent

**Figure 1: Elements of a Rubric**



<sup>4</sup> Deleting is currently disabled for most users.

Creating a Rubric Scale: Begin by selecting the number of levels/categories in your scale. For example, “Not Proficient/Proficient” has two, “Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory/Excellent” has three, etc. Next, enter the descriptive terms for each category in the text boxes provided. **It is very important they the categories be listed in order from poorest to best performance.** After entering these terms, click on the radio button which corresponds to the lowest rating which can still be considered as meeting the minimum requirements for proficiency. For example, I would click on the button next to “Satisfactory” in the generic rubric above, so that all students who receive a Satisfactory or Excellent ranking are considered to be proficient.<sup>5</sup>

Creating Proficiency Standards: The proficiency standards allow you to more finely tune your assessment of an outcome by breaking it down into specific categories which may be assessed individually. You may create anywhere from one to eight proficiency standards; if you would like to use more than four you should seriously consider whether or not this outcome should be separated into two or more SLOs. Assign an appropriate benchmark value to the proficiency standards. This number represents the minimum percentage of students which you feel should be able to demonstrate proficiency on the given standard. Enter a numerical value from 1 to 100 here; do not include the percentage sign(%) or any other text. Think carefully about this number!

*An example I like to give here would be for an SLO about the fundamentals of driving a car. Would a benchmark of 70% of drivers being able to effectively use the breaks and accelerator on a car be appropriate? I think not! A much higher benchmark (essentially 100%) would be appropriate here. For more complex outcomes (e.g. effective and compelling use of metaphor in an introductory creative writing course) a lower benchmark may be appropriate as a starting point.*

Click on “Continue” when you are finished.

Entering Descriptive Guiding Text: In each of the provided text boxes enter instructions which will guide faculty in appropriately assessing student work for each proficiency standard. Descriptive text is ultimately much more useful and appropriate than absolute statements like “Earns 85% on first exam,” which will present valid criticisms:

85% on *who’s* first exam? What if my exam is more challenging than the SLO authors’ exams?  
What if my exam contains different material? When was the last time you revised your exams?  
Etc. etc.

Finally, click save when you are done.

Rubrics may be edited to a limited extent. Only changes which do not fundamentally alter the structure of the rubric are allowed. You may

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<sup>5</sup> At present these radio buttons do not properly align with the text boxes, so users should count the buttons from the bottom of the list to make the correct choice.

- Edit the text of the existing proficiency standard(s)
- Change the benchmark values
- Edit the guiding text

These operations are accomplished in the same way as when the rubric was first created. More substantial changes require that the rubric be deleted and recreated. Deleting a rubric effectively deletes any assessment data already collected for that SLO, including data collected for this outcome in previous terms.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Activate or Deactivate an Existing Course SLO*

In order to collect data on an SLO, the outcome must be designated as *active*. SLOs can be made active when they are first created or by selecting this option from the Course SLO menu. All active SLOs must have a rubric associated with them, or else it would not be possible to collect consistent data.

To activate or deactivate an SLO, begin by selecting the department and course from the given menus. Then, to activate or deactivate the outcome, click in the checkbox next to the outcome. This checkbox is disabled for outcomes which do not contain rubrics. Activating the outcome allows faculty to collect data on the SLO, while deactivating one (or never activating one in the first place) prevents it. Any data collected on an outcome is not deleted when the outcome is deactivated but remains in the system and can be recalled if the SLO is reactivated.

#### *Copy an Existing Course SLO to a Different Course*

This feature allows you to duplicate an SLO and related information (assessment methods, comments, and rubric) from one course to another. The copied SLO may be edited as necessary to accommodate the new course. Outcomes may be copied from *any* course, regardless of the department in which the course resides, encouraging interdisciplinary assessment of student work. A copied outcome is *not* linked to the outcome it is based on, so any changes made will not alter the original SLO.<sup>7</sup>

Begin by selecting the program and course (the *source*) of the original SLO, then select the SLO to be copied. Select the program and course where the outcome is to be copied (the *destination*). Edit the outcome and related items in the same way as was described earlier, then save the SLO.

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<sup>6</sup> Deleting is disabled for most users. I intend to create an archiving feature for outcomes, rubrics, and collected data in the future to prevent permanent, unintentional data loss.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible to link SLOs, but this must be done through the Program Outcomes menu. This is discussed on a later page in this document.

*Additional instructions will be provided soon on*

- *Preparing Assessment Reports/Action Plans*
- *Program/Institutional Outcomes (instructions are similar to those for course outcomes)*
- *Administrative tasks*
- *Generating reports*