

Setting Clear Expectations for Student Achievement (Rubric VII)

Clear, measure-specific expectations help faculty interpret the effectiveness of the curriculum, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate to accreditors that students are held to **meaningful standards**.

Characteristics of Useful Expectations:

- Directly connected to the hypothesis set in the Program Learning Outcome (PLO) (i.e., evaluates the curriculum)

If our curriculum prepares students for a ____ degree (e.g., BA, MS, etc.) in ____ (field), then, graduating seniors will ____ (PLO).

- Specific to the measure (e.g., tied to rubric levels or score)
- Measurable
- Challenging but realistic to the level of the degree (above 80% for undergraduate programs and above 85% for graduate programs)
- Justified by the faculty (logic behind the selections)
- The structure includes a statement about the percent of students from the sample and a statement about level of performance:

____% of the students will perform at ____ level.

WEAK	DESCRIPTION	STRONGER	JUSTIFICATION
Students will meet expectations.	Vague; no defined threshold or criteria for success.	85% of students will score 80% or higher on the test.	Example 1 During the last cycle, our baseline, 84% of the students scored above 81%. We have set this expectation to seek improvement.
30% of students will meet expectations.	Too low; does not reflect a meaningful standard of achievement.		
100% of students will meet expectations.	Unrealistic; does not account for normal variability.		Example 2 We selected this expectation because this is an undergraduate program. We do not want more than 20% of our graduates to underperform on this skill.
Students will complete the course.	Not about learning; does not identify skills or knowledge; cannot inform curriculum improvement.		
Mastery is assessed differently across sections.	No consensus; inconsistent standards across faculty. Both indicate seniors may graduate with the same degree but different skills.		Example 3 We selected this expectation because this is a national test. The average national score is 75%. We want to ensure our graduates outperform other institutions.
We do not set expectations.			

Need Help?

There are no one-solution-fits-all in assessment. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) can support you at every step—ensuring your approach fits your program's goals, resources, and capacity.

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