

Student Learning Guide 2020-21



**Navajo Technical University
Navajo Nation**

**Approved by the Student Learning Committee: Aug 28 2020
Approved by the Faculty Congress: Oct 6 2020**

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Purpose

The purpose of the **Student Learning Guide** is to promote optimal student learning and development at Navajo Technical University (NTU) through planning, assessment, and reporting processes based on Diné Philosophy of Education, accreditation criteria, and best practices. The guide is for NTU's faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

Covid-19

- In uncertain times we must expect the unexpected, and be prepared for change. We must adapt while staying focused.
- In spring 2020, due to the sudden rise of Covid-19, NTU classes were shifted to online instruction. This caused large disruptions for everybody in the extended University community
- As this Guide is revised, in Fall 2020, our institution, families, and communities are not free from the virus. Everyone must stay vigilant.
- We will work together to continue to achieve our University mission and the goals that we have set for ourselves across all of our academic offerings.

Indigenous Philosophies of Education

Diné Philosophy of Education is rooted in efforts at NTU to indigenize Western education and is the centerpiece of NTU's mission. The philosophy is based on Blessing Way and Protection Way teachings that constitute Navajo ways of knowing. Blessing Way teachings help individuals live a good life and stay on a pathway of harmony and balance. Protection Way teachings protect individuals against life's imperfections, evil, and corruption. They help one cope with hardships and difficulties.

Diné Education of Philosophy aims to weave together Blessing and Protection Way teachings in ways that complement all of life around us. Through these teachings, individuals internalize Sa'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón: knowledge, balance, connectivity, and strength – glossed in Navajo as K'é.

Sa'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón connects Blessing and Protection Way teachings to the four cardinal directions and a set of Life Principles:

- Nitsáhákees (intellect, imagination, critical thinking)
- Nahat'á (self-reliance, preparation, motivation)
- Iiná (respect, humor, collaboration)
- Sih Hasin (wisdom, reflection, self-actualization)

The Life Principles undergird everything in this guide about the organization of student learning and development at NTU. Critical thinking, planning, implementation, and reflection are iterative steps for continuously improving what we do for and with students, inside and outside of NTU classrooms. These Life Principles provide the basis for academic program planning, implementation, assessment, and continuous improvement.

The inter-relationship of teachings, directions, and Life Principles in the Diné Philosophy of Education, and connections to academic planning, assessment, and reporting, are depicted in **Figure 1** on the following page.

Similarly, at NTU's Zuni Campus, the A:shiwí Philosophy of Education offers essential elements for helping students develop indigenous and western understandings. Yam de bena: dap hay-doshna: akkya hon detsemak a:wannikwa da: hon de:tsemak a:ts'umme. *Our language and ceremonies allow our people to maintain strength and knowledge.*

A:shiwí core values of hon i:yyułashik'yanna:wa (respect), hon delank'oha:willa:wa (kindness and empathy), hon i:yyayumola:wa (honesty and trustworthiness), and hon kohoł lewuna:wediyahnan, wan hon kela i:tsemanna (think critically) are central to attaining strength and knowledge. They help learners develop positive self-identity, respect, kindness, and critical thinking skills to achieve life goals successfully.

Assessment

Assessment is the process of establishing learning goals, providing learning opportunities, assessing student learning, and using results to implement improvements.¹ The process is ongoing. It follows the logic of the Life Principles of Diné Philosophy of Education: Nitsáhákees (critical thinking), Nahat'á (planning), Iiná (implementation), and Sih Hasin (reflection).

Every degree and certificate program at NTU should have a **student learning plan** that operationalizes the Life Principles of NTU's Indigenous Philosophies of Education (see **Figure 1 and Appendix 1**). The plan's focus is program-level learning, as opposed to class-, course-, or institution-level. What do faculty want the students to know, be able to do, and value and believe by the time they graduate? This is the focus. The plan describes the program's mission, student learning outcomes, measures for gathering data on student learning, and relationship of outcomes, courses, and measures. These program elements, along with assessment data and notes pertaining to analysis and program improvements, are archived by the faculty using online tools.

A student learning plan articulates measures to be used by the faculty to determine levels of student achievement and program effectiveness in attaining the program's mission and goals. Ideally, the measures provide direct and indirect evidence of student learning and include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Individual program plans may be driven by specific requirements of specialized accreditation agencies.

Courses in a program are designed to promote the program's goals and student learning outcomes. Syllabi articulate these connections. In addition to providing logistical information about the course and instructor (e.g., course description, dates, location, contact information, readings, and course schedule), syllabi must describe class- and course-level assessments, as well as connections to program-level assessments.

¹ For a full explanation, see Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide, Third Edition*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



FIGURE 1: *Diné Philosophy of Education at Navajo Technical University*

At the end of each semester, and the end of the academic year in May, faculty complete an **annual student learning** report that records student learning data, status of targets met or not met, and program improvement to be implemented in the future on the basis of that analysis (see **Appendix 2**).

Accreditation

Accreditation criteria stipulate that institutions evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning through processes that promote continuous improvement, reflect good practice, and include the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.² The guidelines herein are designed to help NTU faculty, staff, administrators, and students achieve these standards.

² Criterion Four, and especially Core Component 4B, in the HLC's "Revised Criteria for Accreditation." Retrieved on Sep 18 2019 from http://download.hlcommission.org/policy/updates/AdoptedCriteriaRevision_2019_INF.pdf.

Language of Academic Planning and Assessment

Creating a common language about assessment, student learning, and student development is essential to academic planning and reporting. Here are definitions of important assessment terms (in addition to those discussed in Diné Philosophy of Education, above). A more complete list is spelled out in the Glossary (see **Appendix 3**).

Term	Definition	Other terms with similar meaning
Student learning	The cognitive internalization of information received from instructional services and retention as new knowledge that may be used to further academic and professional goals.	Education
Assessment	Establishing clear, measurable outcomes of student learning, ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes, systematically gathering and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations, and using the information to improve student learning.	Evaluation
Evaluation	Reviewing the results of data collection and then determining the value and ranking of those results.	Assessment
Mission	A short, memorable statement that expresses the purpose and uniqueness of the program.	Purpose statement
Outcomes	Statements that describe specifically what students are expected to be familiar with, be able to do, or value by the time they graduate.	Objectives, standards, goals, indicators
Curriculum map	A grid or map that lists all of the courses in a program cross-tabulated with the program's learning outcomes, and that indicates in which course each outcome is taught.	Outcomes grid, objectives grid
Measures	Assessment instruments, tools, or activities designed to ascertain levels of student learning achievement	Tool, instrument
Assessment map	A grid or map that lists all of the courses in a program cross-tabulated with the program's measures, and that indicates in which course each measure is assessed.	Assessment grid, measures grid
Analysis	Data-driven narrative that indicates program strengths and/or progress made plus logical steps for addressing outcomes partially met or not met.	Improvements, improvement plan, action plan

Assessment Cycle

Consistent with the cyclical and ongoing nature of Diné Philosophy of Education, assessment and program improvement efforts are also cyclical and ongoing. Faculty members administer assessment instruments throughout the academic year. Utilizing web-based resources, they collect, archive, and analyze the data. The analyses culminate in the development of an Annual Student Learning Report, which is made available to all members of the University community. The timeline below summarizes the annual assessment cycle:

Activity	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe
1. Develop and refine program assessment plan(s).	Faculty	Fall semester
2. Gather and archive student learning data that follow program assessment plans.	Faculty and chairpersons	Each semester
3. Analyze student learning data.	Faculty and chairpersons	Spring semester

4. Implement program, curriculum, and assessment improvements as needed.	Faculty and chairpersons	Spring semester
5. Request additional funding based on feedback through assessment.	Chairpersons and Budget Committee	Spring semester
6. Review selected programs every five years (or as stipulated by the appropriate Dean).	Program Review Committee and Deans	Spring semester
7. Produce Student Learning Report for each certificate and degree program	Faculty and chairpersons	Last week of spring semester
8. Review Student Learning Reports; provide feedback (see Appendix 4).	SLC	Last week of spring semester
9. Produce Annual Student Learning Report for the academic year.	Student Learning Coordinator	Jun 1

General Education and Co-Curricular Planning and Reporting

Faculty finalized the revision of all seventy-four GenEd courses in 2019-20. Courses were aligned to new requirements of the New Mexico Higher Education Department that emphasize skills and utilize rubrics. In Fall, 2019 and Spring, 2020, different data collectors were piloted by Student Learning Committee members who taught GenEd courses. Despite Covid-19 disruptions, participation in data collection in Spring, 2020 was 100%. SLC members unanimously endorsed the data collection process that semester and will use it moving forward.

In 2020-21, GenEd assessment will take place one goal/semester. Data summaries will be compiled by the Offices of Assessment and Institutional Research. Design of improvements will take place by the Student Learning Committee, and affirmed by the Faculty Congress, in subsequent semesters.

Student Learning Committee

Program, GenEd, and Co-Curricular design, planning, assessment, reports, and professional development are overseen by the Student Learning Committee. The SLC is a standing committee of the Faculty Congress. Members represent each academic department and campus location and are nominated by department chairpersons. The SLC combines and replaces two former committees: the Assessment and GenEd Committees.

SLC Goals for 2020-2021 are as follows:

General Education

- Assess and improve Goal One (in Fall 2020) and Goal Two (in Spring 2021) GenEd courses.
- Produce and post on NTU website model syllabi for all GenEd courses.

Program Assessment

- Produce SLR's for 100% our certificate and academic program offerings.
- Peer review the SLR's (in May 2021) using feedback rubric so as to establish baseline data for future process improvements (see **Appendix 4**).

Co-Curricular Activities

- Promote and assess as appropriate given Covid-19 limitations.

Academic Program Review

The Deans, Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, and Program Review Committee conduct a thorough self-study of each academic program every five years using the **Academic Program Review Process**. The review focuses on the following:

- Curriculum
- Student data
- Program assessment and improvements
- Strengths and challenges
- Faculty
- Recognition
- Cost
- Action plan

For detailed information consult the latest Program Review Guide, published on the Academics section of NTU's website.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students. Assessment information that demonstrates student learning starts with students. Basic responsibilities of students are to participate in both direct assessment activities (tests, projects with rubrics, portfolios, etc.) and indirect assessment activities (surveys, focus groups, etc.). Other roles that students can assume include:

- Provide feedback on assessment activities.
- Facilitate assessment activities by acting as assessors themselves. (Critiquing class projects and presentations of others students, group work evaluation, conducting campus surveys, etc.)
- Participate in departmental analyses of assessment data and deliberations about program improvements.

Full-time Faculty. FT faculty participation in academic planning and reporting should be substantial in all phases of the assessment cycle. Responsibilities include:

- Design and implement program assessment.
- Collaborate with other faculty on the development and implementation of program assessment, as approved by department chairpersons.
- Implement instructional strategies and course and program revisions that promote continuous improvement of student learning.

Part-time Faculty. PT faculty participation in academic planning and reporting is valuable and recommended. To the extent that they are able to participate in departmental assessment activities, PT instructors should be invited to do so. They are expected to participate in all program assessment activities that are spelled out in master syllabi that they are given to teach. Responsibilities include:

- Implement course-embedded assessments are spelled out in model syllabi.

- Provide assessment data to department chairpersons at the end of each semester as appropriate.

Department Chairpersons. Chairpersons should be knowledgeable about academic planning and reporting and passionate about continuous program improvement. Responsibilities include:

- Ensure that all FT departmental faculty are involved in assessment.
- Explain assessment protocols to all PT faculty.
- Ensure that assessment plans and reports are submitted as requested.
- Provide opportunities for departmental discussion about assessment plans and progress.
- Facilitate the implementation of faculty recommendations resulting from assessment of student learning.

Student Learning Committee. The SLC is a standing committee of the Faculty Congress. Its responsibilities include:

- Monitor the assessment of student learning in academic programs, including the General Education and Co-Curricular programs.
- Serve as consultant-evaluators to the academic departments on the development and implementation of program assessment plans.
- Develop and communicate to the college community annual goals on assessment that are consistent with the Student Learning Guide.
- Develop plans for assessment workdays.
- Provide feedback annually to faculty and departments on program assessment efforts.
- Review and revise as needed the Student Learning Guide.

Student Learning Coordinator. The Student Learning Coordinator serves as point person for all academic assessment activities. Responsibilities include:

- Chair SLC meetings. Set agendas and write up meeting minutes.
- Maintain the Student Learning web page.
- Manage assessment budget.
- Facilitate the review of program assessment plans.
- Identify faculty development priorities.
- Work with the Deans to plan intercampus meetings, end-of-year assessment workdays, and faculty development activities.
- Assist in the preparation and implementation of budgets in support of the Student Learning Guide.
- Coordinate the production of an annual student learning report. Present the report to the Faculty Assembly, President's Cabinet, and Board of Regents.

Office of Institutional Research. In addition to the responsibilities outlined above, personnel in the Office of Institutional Research are key in gathering and making available data on institutional effectiveness, assisting departments and warehousing assessment information. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinate institution-wide work-flows so as to maintain accurate and up-to-date information on student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.
- Gather student, faculty, and staff survey and focus group data so as to gauge institutional effectiveness.
- Gather employer satisfaction data as they pertain to graduates.
- Assist departments in designing academic assessment plans and in warehousing assessment data.
- Assist in the production of an annual student learning report.

Deans. The Deans of Undergraduate Studies and of Graduate Studies are responsible for the coordination and implementation of assessment activities among the departments that they supervise. Responsibilities include:

- Support and verify assessment at the department level.
- Facilitate opportunities for departments to meet together to work on assessment.
- Coordinate periodic review of academic programs that includes results from assessment of student learning.

Provost. As chief academic officer, the Provost is responsible for administrative oversight, coordination, and implementation of assessment throughout the University. Responsibilities include:

- Support and verify assessment at all levels.
- Demonstrate institutional commitment to assessment of student learning and the use of its results by department faculty, chairs, and deans.
- Coordinate professional development activities that support academic planning, reporting, and student learning assessment.
- Submit reports on the assessment of the New Mexico Core Competencies.
- Ensure that adequate funds are budgeted for university-wide assessment activities.

President. The University President should be knowledgeable about academic planning, reporting, and assessment. She or he has ultimate responsibility to promote academic planning, reporting, and assessment of student learning among all University stakeholders. Responsibilities include:

- Ensure implementation of recommendations to improve student learning and development.
- Ensure that necessary resources are available for faculty to conduct assessment and implement recommendations based on assessment results.

**Appendix 1
Student Learning Plan template**

Mission

Outcomes: *Students should be able to...*

Direct measures and targets

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Indirect measures

- Enrollments
- Retention percentage
- Graduates

Curriculum and/or assessment map(s)

Courses in the major	Learning Outcomes					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.

Findings (for each measure)

Improvements

Appendix 2
Student Learning Report template

OVERVIEW

Program

Program mission

Faculty team members

Department

- Applied Technology
- Arts & Humanities
- Business
- Diné Studies
- Engineering, Math, & Technology
- Science

OUTCOMES

SLO 1

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Measure

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Target

All students will attain 80% or higher.

Findings

Semester: Course: # students: # met target:
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Status

- Met target
- Partially met target
- Did not meet target

Improvements

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This page is repeated for each SLO.

Appendix 3 Glossary

Analysis

Data-driven narrative that indicates program strengths and/or progress made plus logical steps for addressing outcomes partially met or not met.

Assessment

Establishing clear, measurable outcomes of student learning, ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes, systematically gathering and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations, and using the information to improve student learning.

Assessment map

A grid or map that lists all of the courses in a program cross-tabulated with the program's measures and that indicates in which course each measure is assessed.

Benchmark

A standard or point of reference against which student performance may be compared or assessed.

Capstone

A final project or activity that provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes that they have achieved, usually, in a program. Examples include projects, research papers, internships, portfolios, performances, or even capstone courses.

Classroom assessment techniques (CAT's)

CAT's provide quick, informative feedback on student learning. The most well-known of these is the "minute paper," in which a teacher asks students to write down the most important, or most unclear, aspect about what they learned.

Co-curricular learning and development

Activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students learn in the classroom, that is, experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum. Co-curricular activities are typically, but not always, defined by their separation from academic courses.

Course-embedded measure

An assessment measure in a specific course whose data are analyzed for program assessment purposes.

Curriculum map

A grid or map that lists all of the courses in a program cross-tabulated with the program's learning outcomes, and that indicates in which course each outcome is taught.

Direct measure

Provides tangible and compelling information about what students have learned and not learned. Examples include tests, standardized exams, licensure or certification exams, essays, projects, performances, internships, and portfolios.

Evaluation

Processes for reviewing the results of data collection and then determining the value and ranking of those results.

Formative assessment

Assessment that provides feedback for improving student learning and instruction rather than ranking or accountability.

Indirect measure

Asks students to reflect on their learning rather than demonstrate it. Techniques include surveys, exit interviews, alumni surveys, employer surveys, and focus groups.

Mission

A short, memorable statement that expresses the purpose and uniqueness of a program.

Outcomes

Statements that describe specifically what students are expected to be familiar with, be able to do, or value by the time they graduate.

Portfolio

A systematic collection of students' learning artifacts that offer direct and indirect evidence of learning, development, and achievements over time.

Reliability

The extent to which an assessment yields consistent results with similar populations in similar assessment circumstances over time.

Rubric

A scoring guide used to assess student performance according to specific criteria.

Student learning

The cognitive internalization of information received from instructional services and retention as new knowledge that may be used to further academic and professional goals.

Summative assessment

An assessment at the end of an instructional unit that gives information on students' learning as measured against some standard or benchmark.

Validity

The extent to which an assessment measures what it is designed to measure.

**Navajo Technical University
Student Learning Report Feedback Rubric**

Program:

Dept/School:

Date:

	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Scores & specific comments
Mission	Mission is present but is a description of the program, not a statement of purpose.	Mission is somewhat aligned to the department and/or University missions.	Mission expresses purpose of the program and is compellingly aligned to the University mission.	
Outcomes	SLO's are stated but unclear; include fuzzy terminology; are less than 3 or more than 6 in number.	SLO's include some but not all of the attributes of "proficient."	SLO's include concrete, observable action verbs; are rigorous and realistic; do not include compound statements; and are 3 to 6 in number.	
Measures and targets	Measures and targets exist but alignment to the SLO's is unclear; they are incomplete and vague in addressing all the SLO's.	Measures and targets promise direct evidence of student learning; align to some but not all of the SLO's.	Measures and targets promise direct and compelling evidence of student learning; they align clearly to and address each of the SLO's.	
Findings	Findings are initiated but incomplete; the overall sense of progress attained is hard to ascertain.	Findings include references to some (but not all) measures and indicate extent to which most but not all SLO's were met as well as need for further actions (as appropriate).	Findings include language that references evaluation instruments used, and indicate extent to which all SLO's were met as well as need for further actions (as appropriate).	
Improvements	Analysis indicates some but not all program strengths and/or progress made; steps for addressing outcomes partially met or not met are incomplete.	Analysis indicates program strengths and/or progress made regarding most (but not all) SLO's; at least several program improvements are indicated for outcomes partially met or not met. On the whole, the narrative is reasonably clear and of sufficient in length but leaves some aspects unaddressed.	Analysis indicates program strengths, areas for improvement, and action steps needed for improvements. Narrative is clear and of sufficient length to be self-explanatory.	
Overall comments				Reader's initials

Total score: 15-13 = proficient; 12-10 = developing; 9-6 = emerging; 5 or less = needs improvement