



Syllabi-tizing Success: The Rock-Solid Foundation of Clear Course Objectives for Assessment of Student Learning

LTC Caitlin Chiaramonte and Dr. Evelyn Mocek
United States Military Academy

Assessment History at USMA

➤ Assessment at USMA (like many institutions) is a relatively new process. Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in 2010 had a report of action to implement a comprehensive process of Program-Level Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) assessment.

➤ 2015: USMA added an assessment of core courses and established the yearly Executive Summary (ExSum) expectation.

➤ 2019: USMA started the Program Review process with Law participating during the 2023-2024 Academic Year

Overview

➤ Case study: Adoption and integration of a comprehensive assessment process within the Department of Law and Philosophy at the United States Military Academy (USMA).

➤ Used lessons learned from the Program Review and the recommendations from the External Reviewers to revise and update their assessment process with SLOs as the cornerstone of the assessment process.

➤ The Program Director, new to both the department and assessment, participated in the Program Review and found that it allowed for a change in the department's assessment culture.

➤ Created a process (see below) where both SLO assessment and Cadet feedback are used yearly to support faculty growth and ongoing curriculum improvement.

SLOs Then and Now

➤ Core Course – LW403: Constitutional/Military Law

➤ SLOs during the 2023-2024 academic year

- Familiarize Cadets with the Constitution
- Introduce Cadets to other legal regimes impacting professional military officers
- Educate Cadets on the military justice system
- Fulfill one of the “Writing-in-the-Profession” requirements of the West Point Writing Program
- Develop critical thinking and analytical skills

➤ Current SLOs

- Cadets will understand and explain the basic principles of constitutional law, including the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and how the Supreme Court interprets the Constitution in evaluating the actions of the executive and legislative branches.
- Cadets will understand and differentiate the basic principles of criminal law and the military justice system.
- Cadets will analyze and differentiate the fundamental principles of international law and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC).
- Cadets will develop comprehensive written and oral legal analyses, succinctly summarize cases, analyze legal issues, and formulate sound legal conclusions, demonstrating critical thinking and clear communication skills.

➤ Of note: A review of all course SLOs was completed during the 2023-2024 AY. One of the most surprising findings was one course that had over 60 SLOs for the cadets, and the assessments were not directly tied to the SLOs. Following the process established the SLOs were cut to 6, and specific assessments are tied to each!

Student Feedback

➤ Question posed: **“To what extent did the assessment align with the course objectives?”**

Fall 2024

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	120	28.6%
Agree	236	56.2%
Neutral	50	12%
Disagree	13	3.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

420/519 - 80.92% Response rate

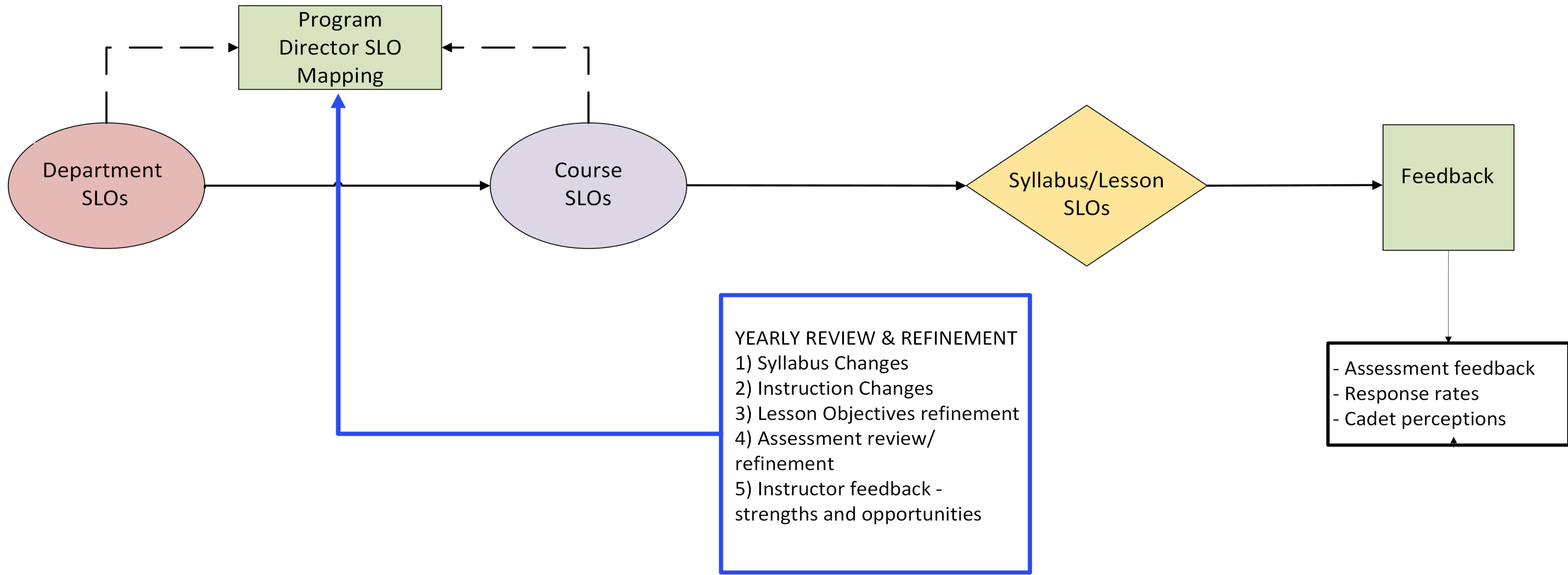
Spring 2025

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	151	36%
Agree	231	55%
Neutral	35	8.3%
Disagree	7	2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

424/484 - 87.60% Response rate

➤ “*Very much in alignment. WPRs and writing assignments tested understanding of the most fundamental course concepts and did not attempt to hem cadets up on pedantic specifics.*”

➤ “*They aligned extremely well. On the first WPR, I didn’t really study the course objectives and did poorly. On the second, I studied the course and lesson objectives and did much better, which is a testament to how well each of them align.*”



A CLEAR PATH to Success

C – Connect SLOs across levels

L – Leverage faculty insight/expertise

E – Ensure objective clarity

A – Assess with purpose

R – Review and Respond

P – Promote student awareness

A – Achieve strong response rates

T – Track progress annually

H – Highlight strengths & opportunities