



Writing Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that characterize students who complete an academic program. Outcomes should be observable and measurable. Use concrete, behavioral language to describe student learning in ways that suggest direct measures.

SMART Student Learning Outcomes

Specific	Describe a specific category of student learning. Use well-defined and clear language to describe exactly what the student will know, do, or value at the end of the learning experience. SLOs stated too broadly or too abstractly are difficult to measure.
Measurable	Use concrete language to describe the knowledge students will be able to articulate or explain, the skilled disciplinary behaviors they will be able to perform, the values and attitudes they will articulate, and how adherence to these values will manifest in their professional behavior.
Appropriate / Attainable / Action-Oriented / Aligned	Expectations for student learning describe expertise that is reasonably attainable and appropriate for the developmental level of students enrolled in the course (lower-level undergraduate / general education, upper-level undergraduate, master’s-level graduate, doctoral-level graduate), given the educational experiences created in the curriculum and the resources available. SLOs should align with goals articulated for the department mission, national disciplinary standards for student learning, and the mission and goals of the college and university.
Relevant / Realistic / Results-Oriented	Learning outcomes should be reasonable given the resources available. Realistic SLOs should be neither too easy to attain nor impossible to attain. Relevant SLOs describe learning that reflects disciplinary goals and standards. Relevant SLOs might describe non-disciplinary skills expected of all graduates of the institution (i.e., that align with general education SLOs).
Time-Specific	Course-level SLOs should be appropriate for the location of a course in the curriculum (early, middle, capstone). Program-level SLOs should be appropriate for the level of expertise represented by the degree awarded (baccalaureate, master’s, doctorate).

How many SLOs?

Degree programs must have at least one program-level SLO for each of the five domain areas of an ALC or ALP.

Individual courses typically have three to six course-level SLOs, although some courses have more than six SLOs.

Certificates and **stand-alone minors** must have at least one SLO and no more than three to five program-level SLOs.



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Remember, departments must assess *every* SLO at least once and document how it uses assessment evidence for continuous improvement during a reasonable period of time (e.g., the 7-year interval for department program review).

Guidelines for writing measurable SLOs

When writing (or reviewing) SLOs, consider the following guidelines and expectations:

- Write student learning outcomes in *measurable* language. Use the SMART model to write measurable outcomes. Refer to the Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy (on the CUTLA web site) to describe knowledge, skills, abilities, dispositions, and/or attitudes in behavioral terms that imply direct measures of student learning. These outcomes support effective assessment because they suggest measures based on direct observation of student performance or evaluation of a student work product.
- Write student learning outcomes in language that students, parents, and individuals outside the discipline will understand.
- SLOs describe expectations for student learning and achievement that clearly represent progressively more advanced and rigorous content expertise and cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) associated with the role a course serves in the curriculum (lower-level undergraduate / general education, upper-level undergraduate, master's-level, or doctoral-level).
- Student learning outcomes **are not any of the following**:
 - course goals,
 - course descriptions,
 - a list of course topics,
 - course content outlines,
 - descriptions of teaching techniques, learning activities, or course processes or procedures.

CUTLA Resources on Student Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Maps

An Introduction to Bloom's Taxonomy

<http://uwf.edu/cutla/assessstudent.cfm>

Action Verbs for Bloom's Taxonomy

<http://uwf.edu/cutla/SLO/ActionWords.pdf>

Guidelines for Curriculum Maps

http://uwf.edu/cutla/curriculum_maps.cfm

Writing Student Learning Outcomes for Course Syllabi

<http://uwf.edu/cutla/writingslo.cfm>

References

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- Maki, P. L. (2010). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution (2nd ed.)*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Stanny, C. J. (published online 2013). *Assessing learning in psychology: A primer for faculty and administrators*. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Dana S. Dunn, Ed. Subject: Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199933815.013.065 Retrieved 18 December 2013 <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199933815.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199933815-e-065?rskey=Dya9d3&result=136>
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