Writing Meaningful Student Learning Outcomes

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Outline

• Why do we need learning outcomes?
• What is a learning outcome?
• How to write a learning outcome
• Helpful hints
• Writing your own outcomes

Why do we need learning outcomes?

• Benefits to faculty:
  • Clarifies the learning students in the program are supposed to accomplish
  • Can plan and revise courses to contribute to program outcomes
  • Allows for meaningful understanding of student learning and ability to make informed decisions about how learning might be improved
  • Assessment
Why do we need learning outcomes?

- Benefits to students:
  - Gives students a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn
  - Students have a deeper appreciation for coursework when they know the purpose it serves
  - Helps students become better self-assessors
    - Contributes to ability to engage in life-long learning

What is a learning outcome?

- Student learning outcome:
  - Clear, concise statement that specifies what students will know, be able to do or value when they complete a program

- Examples:
  - Students will write a feature story that conforms to AP newspaper style.
  - Students will perform laboratory techniques correctly using appropriate safety techniques.
  - Students will be able to express how their beliefs, values, faith and culture shape their actions

What is a learning outcome?

- A student learning outcome is NOT:
  - What you will offer the student
  - The process a student will go through to learn
  - Student satisfaction with the program

- Examples:
  - Students will be given the opportunity to work as a team.
  - The program prepares students for graduate study.
  - Students will participate in an internship.
  - Graduates will be satisfied with their coursework.
How to write a learning outcome

• 3 elements:
  1. Opening phrase
     • Indicates who will demonstrate the learning
  2. Action word
     • Indicates how students will demonstrate the knowledge, value or ability
  3. Learning statement
     • Information, value, or ability gained from program

• Write in reverse order (3-2-1)

How to write a learning outcome

Step 1: Generate a list of learning statements

• Examine your program mission statement and learning goals
  • These describe knowledge, skills, and values that graduates of your program should possess
• Look at what disciplinary professional organizations suggest
  • May be referred to as goals or objectives
• Consider how your program addresses the discipline-specific Undergraduate Learning Outcomes
• Engage program faculty and students in generating ideas

How to write a learning outcome

Step 2: Choose your action words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example Action Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>Recalling information</td>
<td>Recognize, name, retrieve, describe, list, define, identify, outline, reproduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Explaining ideas or concepts</td>
<td>Explain, summarize, paraphrase, classify, interpret, distinguish, defend, discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Using information in another situation</td>
<td>Use, execute, carry out, implement, classify, solve, demonstrate, compute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Breaking information into parts to explore understandings and relationships</td>
<td>Analyze, organize, compare, deconstruct, dissect, differentiate, diagram, combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Justifying a decision or course of action</td>
<td>Judge, critique, experiment, hypothesize, appraise, assess, justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things</td>
<td>Produce, design, construct, plan, invent, generate, transform, integrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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How to write a learning outcome

Step 3: Add the opening phrase

- Students will...
- Graduates will...
- Program specific:
  - Chemistry majors will...
  - Graduates of the Management Program will...

A well-written student learning outcome should:

- Be jargon-free and use clear language
  - Use language understood by your audience (i.e., students, parents, potential employers, etc.)
- Be appropriate, realistic and attainable
  - Students should be able to achieve outcome by completing the program
  - Learning should be appropriate to student level
- Contain only one learning statement
  - Assessment process will be more manageable

Writing your own learning outcomes

- Worksheet:
  - Write a learning outcome for your program, course or event
Helpful Hints

• Work with a small group of faculty members to draft your program’s learning outcomes
  • Multiple perspectives helps to capture agreed upon essential learning

• Once drafted, ask all of your program faculty to review the content
  • Does the curriculum prepare students to achieve these outcomes?
  • Is anything missing?

Helpful Hints

• Before finalizing your outcomes, check that your phrasing is clear
  • Ask for feedback from students, faculty from other disciplines, Office of Assessment

• There is no correct number of outcomes for a program
  • The key is to have a set of outcomes that reflects essential knowledge, skills and values of program graduates

Questions?

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