Writing Student Learning Outcomes for Academic Program Assessment

2020 IE Spring Series
Agenda

I. Define SLOs and their importance
II. Discuss how to develop and write SLOs
III. Review common issues when writing SLOs
IV. Activities
V. Closing announcements
What is a student learning outcome?

• The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2015) defines the term student learning outcomes as “what students are able to demonstrate in terms of the knowledge, skills, and attitude upon completion of a program”

Learning outcomes describe “how students will be different because of a learning experience” (Suskie)
Why are student learning outcomes important?

• Informs students of the standards and expectations of the program and what they will get out of the program
• Guides curriculum planning
• Creates a framework for assessing overall effectiveness of program

“Assessment gives us several ways to gather, interpret, and use data to provide information we need to take appropriate action.” (Walvoord, 2010)
Developing SLOs

Questions to ask:

• What knowledge, skills or abilities should the ideal student be able to demonstrate upon graduation?

• How will students be able to demonstrate what they learned?
Developing SLOs

Sources to consult:

• Program mission/goals
• Program curriculum and course syllabi
• Industry or disciplinary standards
• Licensure or certification criteria
• Accreditation standards
Writing SLOs

There are a variety of formats and guides to structuring a student learning outcome. The below formula and the ABCDs of SLOs are two practical examples of what to include when writing a student learning outcome.

Graduating students will be able to

\[\text{[action verb]} + \text{[clear description of measurable learning to be observed].}\]
ABCDs of SLOs

**Audience**
Who is expected to learn?

**Behavior**
Specifies what the student will be doing

**Condition**
Condition under which the knowledge, skills or abilities will be demonstrated

**Degree**
How well will the behavior need to be performed and to what level?
Examples

Graduating students will be able to apply five major behavioral theories in the creation of a health performance plan.

Graduating students will be able to compare-and-contrast multiple decision making processes in case study examples of crisis management.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>SAMPLE VERBS</th>
<th>SAMPLE BEHAVIORS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REMEMBER</td>
<td>retrieve, recall, or recognize relevant knowledge from long-term memory</td>
<td>Cite, Define, Describe, Identify</td>
<td>Reproduce, State, Retrieve, Tabulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTAND</td>
<td>demonstrate comprehension through one or more forms of explanation</td>
<td>Arrange, Articulate, Associate, Categorize, Clarify, Classify</td>
<td>Illustrate, Represent, Interpret, Restate, Summarize, Translate</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPLY</td>
<td>use information or a skill in a new situation</td>
<td>Apply, Calculate, Carry out, Classify</td>
<td>Predict, Solve, Translate</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYZE</td>
<td>break material into its constituent parts and determine how the parts relate to one another and/or to an overall structure or purpose</td>
<td>Analyze, Arrange, Break down, Categorize, Classify</td>
<td>Organize, Relate, Separate, Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVALUATE</td>
<td>make judgments based on criteria and standards</td>
<td>Appraise, Argue, Assess, Compare, Conclude</td>
<td>Support, Test, Validate</td>
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<tr>
<td>CREATE</td>
<td>put elements together to form a new coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure.</td>
<td>Adapt, Arrange, Assemble, Build, Combine, Compile</td>
<td>Reconstruct, Revise, Write</td>
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Activity #1

• Draft one learning outcome which includes the 4 elements of a student learning outcome. (see worksheet)
Common Issues

• Measuring intervention instead of learning

Ex. 1: Review themes in twentieth century British literature
Ex. 2: Identify themes in twentieth century British literature

➢ Describe what the student will be able to demonstrate in terms of learning, not what you will do in the course
Common Issues

• Covering multiple outcomes in one statement

Ex. 1: The student will be able to identify, describe and analyze themes in twentieth century British literature

Ex. 2: The student will be able to analyze themes in twentieth century British literature

➢ The word “and” is typically a sign you’re doing too much.
Common Issues

• Learning that is difficult to observe or measure

Ex. 1: The student will demonstrate an appreciation for twentieth century British literature

Ex. 2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of twentieth century British literature

➢ Use a strong action verb that is measurable
Common Issues

• Learning that is unrealistic or unattainable given the conditions/time

Ex. 1: The student will successfully perform heart surgery on a patient.
Ex. 2: The student will be able to assess the vitals of a patient.

➢ Represents a level of learning that is realistic and matches instructional activities in the program
Activity #2

• Indicate where the following Student Learning Outcomes fall in the range of weak to strong. Rewrite any SLO you identify as weak to make it stronger. (see worksheet)
Final Considerations

Can the SLO be used to identify areas to improve?

Do the program SLOs accurately reflect the key results of the program?
ACADEMIC PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

Mar 25  Fundamentals of Assessment Methods
Apr 30  Using Results for Improvement

Location: RSC Ambition A&B  Time: 2:00-3:00 pm

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