

How to Write Program Level Student Learning Outcomes

Program level student learning outcomes answer a few key questions while presenting measurable goals for your academic degree.

Program level student learning outcomes articulate competencies delivered through the sequence of courses within a major or degree program. Additionally, each program may take into consideration the requirements of specialized accrediting association when determining program level student learning outcomes.

For example, what do we want students to know or be able to do when they complete the program? These questions speak to both students' cognitive ability and program specific skills. These outcomes should be able to be broken down into more specific outcomes at the course level. In other words, if a program level outcome cannot be mapped to more specific outcomes within some of the courses that are required in the program, the outcome may not be relevant enough to be considered a program level outcome.

NOTES TO REMEMBER:

1. Do not try to assess everything a student might learn in college, just your specific program offerings. Your department does not need to assess core college competences. That is done at the course level for SMU's University Curriculum.
2. Best practices suggest that programs should have 4-7 outcomes, the majority of which should focus on student learning.
4. Student learning outcomes begin with an action verb that is measurable and indicates a level of learning. Examples of action verbs include: analyze, evaluate, identify, explain, etc.¹
4. When writing outcomes, consider how each outcome will be assessed. Measures of learning outcomes must include direct measures of student learning. Please read the document describing direct and indirect measures.

How to Write Program Outcomes

Program outcomes speak to successes that your department wants to achieve that may not be directly related to teaching and learning.

For example, do you want to raise the national ranking of your program, major or department? Do you want to increase the number of job placements for new graduates? Do you want to attract more or better majors? Do you want more faculty publications accepted into better journals, more federal grants, etc. These are outcomes that strengthen your program in addition to student learning and achievement.

Program outcomes help your department focus on strategic planning and improvement. This is work that you may already be doing via 3- and 5-year strategic plans or program reviews. Institutional Effectiveness is the exercise wherein we record our good planning, measurement, record keeping and improvement.

¹ ***Examples of program level student learning outcomes include:***

Students will be able to design individualized education plans for students with special needs.

Students will be able to develop arguments based on the modern conventions and rules of debate.

Students will be able to identify English grammatical structures in different genres of writing.

Students will be able to provide care to patients based upon care plans developed by physicians and physician's assistants.

Students will be able to present a dance routine that reflects the African Culture.

Students will be able to perform a musical selection that illustrates the musical conventions of a certain time period.