



# WRITING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Writing student outcomes (SLOs) helps us be more intentional about learning opportunities we design and offer to students. Outcomes provide the framework for the assessment process because they tell what we want our students to know and be able to do. Each outcome should be short and focus on a single observable action or behavior.

SLOs are important because they communicate expectations to learners, act as a template for course design within a curriculum, guide the design of appropriate assessments, allow faculty and staff to assess the impact of a program, clearly communicate graduates' skills to prospective employers and other external stakeholders, and provide benchmarks for evaluating the program across time.

There are many sources for potential student learning outcomes. Course syllabi within the program provide key outcomes for students in that program. Accreditation agencies and professional/certification exams also provide guidance for what students should know and be able to do. Employers and professional advisory boards are also a good source for what is important for graduates to know.

Constructing student learning outcomes can be thought of as a sentence in three parts:



(1) *Condition*: When you want students to be able to achieve this outcome.

After completion of the BS degree . . .

After participating in the study abroad program . . .

Before beginning the dissertation . . .

(2) *Action verb*: A verb that describes what students will be able to do; it represents one of the Bloom's six levels of cognitive learning (basic knowledge, comprehension, application analysis, synthesis, evaluation)

**Knowledge**: state, define, list, name, identify, recall

**Comprehension**: classify, explain, describe, summarize, interpret, predict

**Applications**: demonstrate, relate, determine, apply, calculate, examine, modify

**Analysis/Evaluate**: generate, analyze, explain, arrange, evaluate, integrate, compare

**Learning strategies**: originate, create, design, plan

Verbs to avoid: appreciate, become aware of, become familiar with, know, learn, understand

(3) *What*: the actual knowledge or skill you expect students to possess.

# Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Checklist

Check each outcome you have written by asking:

- Does the outcome use action verbs?
- Is it stated at the appropriate cognitive level for the degree (bachelor's, master's, or PhD)?
- Ask students to apply what they've learned by producing something?
- Address student competency rather than content coverage?
- Represent a fundamental result of the program?
- Represent an appropriate level of work?
- Contain a piece of knowledge, skill, or attitude/value that is observable or measurable?

## SLO Examples that are too broad and very difficult to measure:

Students will appreciate the benefits of learning a foreign language.

Students will develop high-level problem-solving skills.

## SLO Examples that are still broad and difficult to measure:

Students will demonstrate the ability to resolve problems that occur in the field.

Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills, such as problem solving as it relates to social issues.

Students will exhibit effective communication skills (written, oral, and interpersonal) appropriate for professionals in their field of study.

## SLO Examples that are more specific and easier to measure:

Students will demonstrate the ability to apply basic research methods in sociology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

Students will be able to identify environmental problems and develop science-based solutions.

Students will be able to gather, assess, record, and comparatively evaluate relevant information in order to support conclusions related to a specific project in the discipline.

## Better SLO Examples from other institutions:

Students will demonstrate proficiency in the use of written English, including proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. *Communication, Cal State, Chico*

Students will demonstrate proficiency in formal writing, including the correct use of a designated style of source citation, such as APA. *Communication, Cal State, Chico*

Students will demonstrate the ability to gather information and apply it to persuade or articulate one's own point of view. *Curry College*

Students will communicate in written and oral formats scientific information to chemists and non-chemists. *Utah State University, Department of Chemistry*

Students will be able to choose the most appropriate statistical test for a given problem. *Northern Virginia Community College*

## SLO Examples from professional associations/accrediting bodies:

Students will be able to adapt messages to the diverse needs of individuals, groups, and contexts.

*National Communication Association*

Our students will deliver a professional quality presentation accompanied by appropriate technology. *Adapted from AACSB white paper #3, 2013*

Students will demonstrate an ability to function on multidisciplinary teams. *ABET*

Students will be able to examine and comprehend the fundamental principles present in relevant precedents and to make informed choices about the incorporation of such principles into architecture and urban design projects. *National Architectural Accrediting Board*



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