

Video 2: About 7 minutes long [Already on Test Web page]

The purpose of this video is to introduce to faculty and academic leaders what criteria constitutes an effective learning outcome and how to revise program learning outcomes so that they are effective to measure.

Student Learning Outcomes

Welcome! In this video, we will cover how to write a student learning outcome that works for you. Learning outcomes define your instruction and act as our compass. They answer the question “What will students learn when they complete all of their requirements?”

At UHart, we call the institutional level outcomes, Essential Learning Outcomes or ELO’s.

The concept behind the institutional learning outcomes is then restated at the program level to some degree. For example, two of UHart University’s Essential Learning Outcomes are Written Communication and Oral Communication. Written and oral communication are also present at the program level throughout the university. For instance, one of Acoustical Engineering program learning outcomes is “Students will have an ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences”.

From there, the concept behind the program learning outcome is then often fed into the course learning outcome. For example, at the program level, the leaders will plan that “Students will explain different philosophies of famous thinkers”. At the course level, an outcome could be “Students will describe the philosophies of John Locke.” So, it’s just more specific.

Outcomes feed into each other at different levels.

They are also tools to use to understand how well students are reaching the goals for learning in the major or degree.

Writing Easy-to-Measure Outcomes

The Illinois Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning has an awesome chart describing what makes an outcome easier to measure versus difficult to measure. Let’s take a look.

- An outcome that would be hard to measure is more likely to be vague.
 - For example, “students will learn the programming language, Python”. How do you know students learned it, if the options are so vast? What specific tasks do they need to execute to prove that they learned the language? Is it even possible for a student to learn all of Python’s possibilities after a course?
 - Let’s take a look at an outcome that would convey the same meaning and also be easier to measure. A revised version could be, “Students will use the programming language, Python to complete a data mining analysis.” That task is more specific. It is

also easier to create a key assignment to measure whether students were able to master that outcome.

- Here's another example of a learning outcome that would be hard to gather evidence on. Here's an example, "Students will know the elements from the periodic table." What does "knowing" mean? Does it mean students can name the acronyms of the elements? Or that they just can explain the properties of the elements? This statement is not very measurable.
 - Now let's look at the same concept, but make it a more observable statement. "Students will be able to identify the elements from the periodic table based on their symbols." That outcome is much easier to gather evidence on for an assignment or an exam. If you'd like more before/after examples, check out the others on this slide.

How to Write Quality Learning Outcomes.

We have good news for you! There is a formula to writing a learning outcome. That process is made up of the following steps:

1. So first, we write... "By the end of the assignment/program, students will be able to.... [blank]"
2. Then within the blank, you would insert a Measurable Action Verb...
3. And then you would insert Skill, Knowledge, Value, Attitude, or Ability that a student should be able to master.

How to Pick Your Action Verbs

Bloom's Taxonomy verbs are commonly used for writing outcomes because the verbs are action-oriented. If you are looking to revise or write a program learning outcome, these verbs could be a great place to start. You can either choose to use the verbs according to level (for example, at the 100-level or 300-level) or you can disregard the level. Faculty from across the United States have used this taxonomy both ways, according to what works for their program.

W Writing Outcomes for Online Courses

There's also the Digital Bloom's Taxonomy, which is specifically created for online/hybrid courses and programs, as well as on ground courses that use technology. That framework lists action verbs paired with activities that we may use in interacting with technology.

Aligning a Learning Outcome to an Assignment

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1. If you really like your program learning outcome, but none of your assignments aligns to that outcome, you may need to edit one of your assignments, so it fits.
2. However, if you don't like your program learning outcome that much and none of your major assignments fit, you may need to edit your program learning outcome and that might actually be the easier solution and the easier lift.

Aligning an Assignment to an Outcome

Here's an example of how we can align an assignment to an outcome.

An example of a measurable program learning outcome in the Education department could be: "Candidates design assignments for reading for all students".

An example of an aligned assignment could be that students create a lesson plan related to reading. An example of an assignment that is not aligned to this outcome would be to have candidates just read assignments to students, but it is not necessarily relating to designing those assignments.

Thank you

That's it for our video on learning outcomes! As a refresher,

1. First, look at your existing student learning outcomes, especially at the program level. Are they measurable?
2. Are any of your program learning outcomes tied with the Essential Learning Outcomes at the institutional level?
3. See if any of your key assignments in your courses have anything to do with your program learning outcomes. Also consider how many of your program learning outcomes are not mentioned in the assignments. You're going to have to decide about whether or not you want to revise any of your learning outcomes or maybe revise one of your assignments.

In our next video will be centered on how to create a curriculum map, so you have an easier time gauging where assessments are taking place in your academic program. If you have any questions about this process so far, feel free to contact the Institutional Effectiveness office.