Learning Outcomes Toolkit

A portable guide to helping colleagues learn about program learning outcomes, a key component of program assessment.
Preview existing LOs and mission statements as context for choosing from among the elements of this toolkit.

Knowing where programs are with their learning outcomes will help you efficiently guide colleagues to the most urgent matters to address.

The information on the remaining slides can help you answer some of the common questions that arise, such as:

- Why spend my time on writing/improving LOs? What are they good for?
- What’s the difference between program and course LOs?
- Do we have enough LOs?
- Are they the right LOs?
- Are they “good” LOs?
A good program learning outcome (PLO) is a measurable statement of what graduating/exiting students should know, be able to do, believe, or value as a result of participating in your program.

PLOs describe students’ cumulative learning across courses and other learning opportunities.
# Uses for Learning Outcomes

**Students** can

- explain what they have gained through their studies to peers, parents, and employers
- Better understand how to focus their efforts and to connect their learning across courses and experiences into a more coherent whole.

**Faculty and staff** can

- communicate expectations to students
- focus their efforts on activities that support the primary goals of their program
- assess whether those goals are being met
- promote the value of their program to stakeholders.
Good LO Examples: Doctor of Physical Therapy

PLO example:
• Students examine patients using appropriate tests and measures

Course learning outcomes (CLOs) that support this program learning outcome:
• PT 5320: Students demonstrate appropriate test or measure during practical examination
• PT7100/7200: Students utilize tests and measures during a [practical] examination.
• PT8800/8820: Students interpret findings of tests and measures.
**Questions:**

- Do our outcomes describe all of the key skills, knowledge, and values or dispositions taught in our program? Are any outdated or are any missing?

- Are the LOs precise enough that faculty, staff, and student will interpret them in the same way?
  - For example, for an LO like *Students write well*, some may assume this includes a well-supported, organized argument with supporting graphics and adherence to a discipline’s style guide, whereas others may assume the outcome only includes some of those criteria.

- Do multiple courses or other learning opportunities contribute to each PLO?
  - If not, you might have a CLO instead of a PLO.
Hands-On Activity Options

1. Review existing LOs using the assessment plan review rubric criteria
   - Focus on the results of learning or participating in the program
   - Isolate one behavior per outcome
   - Identify a measurable, observable behavior using an action verb
   - Are clearly derived from the mission statement
   - Are appropriate for the target audience (e.g., BA vs. MA students)

2. Analyze CLOs and/or course assignments
   - List each CLO or assignment under the PLO that it be supports.
     - If a CLO corresponds to more than one PLO or doesn’t align with any PLO, highlight it for discussion.
   - Discuss whether the PLOs effectively capture the full range of behaviors elicited in the CLOs and the assignments.
     - Look for omissions, mismatches in scope, outdated goals