Writing Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes describe the knowledge/skills/abilities/attitudes etc. a student should display after participating in a program, activity, service, or interaction. Based on their participation in a learning experience, students will demonstrate what they know or are able to do upon being assessed. This demonstration should be measureable.

Characteristics of Student Learning Outcomes

- Align with department, division, and institution goals.
- Focus on behavior that is a result of some intervention or activity.
- Contain an active verb that describes an observable or identifiable action—Bloom's Taxonomy
- Focus on student as the performer
    - What is the student expected to be able to know?
    - What is a student expected to be able to do?
    - How is the student expected to be able to think?
- Describe a behavior that is meaningful, specific, measurable, and attainable.

Basic Format of a Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to <<**action verb**>> <<**something**>>

- Example: Students will be able to demonstrate accountability and responsibility for their actions as members of the KU community.

Steps for Developing/Writing Learning Outcomes

1. Define the program/event/service you will be assessing with your Student Learning Outcome(s)
    a. *Focus on one program/event/service. This narrows the potential learning outcome(s).*
2. Think about what students can/should learn from the program/event/service.
    a. *When we organize programs/events as well as provide services, we try to educate students about something. What is that something? What is the purpose of the program?*
3. Draft a few learning outcomes.
    a. *Keep the outcomes to a simple sentence with outcome. Use an action verb.*
4. Review the learning outcomes with colleagues. (Two heads are better than one).
    a. *Make sure you choose a colleague who understands learning outcomes. Ask if it relates and complements your program/event/service. Remember, others who know nothing about your area may read your outcome so direct, concise outcomes are best.*
5. Make a second draft of the learning outcome.
    a. *Use the feedback and adjust the outcome, if necessary.*

6. Think about how you will measure the outcome(s). Choose a method to do so.
    a. *What instruments will you use? Quantitative or qualitative methods? Survey, interviews, observations, focus groups, etc.? Be sure that the student learning outcomes can be measured appropriately and adequately.*
7. Determine if your instrument tools will help you to thoroughly determine whether or not the learning outcomes have been accomplished.
    a. *Be sure the tools actually measure the student learning outcomes. If the methods don't do this, your work is wasted. You are trying to determine whether or not students are achieving the learning outcomes. If the tools don't measure the outcomes, then you won't know if the students are learning.*
8. Consult with colleagues about the connection between the measurement tool and the learning outcomes.
    a. *As you did when consulting colleagues about our learning outcomes, consult them to determine if they see the clear link between your methods and the student learning outcomes. This will help you to be sure that your work will provide meaningful results in the end.*
9. Finalize your learning outcomes and methods.
    a. *Make changes based on feedback or other resources. This is the last step before going forth with your assessment project.*

Verbs to avoid when writing learning outcomes—these are <u>not</u> action verbs (use specific action verbs):

- Appreciate
- Become aware of
- Become familiar with
- Know
- Learn
- Understand
- Value

Use verbs such as Tell, Articulate, Define, Demonstrate.

To find appropriate verbs to use, refer to Bloom's Taxonomy and examples of active verbs.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Creating: make judgments about the value of ideas or materials	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts, criticizes, critiques, defends, describes, discriminates, evaluates, explains, interprets, justifies, relates, summarizes, supports
Evaluation: make judgments about the value of ideas or materials	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts, criticizes, critiques, defends, describes, discriminates, evaluates, explains, estimate, interprets, justifies, judges, revise, relates, score, select, summarizes, supports, value
Synthesis/Evaluating: builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure.	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** assemble, categorizes, combines, compiles, composes, creates, devises, designs, explains, formulate, generates, manage, modifies, organizes, plans, propose, rearranges, reconstructs, relates, reorganizes, revises, rewrites, set up, summarizes, tells, writes
Analysis: separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure maybe misunderstood. Distinguishes between facts and inferences.	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** analyzes, appraise, breaks down, compares, contrasts, calculates, criticize, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, examine, identifies, illustrates, infers, outlines, relates, selects, separates, tests
Application: use a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction. Applies what was learned in the classroom into novel situations in the work place.	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** applies, changes, computes, constructs, demonstrates, discovers, interpret, illustrates, manipulates, modifies, operates, practice, predicts, prepares, produces, relates, shows, solves, translate, uses
Comprehension/Understanding: understand the meaning, translation, interpolation, and interpretation of instructions and problems. State a problem in one's own words.	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** comprehends, converts, defends, distinguishes, discuss, describe, express, estimates, explains, extends, generalizes, gives an example, infers, interprets, identify, locate, paraphrases, predicts, recognize, review, rewrites, summarizes, translates
Knowledge/Remembering: Recall data or information.	**Examples of Measurable Action Verbs:** arranges, defines, describes, identifies, knows, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, recalls, repeat, relates, recognizes, reproduces, selects, states.

References

Bloom, B.S. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitve Domain. New York, NY: David McKay Co Inc.

Michigan State University *Writing Learning Objectives* online at http://www.vps.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Writing-Learning-Objectives.pdf

North Central University *Writing Student Learning Outcomes* online at http://www.northcentral.edu/sites/default/files/WritingStudentLearningOutcomes.pdf