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Guide for Program Learning Outcome (PLO) Assessment



Objectives

- Define assessment.
- Identify the three main reasons why we assess.
- Define Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
- Identify ways to collaborate in the development of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).
- List guidelines for writing effective, measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).
- Outline tips for developing effective, measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).
- List the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Create examples of clear, measurable action verbs using Bloom's Taxonomy..
- Write Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) using the best action verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Brainstorm ways to assess Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Definition of Assessment

Assessment is the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning. It refers to any activity designed to collect information on whether students can demonstrate a set of knowledge and skills after completing a program/discipline.

It is not an evaluation of faculty.

Three Main Reasons to Assess

To Prove:
What should students be learning and in what ways should they be growing?

3. To Improve: Using the answers to 1 and 2, what should be done to facilitate student learning and growth?


2. To Inform: What are students actually learning and in what ways are they actually growing?

Definition of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Program learning outcomes describe learning outcomes and concepts – what you want students to learn.



Developing agreed upon program learning outcomes is not always a quick and easy task.



Departments vary in the extent to which the faculty share a common disciplinary framework.



When faculty have various perspectives, identifying agreed upon outcomes may be more difficult than in departments where there is a unified approach to the discipline.



- Describe the ideal student in your program at various phases in your program.
 - What does this student care about and what is this student able to do?
 - List and briefly describe the program experiences that contribute most to the development of the ideal student.
 - Be concrete and focus on those strengths, skills, and values that you feel are the result of your program.

Collaborating in the Development of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

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- List the achievements you implicitly expect of students who take your program.



- Collect and review instructional materials that you think are important for program outcomes. You may want to look at:

- Syllabi and course outlines
- Course assignments and tests
- Textbooks (especially the tables of contents, introductions, and summaries)
- Documents that describe your department and its programs
- Brochures and catalogue descriptions
- Accreditation reports
- Curriculum committee reports



Collaborating in the Development of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Effective learning outcomes highlight expected student behavior as well as the specific conditions and standards of performance by which students will be measured.

Necessary Components of PLOs:

- Expected Student Behavior
- Student–Centered
- Specific Conditions
- Specific Standards of Performance

Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Necessary Components of PLOs:

Expected Student Behavior

- It is best to write learning outcomes in terms of observable behavioral outcomes.
- Learning outcomes should provide a description of what the student will be able to do.





Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Necessary Components of PLOs:

Student-Centered

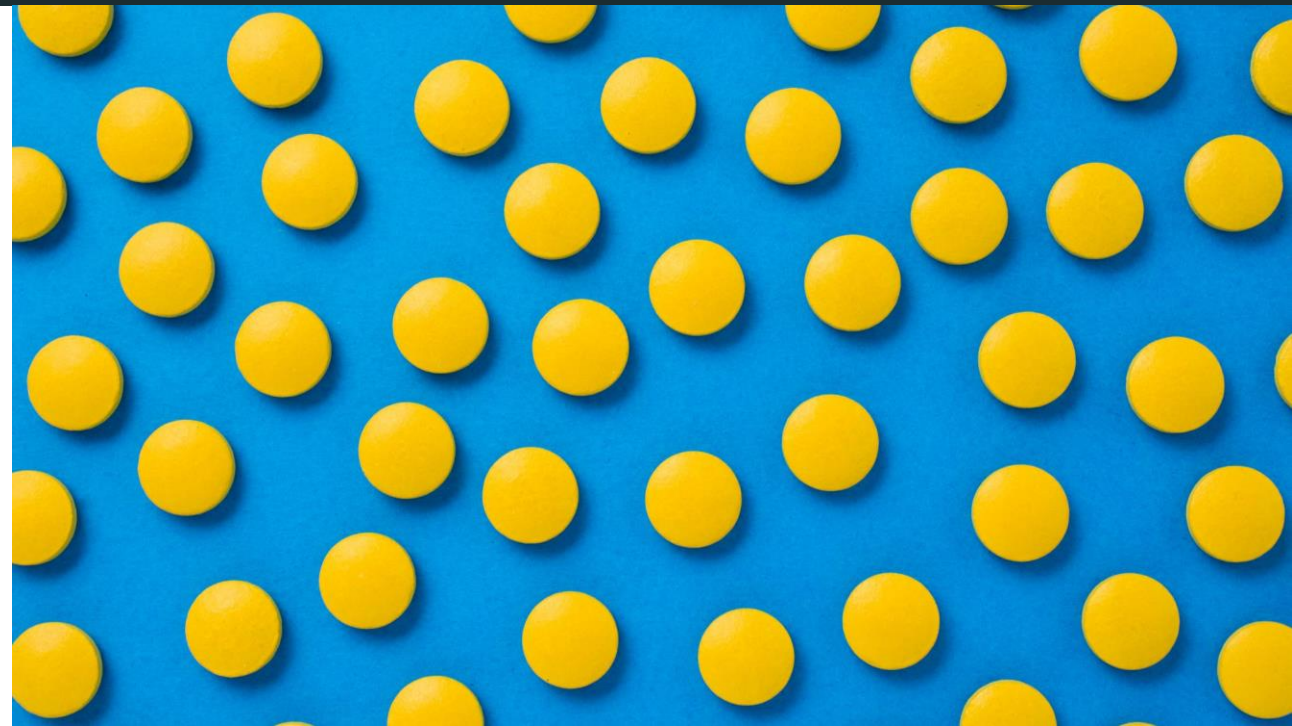
- All learning outcomes should focus on the student.

Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Necessary Components of PLOs:

Specific Conditions

- Learning outcomes should be specific and target one expectation or aspect of understanding and highlight the conditions under which the student is expected to perform the task.



Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Necessary Components of PLOs:

Specific Standards of Performance

- Each learning outcome should be measurable and include the criteria for evaluating student performance.



Tips for Developing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)



To be measurable, outcomes need to be as specific, focused and as clearly stated as possible.



General outcomes will always be very hard to measure.

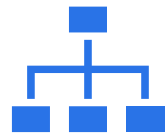


Essentially, we want to know how student learning will be determined.

Bloom's Taxonomy



Bloom's Taxonomy is a well-known description of levels of educational objectives.



It may be useful to consider this taxonomy when defining your learning outcomes.



Most courses in higher education focus on the cognitive domain, thus it is important to examine various levels of cognitive understanding.



The cognitive domain is broken down into six categories:

Knowledge (Level 1)

Comprehension (Level 2)

Application (Level 3)

Analysis (Level 4)

Synthesis (Level 5)

Evaluation (Level 6)

Examples of Clear, Measurable Action Verbs

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Define	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Arrange	Appraise
Identify	Describe	Compute	Appraise	Assemble	Assess
Indicate	Discuss	Construct	Calculate	Collect	Choose
Know	Explain	Demonstrate	Categorize	Compose	Compare
Label	Express	Dramatize	Compare	Construct	Contrast
List	Identify	Employ	Contrast	Create	Decide
Memorize	Locate	Give Examples	Criticize	Design	Estimate
Name	Paraphrase	Illustrate	Debate	Formulate	Evaluate
Recall	Recognize	Interpret	Determine	Manage	Grade

Examples of Clear, Measurable Action Verbs

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Record	Report	Investigate	Diagram	Organize	Judge
Relate	Restate	Operate	Differentiate	Perform	Measure
Repeat	Review	Organize	Distinguish	Plan	Rate
Select	Suggest	Practice	Examine	Prepare	Revise
Underline	Summarize	Predict	Experiment	Produce	Score
	Tell	Schedule	Inspect	Propose	Select
	Translate	Shop	Inventory	Set-Up	Value
		Sketch	Question		
		Translate	Relate		
		Use	Solve		

Using the Best Action Verbs for Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Very Hard to Measure	Still Too Hard to Measure	Relatively Easy to Measure
Students will be able to...	Students will be able to...	Students will be able to...
appreciate the benefits of exercise.	value exercise as a stress reduction tool.	explain how exercise affects stress.
access resources in the college library database.	recognize problem solving skills that would enable one to adequately navigate through the proper resources within the college.	evaluate the most appropriate resource that is pertinent to their college concern.

Using the Best Action Verbs for Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Very Hard to Measure	Still Too Hard to Measure	Relatively Easy to Measure
Students will be able to... develop problem-solving skills and conflict resolution.	Students will be able to... understand how to resolve personal conflicts and assist others in resolving conflicts.	Students will be able to... demonstrate to classmates how to resolve conflicts by helping them negotiate agreements.
have more confidence in their abilities.	identify critical thinking skills, such as problem solving as it relates to social issues.	demonstrate the ability to analyze and respond to arguments about racial discrimination.

Assessing Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

References



All information was adapted from California State University, Bakersfield, PACT Outcomes Assessment Handbook (1999).



<https://bergen.edu/wp-content/uploads/CIE-Outcomes-Assessment-Handbook-October-2013.pdf>