

Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning

Select Page



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Why Do We Care About Student Learning Outcomes?

SLOs guide the decisions you make when designing or re-designing a course



SLOs communicate the "why" for taking your course to students



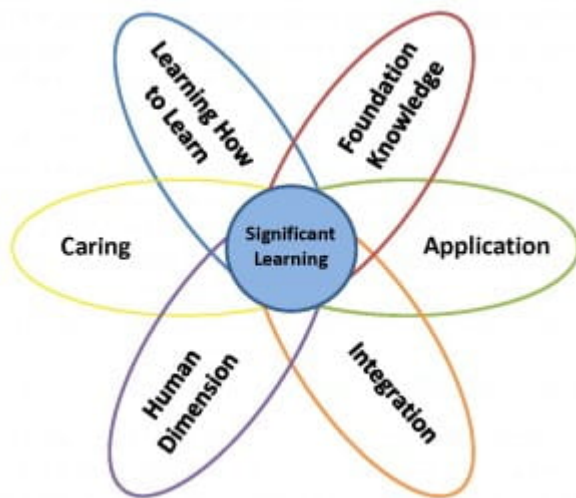
SLOs are important for program assessment

SLOs are used for program assessment by linking course outcomes to your program outcomes, curricular maps can reveal gaps, redundancies and overlaps within a program

Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning

Dee Fink, in 2003, introduced a taxonomy of significant learning that integrates cognitive and affective areas and adds a meta-cognitive component. His 6 types of significant learning are interactive but not hierarchical and would be used selectively depending on the learning outcome desired. They are:

- **Foundational Knowledge:** understanding and remembering information and ideas
- **Application:** skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, practical thinking, and managing projects
- **Integration:** connecting information, ideas, perspectives, people, or realms of life
- **Human Dimension:** learning about oneself and others
- **Caring:** developing new feelings, interests, and values
- **Learning How to Learn:** becoming a better student, inquiring about a subject, becoming a self-directed learner



Tips for Writing SLOs

1. Avoid vague and non-observable verbs.
 - For example, it is difficult to measure whether someone has "become familiar with" a particular tool or "appreciates" a genre of music. Use a more specific verb. If

“understanding” is sought, think more closely about what students should be able to do or produce as a result of their “understanding.”

2. Use observable action verbs

- Outcomes should be something students “do” and are measurable.
- Coming up with the right verb can be challenging, and sometimes an existing SLO can be revised in a much more effective way by simply using the right verb. [This sheet provides suggested action verbs](#) that correspond with Fink’s taxonomy.

3. Outcomes should be important

- There is a clear connection to the student’s life and/or their future career path

4. Are rigorous yet realistic

Examples:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- explain how physical exercise impacts stress.
- design a lesson plan using backward design.
- demonstrate the use of correct grammar and various literary devices in creating an essay.
- analyze and respond to arguments about racial discrimination in the workplace.

A Template for Writing a Student Learning Outcome:



As a result of participating in (*course*), students will be able to:

(*action verb*) + (*defined by explicit and observable terms*).

TIP: It is recommended that you limit yourself to 3-6 outcomes. Try to focus on the most important outcomes for your course.

References:

- Maki, P.L. (2010). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution (2nd ed.)*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Fink, D. (2003). [A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning](#). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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