



Intended Outcome Statements, Goals, Targets, and Benchmarks

LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

Defining What Matters the Most

OUTCOME Statement Definition. For academic programs, an expected learning outcome is a clear cognitive, affective, or behavioral expectation of what students are expected to know, do, or think/care about *by the time they finish* a program, course, or lesson. *Note: Outcome statements are not program “goals”—not what the program is going to do.*

Quality outcome statements for a program include the following characteristics:

- ✓ **Mission-Focused.** Aligned with the program’s mission.
- ✓ **Most Important.** Limited in number to the **most essential** learning expectations (3 to 5 if possible, although some programs require more as a result of external professional accreditations).
- ✓ **By End of Program (or Course).** Contain knowledge, abilities, values, and/or attitudes that students are expected to have once the courses are over.
- ✓ **Clarity.** Limited in statement length. *(Avoid convoluted statements with numerous phrases.)*
- ✓ **One Action Verb.** *One* action verb per outcome statement. *(Avoid double-barreled statements. Multiple verbs in the same PLO result in muddled results reporting.)*
- ✓ **Action.** Action-oriented verbs. *(Avoid words like understand, appreciate, have, demonstrate the ability to, and value—they are vague and generally difficult to measure.)*
- ✓ **Measurable.** Verbs that are reasonably measurable by a variety of methods.
- ✓ **Rigor.** Verbs appropriate in rigor to the level of the program or course.
- ✓ **Direct Instruction.** Faculty provide *direct instruction* in the learning expectations somewhere in the program.
- ✓ **Multiple Opportunities.** Students have *multiple opportunities* within the course of study in the program to practice learning expectations.
- ✓ **Usable Results.** Learning outcome assessment data should produce *actionable results*: faculty can use student performance trends to inform decisions about how to improve the program.

Outcome statements vary in specificity by level. Outcome statements are not what the program does or is going to do. *Outcome statements are focused on the expected behaviors of the students.*

- **Academic Program Samples**—student learning outcomes are aligned at several levels. *(for demonstration purposes only)*
 - **Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):** broader in scope, apply to all students in that program. PLOs relate to a specific discipline. Graduates will . . .
 - Program: Juris Doctor Degree—School of Law*
 - PLO 1. **Identify** key concepts in substantive law, legal theory, and procedure.
 - PLO 2. **Analyze** general approaches to the study of law.

- PLO 3. **Write** a competent legal analysis.
- PLO 4. **Apply** oral communication in a variety of legal contexts.
- PLO 5. **Apply** written communication in a variety of legal contexts.
- PLO 6. **Display** professionalism consistent with the legal profession’s standards.
- **Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs):** narrower in scope, apply to students taking that course. CLOs use language that students comprehend and are supported through teaching and learning activities. CLOs are aligned with PLOs.
 - Course: Legal Research Analysis, Writing & Oral Communication III: Litigation/Appellate Advocacy*
 - 1. **Compare** the roles of trial and appellate courts. *(Aligns with PLO 1.)*
 - 2. **Analyze** the limitations imposed on appellate tribunals, including the standards of review. *(Aligns with PLO 1.)*
 - 3. **Apply** appropriate techniques for writing an appellate brief persuasively. *(Aligns with PLO 5.)*
 - 4. **Collaborate** to produce a two-issue appellate brief for oral arguments before a panel of judges. *(Aligns with PLO 4, PLO 5, and PLO 6.)*

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Revisions SAMPLES ONLY (bachelor’s degree)

Draft Original	Outcome Statement Issues	Considered Improvement
Identify the features of entrepreneurship, management, and marketing in the field of traditional and esports events.	Contains triple-barreled learning expectations. <i>You will get to the specifics in the measures you select for PLO proficiency.</i>	Differentiate the critical components of operating successful esports events.
Describe technology and systems that apply to the field of esports, such as cybersecurity, networking, hardware, software, platforms, social media, gaming systems, and virtual reality.	Double-barreled learning expectations. <i>You will get to the specifics in the measures you select for PLO proficiency.</i>	Analyze the influence of each technological system that impacts the field of esports.
Engage sports media participants in interactive content , shorter competition formats, and new types of interaction during sports competitions.	Contains triple-barreled learning expectations. <i>You will get to the specifics in the measures you select for PLO proficiency.</i>	Design interactive content that engages sports media participants at high levels.

Program Learning Outcome (PLOs) SAMPLES ONLY (9-credit program)

Draft Original	Outcome Statement Issues	Considered Improvement
Develop an understanding of the scope of management theories that can be directly applied to the world of work.	<i>Avoid use of the word “understanding.” Start the statement with the verb that is the MOST IMPORTANT learning expectations.</i>	Identify the management theories that can be directly applied to the world of work.

Draft Original	Outcome Statement Issues	Considered Improvement
Understand how to evaluate matters of ethics in the management profession more broadly	<i>Avoid use of the word “understanding.” Start the statement with the verb that is the MOST IMPORTANT learning expectations. “More Broadly” is vague language.</i>	Evaluate matters of ethics in the management profession across diverse work situations.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Revisions SAMPLES ONLY (bachelor’s degree)

Draft Original	Outcome Statement Issues	Considered Improvement
Demonstrate effective communication in visual, verbal, time-based, and web-based media	<i>Avoid starting the statement with “demonstrate.” Start with the verb—the primary behavior expected by the end of the program. Avoid “effective”—vague.</i>	Apply tailored communications appropriate to multiple media needs (e.g., visual, verbal, time-based, and web-based). <i>You can remove the e.g. items because they will part of your measures—what you will assess.</i>
Demonstrate effective collaboration skills as member of a design team	<i>Avoid starting the statement with “demonstrate.” Start with the verb—the primary behavior expected by the end of the program. Avoid “effective”—vague.</i>	Apply the collaborative skills needed to be a productive member of a design team.
Choose and use digital media tools to effectively and creatively display original and client-driven content for the web	<i>Avoid double-barreled verbs. Select the MOST IMPORTANT behavior. It can be inferred that in order to use, a student must choose. Multiple modifiers make assessment challenging.</i>	Use the appropriate digital media tools required to display web content.
Analyze and develop appropriate content and designs for a variety of audiences and purposes	<i>Avoid double-barreled verbs. Select the MOST IMPORTANT behavior. Also double-barreled—content and designs are two different expectations.</i>	Develop appropriate content for a variety of audiences and purposes.
		Develop appropriate designs for a variety of audiences and purposes.
Use promotional theories and tools to plan, implement, evaluate, and manage a promotional strategy.	<i>Double-barreled expectations—theories and tools are two different things—would have to be measured separately.</i>	Apply promotional theories to implementing, evaluating, and managing a promotional strategy.

GOAL STATEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE TARGET STATEMENTS

How You Know if What Matters the Most is Accomplished

GOAL Statement Definition. A goal statement is **priority** improvement area established by some evidence that indicates a need—a change in results. A goal is not an action, but a desired “increase” or “decrease” in something. Goals define directions of desired change.

Note: Actions are NOT “tasks or actions to do.” *For example, building a new dorm is an “action,” not a goal. (The goal might be to increase student engagement on campus.) Adding a new program is an “action,” not a goal. (The goal might be to increase student enrollment.)*

- **Academic Program Samples.** *(for demonstration purposes only)*
 - ✚ **Goal: Increase student retention in XYZ program.**
 - Long-Term Benchmark (how good is good enough)
 - The XYZ program’s overall retention rate from fall to fall is 80%.
 - Short-Term Target (generally annual):
 - The % of students retained in XYZ program will increase from 52% to 65% by fall 2025.
 - ✚ **Goal: Decrease overall course DFW rates in XYZ program.**
 - Long-Term Benchmark (how good is good enough)
 - The XYZ program’s overall course DFW rate is 10% or less.
 - Short-Term Target (generally annual): The XYZ program’s overall course DFW rate will decrease from 25% to 15% by fall 2025.