

DESIGNING MEASURABLE, MEANINGFUL, AND MANAGEABLE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Student learning outcomes (SLOs) provide the central mechanisms to assess and ensure curricular and co-curricular student learning. Here are some tips to developing measurable, meaningful, and manageable student-centered SLOs.

BEGIN WITH MEASURABLE VERBS:

- Develop around 4-6 SLOs for every class or co-curricular activity, and for every curricular and co-curricular program.
- Begin every SLO with a measurable verb.
- Choose a measurable verb from a learning taxonomy that best aligns with the curricular or co-curricular program's purpose, and the level of learning the program or co-curricular unit wants students to achieve.
 - For more on learning taxonomies, including resources on Bloom's, Anderson and Krathwohl's, and Fink's, return to the [assessment resources web page](#).
- Avoid verbs that describe a mindset, such as know, learn, or appreciate. They do not prompt observable actions, and thus are difficult to measure.
- Preface your SLOs with the statement: Upon completion of this [course or academic program, or co-curricular activity or offering], successful students will be able to..

ENSURE CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT:

To ensure students get the support to achieve the SLOs in your area, align them to the curriculum, instructional methods and materials, and assessment measures.



To ensure students get continual support to achieve the SLOs at the university, also align them to all levels of the university, including the program learning outcomes; the program mission, vision, and core values; the college mission and strategic plan; and the UNE mission and strategic plan.



COMPOSE COMPLETE SLOs

Follow the measurable verb in each SLO with the:

- 1 knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or values students will learn;
- 2 context, conditions, and/or setting in which students will learn; and
- 3 criterion or level the outcome should be achieved.

Here are some examples that compare vague and specific student learning outcomes.

VAGUE	SPECIFIC
Know the principles of effective communication	Communicate effectively in a professional environment through technical reports and presentations.
Think in an interdisciplinary manner	Draw from theories, principles, and knowledge from other disciplines to help solve a problem.
Function as a team member	Reflect on your contributions to a team effort, your ability to accept other team members as resources, and your willingness to accept compromises, if required, to achieve a team goal in written form.

VAGUE	SPECIFIC
Understand how to use technology effectively	Use word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation graphics effectively and appropriately in preparing the final research project and report.

CONSIDER THE LEVELS OF LEARNING

Consider developing SLOs with measurable verbs and goals that represent the hierarchy of lower-order and higher-order thinking skills. The cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy moves from lower-order skills (remember, understand, and apply) to higher-order skills (analyze, evaluate, and create). Also, consider sequencing the list of SLOs from lower- to higher-order skills (or basic to intermediate to advanced).

DESIGN STUDENT-CENTERED, LEARNER-DRIVEN SLOs

Finally, involve the students in every step of the learning outcomes' development, implementation, and assessment. Faculty and professional staff serve as the content experts to construct the learning outcomes that are pertinent to their program and co-curricular unit. Students can provide input to ensuring the learning outcomes are understandable, achievable, and connected to the learning experiences.