

Course and Program Improvement Plans

Learning Outcomes

What do you want students to know (cognitive), think or feel (attitudinal), or do (behavioral) by the end of the course (or their program of study)?

This is where you state what you expect your students to know, think or feel, or do by the time they complete the course (or their program of study). You need not list only those outcomes which relate to general education outcomes. You might consider using common outcomes terminology such as: "Students will _____." While you may have many different outcomes in mind for your students, we would encourage you to select only three to five outcomes that you will focus on in any one year for assessment purposes. Remember this is an ongoing activity to be reviewed and updated annually, and there will be opportunities to select different outcomes to assess in future years.

Assessments and Criteria for Success

What measures will you use to help you know if students have achieved the outcomes?

The assessment measures you choose should be tied logically to the nature of the outcomes you select. For example, student opinion surveys might be useful in assessing student feelings about art. They may not be useful in assessing the mastery of mathematical skills.

Regarding the use of grades as the sole measure of the attainment of course or program outcomes, a respected text about accreditation says the following: "Class grades represent individual faculty members' evaluation of students and are not generally accepted by accrediting associations as a means of assessment. Why? As faculty, we are the only profession that (through class grades) certifies its own success. A physician's success is evaluated by patient wellness or mortality. A lawyer's performance is judged by juries. We *individually* provide instruction and certify that it has been successful in stimulating student learning through the grading practice. The fact that both providing and certifying obviously differs from the other professions and leads naturally to questions regarding potential objectivity of the evaluation. For this reason, any time (such as in class grading) that the individual instructor responsible for instruction in the field is the *only* party evaluating or assessing the results of that instruction, its utilization as a measure of assessment is severely compromised and of little practical assessment value."

So what are other ideas for assessment measures? *Direct measures* provide evidence of outcome achievement that is observed and assumes no influence by another source. A math test would be a direct measure. *Indirect measures* assume that because one event transpires it was based on another event. Such measures might include students' success in obtaining jobs. Another way of thinking about measures might include *qualitative measures* and *quantitative measures*. Qualitative measures can be described as those assessment activities culminating in an informed judgment and might include portfolio review, public performances, juried competition, and oral exams. Quantitative measures typically result in a specific numeric score and might include locally developed or standardized means of cognitive assessment. National standardized exams such as the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), area concentration tests, and licensure exams are common. Attitudinal surveys, performance type measures (internships, projects), and behavioral means of assessment (job placement, performance at the transfer institution) are other examples of assessment. Remember, multiple measures can provide more than one perspective on student attainment of desired outcomes.

Criteria for Success refers to the need to identify before the assessment occurs how well students "should" perform. For example, if the measure is a test, how well should the students perform on that test for you to consider them having achieved the outcome.

Summary of Data Collected

What were the results of the most-recent assessments of your students?

Use of Results

What improvements did you make as a result of previous assessments?