



I. Assessment: Outcomes

Aloha. This tutorial is about the first step of the assessment cycle: Defining the outcomes. How to write the outcomes for a course (SLO or CLO), an academic program (PLO), or a service (SAO). Outcomes are the foundations: they indicate what a course, degree, service is about; why it is important, unique, needed; and how it demonstrates to contribute to a high quality educational experience.

(a) Outcomes guidelines: Outcomes should be:

1. **Limited in number:**

- 2-4 for a service
- 4-6 for a course/program

Because they illustrate the ultimate goals (not tasks or topics) and they need to be assessed every semester.

2. **Broad** so they do not have to be revised as the instructor and discipline change.

3. **Brief** so students/participants can understand them quickly and easily.

4. **Assessable:**

- Each outcome contains **one verb only** (do not stack multiple verbs/outcomes in one sentence because it makes assessment impossible).
- Each outcome addresses a **different verb** (do not repeat the same verb within one list).
- Each outcome begins with a **measurable verb** according to a taxonomy (e.g., Bloom's Taxonomy for instruction or Support Outcome Taxonomy for non-instruction).
- Each list of outcomes draws from **2-3 domains per Taxonomy**. Let me give you a few examples.
 - ✓ If you write the list of outcomes for your office, use verbs from two layers in the Support Outcome Taxonomy (e.g., from the delivery layer—your unit offers workshops for staff—and from the development layer—your unit creates informative resources for participants).
 - ✓ If you teach a course at the introductory/beginner level, draw verbs from columns 1-2-3 in the Bloom Taxonomy.
 - ✓ If you teach a course at the advanced level, draw verbs from columns 4-5-6.
 - ✓ If you teach a course where students move from an introductory to an advanced level, just draw verbs from columns 4-5-6 because you want to focus on the ultimate goals.

5. **Unique** to each course or service (should not appear in multiple lists).

6. **Collectively agreed.**

- Instructors teaching the same course and department liaison agree on course outcomes.
- Faculty of a department agree on program outcomes.
- Staff of a unit agree on service outcomes.

7. **Formatted** so they do not create glitches in the database where they are stored:

- Start with a verb in capital letter (e.g., no bullet points, numbering, quotation mark).
- End with a period.

8. **Mapped:**

- Service outcomes link to their department mission only.



- Each CLO links to 1-2 PLO, ILO, certificate outcome, Gen Ed outcomes, and any Third Party objectives that may apply to your field.

Here we have a great example of mapping because each course outcome is mapped with at least one higher outcome (in this case we are looking at institutional learning outcomes, just as an example) and overall the course outcomes are mapped with two or three higher outcomes (in this case we are looking at three ILOs):

	ILO1	ILO2	ILO3
CLO1	X		X
CLO2		X	
CLO3	X	X	

These other three tables represent poor mapping because in table number 1 each outcome is mapped to all higher outcomes, in table number 2 one outcome, number 1, is not mapped at all, and in table number 3 all outcomes are mapped to the same higher outcome:

(1) Avoid: Mapping to everything (over-mapping):

	ILO1	ILO2	ILO3
CLO1	X	X	X
CLO2	X	X	X
CLO3	X	X	X

(2) Avoid: Mapping to nothing (under-mapping):

	ILO1	ILO2	ILO3
CLO1			
CLO2			X
CLO3		X	

(3) Avoid: Mapping to the same outcome (under-mapping):

	ILO1	ILO2	ILO3
CLO1	X		
CLO2	X		
CLO3	X		



The curriculum map ensures the integrity of the entire degree and institution—students have to learn what is needed in the correct sequence without redundancy.

(b) Strategies to create outcomes

You can start drafting your outcomes through two lenses.

- Try a “top-down” approach: Think about the outcomes of other courses or services, program outcomes, institution outcomes, Gen Ed hallmarks, your department mission, state requirements for your certifications, national and international trends in your field.
- Try a “bottom-up” approach: Look at your lesson plans and daily tasks, and move up to create broad umbrella outcomes.

(c) Examples of good outcomes

Finally, note a few examples of good outcomes, according to these guidelines:

- Compare and contrast *major perspectives* of political science.
- Explain political institutions *such as* Senate, Parliament, and Supreme Court.
- Apply mediation styles *in different circumstances*.
- Create a safe campus for students, faculty, staff, and community members.

(d) Student’s quote

I want to end with a student’s quote to emphasize the importance of transparent outcomes and curriculum map for students:

“As a first-generation college student, I had no one to guide me. My major seemed like a good fit at first but I had a misconception about what the major was and what jobs could result from my degree. **If I had known the learning outcomes beforehand, I would have chosen a different major** and instead I felt trapped in what I had chosen.

Learning outcomes help students be successful in their learning and they need to be very transparent. **Students need to understand that outcomes are connected beyond the classroom** to their future career goals. Outcomes need to make sense and be integrated across campus, they need multiple touchpoints. Posting outcomes on the website and syllabus, and introducing them once to students, does not help, that’ll not stick. But if there’s **repeated exposure**, repeated saturation to this student, it will be valuable.” (Christina Ouellette, Bridgewater State University, presented at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment’s Beyond the looking glass: Tenets of meaningful transparency, 2020)”

Thank you so much for watching and please visit our assessment webpage under "Outcomes" for guidelines, checklist, tutorials, and other resources.