Writing Learning Outcomes

A learning outcome is simply a statement of what students should know or be able to do. They are not the same as a “In this course you will learn about…” statement.

A typical course should have between five to nine learning outcomes.

Effective learning outcomes are:

* Specific
* Measurable
* Attainable
* Relevant
* Timely
* Straightforward
* Student-centered

They must include active verbs.

Why Write and Provide Learning Outcomes

It is important for both you and your students to know what key knowledge and skills they should gain from taking your course. Writing and providing your students with learning outcomes is an effective way to accomplish this.

How to Write a Learning Outcome

When writing your learning outcomes, you should remember:

* Be clear in your expectations
* Think about how you will evaluate the learning you describe
* Align the course priorities with the outcomes

It is important that you align your assessment with your learning outcomes.

Effective learning outcomes include:

1. Performance – “The student should be able to”: do what?
2. Condition – the condition, circumstance or environment in which student learning will occur or be demonstrated (e.g. in a classroom or lab, on a project or exam, given certain equipment or resources, etc.)
3. Criteria – the type, quantity, quality / standard, accuracy, degree to, completion time

Examples:

* Students should be able to calculate the circumference of a cylinder on an exam without using a calculator.
* The learner should be able to demonstrate how to use a dial caliper to determine the outside diameter of an object in a lab setting.