

Student-centered Course Learning Outcomes - Criteria

Learning outcomes are statements of what a student should be able to do to demonstrate the knowledge/skills/understandings they have learned in your course. They represent the enduring learnings and foundational ideas students should achieve upon completing the course (as opposed to learnings from just a single unit of instruction, or from a series of courses in your department).

Outcomes should be stated in a way that allows all students, including English language learners, to readily understand what they are expected to be able to do by course end, without using overly complex language.

Characteristics of student-centered course learning outcomes (see also examples, corresponding by number, on the opposite side):

1. CLOs contain a performance statement. This statement starts with a verb that describes what the student will be *doing* to demonstrate to you their knowledge/skills/understandings (Mager, 1997).
2. CLOs are measurable. If you find yourself using verbs such as “understand,” or “reflect”, ask yourself: What must students *do* to demonstrate that they understand the material? or have reflected on it? Choose measurable verbs instead like identify, calculate, or analyze.
3. CLOs are specific, rather than broad. Rather than a general statement such as “Describe applications of social psychology”, give it some context - some boundaries or edges. On the other hand, avoid narrowing the specificity to that of a single assignment.
4. CLOs are concerned with learning (students), not teaching (instructors). Saying “Complete course assignments by applying the scientific method” may signal to students this skill is only valuable for completing your class, and nothing larger beyond.
5. CLOs are related to the end, rather than the means. For an outcome that states “Analyze and identify XYZ”, *identifying* is likely something that occurs earlier in class - a scaffold or task - whereas *analyzing* represents the enduring learning.

An optional element (if needed):

6. A condition statement describes the conditions under which a performance is to occur. If a condition statement is used, it should *follow* the performance statement. (Mager, 1997, p. 51).

<u>Track law office time</u>	<u>using current legal timekeeping and billing software.</u>
(performance statement)	(condition statement)

Student-centered Course Learning Outcomes - Examples

Learning outcomes are statements of what a student should be able to do to demonstrate the knowledge/skills/understandings they have learned in your course.

The following table gives examples of weak and strong outcomes to explain why a strong outcome is more student-centered (**the first column references the characteristic number from the first page**).

	Weaker Outcome	Stronger Outcome	Why it Matters
1	Develop a thorough understanding of what led up to the Great Depression	Cite causes of the Great Depression	The weaker outcome contains no performance statement -- what the student will <i>do</i> to show you they have developed said understanding. With the stronger outcome, prior to engaging the content, the student now knows what they must be prepared to do.
2	Explore community resources that can respond to individual student/family needs	Compare and contrast community resources that can respond to individual student/family needs	“Explore” describes an inward state and is not a measurable or an observable behavior. “Compare and contrast” lets the student (and instructor) know exactly what must be done to demonstrate learning.
3	Describe the nature of hospitality management	Compare and contrast management styles used various areas of a hotel or resort	Although the weaker outcome uses an active, observable verb, it is too broad to cover in a single course. The stronger outcome describes a specific activity that students could reasonably achieve in one course.
4	Apply knowledge of caloric needs to assignments and discussions of fitness goals	Calculate daily caloric needs based on weight and fitness goals.	Ask yourself <i>why</i> you want students to be able to apply said knowledge to assignments and discussions. The stronger outcome represents a meaningful skill students can use beyond the course.
5	Describe proper hand position for CPR and correctly perform CPR using a manikin	Correctly perform CPR using a manikin	Outcomes should represent enduring learnings and foundational ideas. They represent the highest-level skills for the course. Describing hand position is a scaffold to learning to correctly perform CPR, and should be eliminated.

Reference:

Mager, R. F. (1997). *Preparing instructional objectives: A critical tool in the development of effective instruction*. Atlanta, GA: CEP Press.