What are student learning outcomes?

Student learning outcomes are statements that specify what students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in a program/activity/course/project. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, attitudes or values.

Learning outcomes can be written for individual courses or for an academic program. They answer two fundamental questions:

- What do you want students to know by the time they complete a course or a major?
- What do you want students to be able to do with what they know?

Student learning outcomes should be...

- **Student-focused** rather than professor-focused.
- Centered on **skills and abilities central to the discipline** and based on professional standards of excellence.
- Focused on **learning resulting from an activity** rather than on the activity itself.
- General enough to capture important learning but **clear and specific enough to be measurable**.
- Focused on aspects of learning that will develop and endure but that can be assessed.

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Fixing Poorly Stated Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will understand Erickson’s developmental stages</th>
<th>Students ill identify and summarize each of Erickson’s stages of development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be familiar with the major sociological perspectives and how they relate to their lives</td>
<td>Students will describe each of the major sociological perspectives and will illustrate how each perspective relates to events in their daily lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will develop the skills necessary for conducting research in the social sciences</td>
<td>Students will design, conduct and analyze a research project using appropriate scientific theory and methodology.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>