

How do I write student learning outcomes for my course?

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Writing student learning outcomes is not difficult. It only takes a couple of hours to do, but the benefits will continue for you and your students for as long as you teach the course. If you teach the course with others in the department, everyone needs to agree on the outcomes for a specific course. Here is a brief sketch about how I go about it:

1. List the topics covered in your course. There are generally about 5-10 of these. When you later go to write learning objectives for each section of the course, you can be a lot more specific.
2. For each topic, write down what students should be able to DO after each one.

How do you write these?

- a. One good way to start is to look at your tests, exams, reports, projects, practicals, performances etc. What do you ask the students to do to prove that they 'know' and are competent at using the material?
 - i. Note: These things that you ask the students to do are a measure of what you ultimately consider important in the course. If you never assess whether a student can do something or not, you are signaling to the student (and to the world) that you do not think this skill is important.
 - b. Think about why your students are taking the course.
 - i. Is it for your department's major? Why do they take this course? What should they be able to do in subsequent courses because they took your course?
 - ii. Is this a service course for another major? Why do they take this course? What should they be able to do in subsequent courses because they took your course?
3. It is helpful to refer to a system such as Bloom's Taxonomy when writing learning outcomes. This type of classification scheme differentiates levels of knowledge from the simple (recalling facts) to the more advanced (applying concepts to problems).
 4. Check your work. Discuss it with colleagues. See how your goals for a major course apply to your major's learning outcomes for the program. Similarly check and see with other majors if what you are preparing students for is what they expect from your class as a prerequisite.



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