Program Learning Outcomes
Program Learning Outcomes
Round 1 Observations

• All programs at York have program learning outcomes!
  – Not as helpful for innovating / evolving programs
  – Challenging to demonstrate achievement
  – Challenging to map development
  – Not generally communicated to students
  – Overdependence on the Degree Level Expectations
Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV)
Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Level Expectations

1. Depth and breadth of knowledge
2. Knowledge of methodologies
3. Application of knowledge
4. Communication skills
5. Awareness of limits of knowledge
6. Autonomy and professional capacity
Refining Program Learning Outcomes

Number and format of outcomes:

• 8-12 Program Learning Outcomes
• Able to demonstrate student achievement and impact
• Engage in ongoing program development
## Demonstrating Program Learning Outcomes Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key questions / Assessment Methods</th>
<th>Do students appreciate/value it?</th>
<th>Can graduates do it?</th>
<th>Does the achievement of the PLO transfer? Have impact?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct methods</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Student demonstration of learning outcome achievement and impact)</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Exiting student focus groups or surveys</td>
<td>□ Accumulation of embedded course-based assessments</td>
<td>□ Cross-course assessments (e.g. iterative assignments across courses)</td>
<td>□ Graduation surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Accumulation of course-based student evaluations</td>
<td>□ Cross-course assessments (e.g. iterative assignments across courses)</td>
<td>□ Program-wide assessments</td>
<td>□ Alumni surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Confidence student self-rating on outcomes development</td>
<td>□ Program assessments (e.g. ePortfolios)</td>
<td>□ Experiential education supervisor surveys/feedback</td>
<td>□ Advisory groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Common assessment rubrics across courses for each PLO</td>
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<td>□ Employer surveys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Collaborative review of example of student learning</td>
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<td>□ Employment / Ongoing education stats</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ External expert review</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Experiential education supervisor surveys/feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Exiting student focus groups or surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Other indicators as appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Indirect methods**<br>(Stakeholder perceptions demonstration of learning outcome achievement and impact) | | | |
| □ enrolment summary (required for CPR) | □ Curriculum mapping (required for CPR) | □ Graduate surveys |
| □ Student surveys (required for CPR) | □ Educator/faculty feedback | □ Alumni surveys |
| □ NSSE (required for CPR) | □ Accumulation of course-based student evaluations | □ Advisory groups |
| □ Alumni Surveys | □ Alumni surveys | □ Employer surveys |
| □ Graduate Surveys | □ Alumni surveys | □ Employment / Ongoing education stats |
| □ Other indicators (e.g. enrollment trends, program retention rates, etc.) | □ External expert review | □ Experiential education supervisor surveys/feedback | □ Other indicators as appropriate |
Refining Program Learning Outcomes

• Identify cumulative knowledge, skills and habits of mind integrated across the whole program
• Identify common outcomes across similar programs elsewhere AND outcomes that differentiate your program
• Map the *scaffolded* development of the PLOs through the student journey
Example of a Vague Program Learning Outcome

‘This program will expose students to a variety of theoretical and practical applications of disciplinary skill.’

• The problem?
Example of a Vague Program Learning Outcome

‘This program will expose students to a variety of theoretical and practical applications of disciplinary skill.’

• The problem?

  • “Expose” is a passive activity that could have various interpretations based on one’s understanding of what it means to “be exposed” in terms of knowledge and skills

  • It is difficult to tell if that exposure lead to student learning
Avoid vague language or terms that are difficult to measure such as…

- Understand/ develop an understanding of...
- Appreciate / develop an appreciation of...
- Develop an awareness/knowledge of...
- Able to consider...
- Become exposed to ...
- Be familiar with...
- Recognize the importance of...
How to Write Better Program Learning Outcomes

1. Start with the stem: “By the end of this program, graduates will be able to…”

2. Identify an action VERB that specify the desired student performance

3. Add a description of program specific goals relative to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values expected of graduates
Example of a More Specific Program Learning Outcome

‘By the end of this program, students will be able to generate ideas, proposals, solutions, or arguments independently and/or collaboratively in response to challenges posed.’

• How is it better than our first example?
Goals for Your Students

**S**
**Specific**
Who, What, Where, When, Why, Which
Define the goal as much as possible with no ambiguous language.

**M**
**Measurable**
From and To
Can you track the progress and measure the outcome?

**A**
**Attainable**
How
Is the goal reasonable enough to be accomplished? How so?

**R**
**Relevant**
How
Make sure the goal is not out of reach or below standard performance.

**T**
**Timely**
When
Is the goal worthwhile and will it meet your needs?

Is each goal consistent with other goals you have established and fits with your immediate and long term plans?

Your objective should include a time limit. “I will complete this step by month/day/year.”

It will establish a sense of urgency and prompt you to have better time management.

Photo by: Courtesy Graphic, Downloaded from: https://www.jbcharleston.jb.mil/News/Art/igphoto/2002088561/
Real-Life Example: U.S. Studies

Small-group activity

• Look at the program learning outcomes and identify one that you think is not well-written and explain why.
  – How might you revise it?

• Identify a learning outcome that is better drafted and explain why you think so.
Real-Life Example: U.S. Studies

Whole-Group debrief

• Based on your experience, is this document similar to the ones you might have seen in your department? How so?

• In your view, does the document communicate effectively what makes U.S. Studies a unique program?
  – Are you able to grasp its coherence, identify its strengths?
Bloom’s Taxonomy

Remember
Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

Understand
Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

Apply
Use information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

Analyze
Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

Evaluate
Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

Create
Produce new or original work
design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

Source for the visual: Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching
# The Cognitive Dimension of Bloom’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Cognitive Dimension</th>
<th>Lower Level</th>
<th>Mid Level</th>
<th>Higher Level</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Remember</strong></td>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Assess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>List</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Defend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Solve</td>
<td>Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Argue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Classify</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Explain</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Find</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Solve</td>
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Concepts for lower level include remembering, identifying, labeling, listing, and describing. Mid level includes summarizing, classifying, explaining, predicting, classifying, and restating. Higher level includes applying, analyzing, evaluating, assessing, defending, and arguing. Combination skills include combining, planning, composing, and developing.
Aligning Your Learning Outcomes

Alignment occurs when:

• The program learning outcomes state the knowledge, skills, habits of mind you want your students to have by the end of your program.

• In your program, you assess to what degree your students are meeting these learning outcomes.

• The instructional strategies assist in the meeting of program learning outcomes.
Program Learning Outcomes

Aligned Curriculum

Assessment

Instructional Strategies
Program Learning Outcomes Supports

• Vice-Provost Academic
  – Samantha Cutrara (cutrara@yorku.ca)
  – Peter Wolf (pwolf@yorku.ca)

• Teaching Commons
  – Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier (gmp@yorku.ca)
  – Natasha May (teaching@yorku.ca)
Teaching Commons Support

• An educational developer from the Teaching Commons will be in touch to schedule an initial meeting to discuss support and determine a tailored plan.

• Examples of activities the Teaching Commons can support:
  
  − Envisioning exercise to articulate the overall focus of the curriculum
  
  − Revisiting program-level outcomes to articulate the specific expectations a program has for graduating students
  
  − Mapping the curriculum to establish how elements of the curriculum relate to the program outcomes
References


Cal Poly - Academic Programs & Planning
https://academicprograms.calpoly.edu/content/assessment/assessplanguide

HEQCO - Learning Outcomes Assessment – A Practitioners Guide

HEQCO Learning Outcomes Assessment Resource Room
http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/OurPriorities/LearningOutcomes/Pages/Learning-Outcomes-Assessment-Resource-Room.aspx