

## Student Learning Outcomes at the Course Level:

### Guidance and Rubric

This language of this rubric is derived from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education publication, *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources* ([link](#)).<sup>1</sup> It is intended to assist faculty in writing course-level student learning outcomes that are consistent with MSCHE guidelines; aligned to program, institutional, and (if applicable) SUNY General Education learning outcomes; likely to be sustainable and manageable; and likely to provide useful information about maintaining or enhancing student success.

During the Fall of 2018 and the Spring of 2019 this rubric will be used by the members of the SLAC committee who serve on the ad-hoc SLAC/General Education Committee/Curriculum Committee group that is charged with reviewing proposed revised course-level SLOs before they can be entered into the catalog. (Note that Program-level outcomes are not included in this process.)

Subsequently, it will be used by SLAC and divisional Assessment Coordinators to give feedback to department chairs and coordinators as they enter their course-level SLOs into Nuventive Improve.

---

<sup>1</sup> Faculty new to writing course-level Student Learning Outcomes may find this brief advice from p. 19 of this Middle States publication useful (bear in mind that when MSCHE here says “goals,” they mean “outcomes”):

**Meaningful Learning Goal Statements That Lead to Improvement.** Meaningful statements of student learning goals address learning as a multidimensional and integrated process, occurring over time. They do not focus on trivial learning outcomes. Stated cogently and clearly, meaningful learning goals will lead to the improvement of teaching and learning at the course, program, and institutional levels. The importance of each learning goal should be obvious to students, faculty, and prospective employers.

Meaningful learning goals stress generalizable and higher-order thinking skills rather than memorization of facts or very simple conceptual understanding. For example, a goal to identify grammatical forms (past participles, etc.) is, in most cases, not as meaningful as a goal of being able to write and speak grammatically. Similarly, the successful memorization of important historical dates is not as meaningful as a goal for students to be able to place historical events within a social and political context, to draw meaningful comparisons between events, and to analyze current events within an historical framework. For both of these examples of more meaningful or higher-order goals, the more trivial goals of memorizing dates and acquiring the names of parts of speech probably will be achieved naturally in the course of achieving the larger goal.

**Sufficiently Explicit Learning Goals.** Although it is not helpful for statements of student learning goals to be so specific that they focus on unimportant or trivial outcomes, it is important for statements to be sufficiently explicit for all stakeholders to have a common understanding of their meaning. For instance, one goal for an undergraduate psychology program might be for students to exhibit proficiency in conducting research. While faculty members may implicitly understand what this goal might mean, increasing the specificity of the goal would enhance its clarity and allow for more direct assessment of the attainment of the goal. For example, a statement of the goal might read: “Students will learn the statistical, organizational, writing, and analytical skills necessary to conduct meaningful and valid scientific research.” Statements then could describe the evidence needed to demonstrate that students have achieved the knowledge and abilities related to each of these components.

## Rubric

Course:

Date Received:

Program or Discipline:

Outcome:

Does this outcome....

**1. Prioritize the most important learning outcomes of the course, so that students know what they will have learned and be able to do at its completion?**

Yes No

**2. Directly connect to college's mission and values, as enumerated in the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes?**

Yes No

**3. Directly measure student learning by specifically describing what a student will prove that they know or can do?**

Yes No

**4. "Ensure that general education skills, such as proficiency in oral and written communication, the ability to think critically and analytically, and the ability to be effective decision-makers and problem-solvers, are included in programmatic plans"?**

Yes No

**5. Provide "Direct evidence of student learning and development... [through the assessment of] student products and performances resulting from embedded assignments, tests, and other educational experiences"?**

Yes No

**6. Do the criteria for success and benchmarks lend themselves to gathering evidence over time that can be used to determine whether or not students are continuing to succeed, and to identify ways to maintain or improve student success?**

**Yes    No**