Glen Rogers
Director of Assessment, University of the Pacific
September 5, 2018

A Framework for Developing and Using Student-Friendly Program Learning Outcomes

The student friendly framework for program learning outcome statements has three different components, which together comprise the full learning outcome statement:

> (1) **Short title,**
> (2) **Integrated outcome statement, (*verb phrase*)**
> (3) **Analytic elaboration (*bulleted subcomponents, as more detailed phrases*)**

Not all three components of the statement should be used in every communication. Nonetheless, all communications, a least implicitly in context, acknowledge the existence of a fuller description. The full description should be readily accessible to students and faculty. For instance, the full program learning outcome statement might exist in a student handbook or as a distinct link from the department's webpage. In contrast, when writing about a program's set of learning outcomes, *as a set,* a listing of the short titles may be appropriate.

The capacity to support developmentally-sequenced assessment of learning outcomes is a critical benefit of the analytical-elaboration component. For example, if an introductory course focuses on just one *subcomponent* of a particular learning outcome, in a discrete way, then supplementary reference to the integrated statement with the same short title can assist students to see that the taught and assessed subcomponent is indeed part of a path toward mastering the integrated learning outcome.

Here is an example of the presentation of all three components for a student-friendly program learning outcome statement, which is drawn from the University of the Pacific's Studio Art (BFA) degree program.

Artistic Perception: ←*Short Outcome Title*
Use principles of design and visual arts vocabulary   ←*Integrated Outcome Statement*
to systematically analyze works of art in written
commentary and through dynamic discussion with
others.
• Identify and use the principles of design to   ←*Analytical Elaboration of the*
discuss, analyze and write about visual aspects in   *Outcome*
works of art.
• Describe how the elements of art are used to
express mood and intent in a work of art.
• Describe the impact of media choice in particular
artworks.
• Analyze and describe how the composition of a
work of art is affected by the use of a particular
principle of design.
• Analyze the stylistic direction of a work of art.

The following table further explains the three components of a student-friendly program learning outcome statement, i.e., the component's formal characteristics, learning purposes, and contexts of use.

Three Components of a Student-Friendly Program Learning Outcome Statement

Component of Program Learning Outcome	Formal Characteristics	Learning Purposes	Contexts of Use
1. SHORT OUTCOME TITLE Short-hand title when brevity is needed *How can we all talk about (remember) both individual learning outcomes and the set of outcomes?*	• *action verb and/or area of action, perhaps with adverb/adjective)* • connects to a discipline specific version of the outcome • even so, is best as less than 4 words.	• *as shared shorthand* • briefly point toward an ability • support students' ability to talk about what they are learning in the discipline	• as follow-up reminders in learning activity, assignment, syllabus • when listing the set of outcomes • in curriculum map • in hallway conversations • in marketing publications
2. INTEGRATED OUTCOME STATMENT The overall description of the program learning outcome The student should get a sense of the integral complexity of knowing and doing; i.e., what they can do with what know at graduation. *What can students demonstrate independently and collaboratively at graduation that we most care about?*	• *high-level summary that integrates various aspects of what is learned across courses* • Builds out from a descriptive verb phrase • learned by graduation • how one thinks and acts as a result of learning the discipline or profession (and in particular at UOP) • Fluent, if not beautiful prose • aligned with post-college contexts	• *to make exit outcome integratively meaningful* • communicate to students a vision of being effective across contexts • help students organize their learning into an integrative vision of how they will use it. • help students connect learning across assignments and courses • Assist students to self-assess their independent performance and take responsibility for their continued learning	• at academic student events organized around the major • in syllabi, assignments • in catalog and department website • in classroom explanations of course content relevance • per capstone course assignments • per student reflective portfolios and internship essays • as contextual background to feedback on assessments (projects) • in faculty discussions on meaning of outcome
3. ANALYTICAL ELABORATION of the OUTCOME Clear statements of subcomponents of the outcome. *How can we clearly communicate the specificity of what still needs to be learned, practiced, and then demonstrated in course assessments?* Note, further specificity would likely exist at the course and assessment level.	• *observable behavioral performance* • bulleted uni-dimensional learning outcome statements that break apart and elaborate on integrated outcome statement	• *to make developmentally assessable* • To give students clear hand-holds in early courses in the major • to create grading rubrics appropriate to the level of the class • to communicate how assignments connect to broader program learning outcomes.	• in syllabi, per the instructional focus • in explaining to students how prior and new learning connect to learning broader integrated abilities • in identifying and giving feedback on strengths and areas for improvement (for students, courses, program)