

Developing SMART Outcomes

Tip Sheet for Student Affairs Professionals



The following tip sheet is an expanded version of the content presented in the [assessment guide](#). It includes additional examples and tips to support the best practices outlined in the guide. You can use this resource as a companion tool or a standalone reference to help you develop clear and measurable outcomes.

OUTCOME TYPES

There are two main outcome types that can be used to operationalize your program or departments' mission, program outcomes and student learning outcomes (SLOs). **To operationalize your mission, it is good practice to use both program and student learning outcomes.**

You can think of program outcomes as your strategic goals your unit aims to achieve, and student learning outcomes focus on what students are expected to learn or develop as results of engaging with program. In other words, program outcomes show the strategic impact of your work, while student learning outcomes capture the educational impact your program has.

	What it is:	Example:
Program Outcomes	Examine what a program is to accomplish for improvement. This is usually driven by needs, satisfaction, or efficiency.	Decrease the percentage of students experiencing stress, depression and anxiety by x% within the next [timeframe].
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Examine what a student is to do or learn as a result of program or service and describe observable measurable actions.	Students will be able to identify and practice two or more wellness strategies (mindfulness, exercise, time management, or relaxation) after participating in [x activity].

SMART OUTCOMES

Whenever you are developing outcomes, make sure they are SMART (Strategic/Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound). SMART outcomes provide focus when defining what success in your program looks like, how it will be measured, and by when you it should be achieved. Using this framework also ensures outcomes are purposeful, attainable, and aligned with organizational goals. As you develop your outcomes also consider whether they are also inclusive and equitable.

	What it is:	Guiding Questions:
<u>Strategic/Specific</u>	Reflects on important dimensions of what your area seeks to accomplish (i.e., programmatic or capacity-building priorities).	What does your program/area hope to accomplish?
<u>Measurable</u>	Includes a standard or benchmark to be met.	Did you establish benchmarks? Have you set measurable standards?
<u>Achievable</u>	Is challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress or a “stretch” for the organization.	Does your program/area have the capacity/ resources to achieve this goal?
<u>Realistic</u>	Is not overly challenging and takes resources, capacity, and execution into consideration; it is possible to track progress and worth the time and energy to do so.	Is the goal (and plan for achieving it) realistic? Does your objective reflect the population of focus?
<u>Time-Bound</u>	Includes a clear timeline/deadline	Did you establish a deadline or timeframe?

TIPS FOR FRAMING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In addition to using the SMART framework, the following offers a few key checks to ensure your outcomes align with your programmatic and departmental goals. Use these prompts to reflect on your program's purpose and consider what students are to know, do, or value as part of their experience.



Reflect on what is the goal of your program, service, or initiative.

Example: Increase sense of belonging among first year students.



What is your program trying to achieve overall? What change do you want to see? How does it connect to departmental priorities?



Define the program outcome

Example: Students will report an increased sense of connection to their peers and the campus community.



Think about what students should know, do or feel as a result of participation in program. What evidence would show success?



Make it SMART!

Example: By the end of the fall quarter, students who participate in the First-Year Experience program will report an increased sense of connection to their peers and the campus community, as measured by a pre- and post-program survey, with at least 70% of participants showing a positive change in their responses.

Reflect on what parts are...

Strategic/Specific?

Measurable?

Achievable?

Realistic?

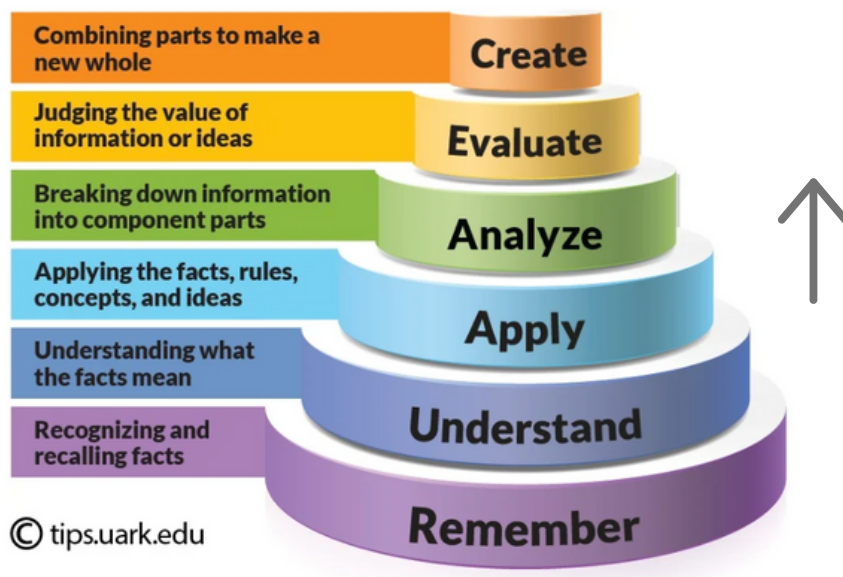
Timebound?

Activity: What makes this goal SMART?

TIPS FOR FRAMING SLOS

Blooms Taxonomy of Learning

The Blooms Taxonomy of Learning is a framework that helps you define the level of learning you want your students to achieve. Blooms Taxonomy organizes learning into six cognitive levels, going from lower order at the bottom to higher order thinking skills towards the top. In higher education, outcomes should focus on the top four cognitive skills (Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create). Bloom's Taxonomy can help with clarifying what learning is expected, selecting verbs that match intended learning, and help with designing assessments that measure the outcome.



Source: Levy, J. (2018, May 31). A brief guide to creating learning outcomes. Modern Campus. <https://sapro.moderncampus.com/blog/a-brief-guide-to-writing-learning-outcomes>

Resource:

[Bloom's Taxonomy Verb Chart](#)

Bloom's Taxonomy Verb Chart is a list of action verbs organized by learning objectives. As you write your SLOs, use this resource to identify verbs that align with the cognitive learning skill you expect students after participating in your program.

TIPS FOR FRAMING SLOS

Who is expected to learn?

Undergraduate students

Think about the population you serve (e.g., first-year students, student leaders, transfer students, etc.)

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What learning is expected?

Practice mindfulness, exercise, time management and relaxation

Describe specific skills, behaviors, or knowledge students should demonstrate.
Tip: Here you would use Bloom Taxonomy verbs.

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When/where is learning expected?

After participating in [x] activity

After which program, workshop, or experience will students demonstrate learning?

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Why is learning expected?

To improve student well-being

Think about why this outcome is important for student growth or development and whether it connects to your program/department goals

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Students will be able to identify and practice two or more wellness strategies (mindfulness, exercise, time management, or relaxation) after participating in [x activity].



Don't know where to start?

Contact the Student Affairs Information and Research Office at sairo@saonet.ucla.edu.