

Developing 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 types of outcomes that can help translate your program or department's mission into practice: **operational outcomes** and **student outcomes**. Using both provides a more complete picture of your work by capturing both how the program operates and what students gain from their engagement.

	What it is:	Example:
Operational Outcomes	Describe what the program, service, or initiative will accomplish or improve to strengthen its effectiveness, reach, delivery, or responsiveness to student needs.	The program will increase access to wellness programming by offering activities at multiple times and locations based on student needs.
Student Outcomes	Describe what students will learn, feel, experience, or be able to do as a result of engaging with a program, service, or initiative.	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

When developing outcomes, consider using the SMART framework (Strategic/Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound) as a guide. SMART outcomes can help clarify what success looks like, how progress or achievement may be assessed, and when the outcome is expected to be achieved. Using this framework can also help ensure outcomes are purposeful, attainable, aligned with organizational goals, and responsive to the needs of the populations served.

	What it is:	Guiding Questions:
<u>S</u>trategic/<u>S</u>pecific	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>M</u>easurable	Includes a standard or benchmark to be met.	Did you establish benchmarks? Have you set measurable standards?
<u>A</u>chievable	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>R</u>ealistic	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>T</u>ime-Bound	Includes a clear timeline/deadline	Did you establish a deadline or timeframe?

TIPS FOR FRAMING OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES

In addition to using the SMART framework, start by connecting your operational outcome to what your program is trying to achieve. Then consider what your program, service, or initiative needs to accomplish or improve to better support its goals.



Start with your program goal

What is your program trying to achieve?

Example: Improve student access to wellness resources and programming.



Ask yourself:

- What change are we trying to create?
- How does this connect to our program or department goals?



Identify what needs to improve operationally

What aspect of your work should become more effective, accessible, efficient, consistent, or responsive?

Example: Expand wellness programming at times and locations that better reflect student needs.



Ask yourself:

- What part of our work could be strengthened?
- What would improved delivery, access, or effectiveness look like?



Make it SMART!

Add enough detail so you know what success looks like and when you expect to see it.

Example: By the end of the academic year, the program will increase access to wellness programming by expanding offerings across multiple times and locations based on student needs.

Measure: Program participation and scheduling data

Target: Increase participation by at least X%.

Tip: Your outcome does not need to capture every SMART element in a single sentence. Use your assessment plan to identify the measures, targets, and timeline that will help make the outcome SMART.

TIPS FOR FRAMING STUDENT OUTCOMES

When developing student outcomes, focus on what students should know, do, feel, or experience as a result of participating in your program, service, or initiative. Then connect that expected change back to what your program is trying to achieve. If there is a learning component to your programs programming/activities see, *Tips for Framing Student Learning Outcomes* on pg. 3



Start with your program goal

What is your program trying to achieve?

Example: Increase sense of belonging among first year students.



Ask yourself:

- What change are we trying to create?
- How does this connect to our program or department goals?



Describe the student outcome

What should students know, do, feel, or experience?

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



Ask yourself:

- What would success look like for students?



Make it SMART!

Add enough detail so you know what success looks like and when you expect to see it.

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.

Measure: Pre/post survey

Target: At least 70% of participants will show a positive change.

Tip: Your outcome does not need to capture every SMART element in a single sentence. Use your assessment plan to identify the measures, targets, and timeline that will help make the outcome SMART.

TIPS FOR FRAMING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning happens across a variety of Student Affairs settings and experiences. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are a type of student outcome that focus specifically on what students will learn or be able to demonstrate as a result of participating. SLOs are often written using observable knowledge, skills, or behaviors.

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

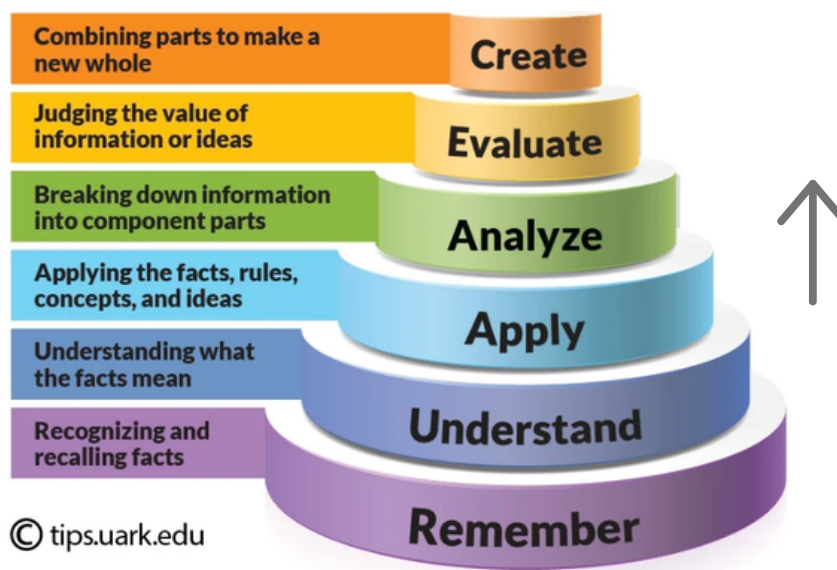
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Students will be able to identify and practice two or more wellness strategies (mindfulness, exercise, time management, or relaxation) after participating in [x activity].

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.



Don't know where to start?

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