



Student Learning Outcome Assessment

Student Learning Outcome Plan(s) Explanation & Directions

Revised Fall, 2014

All departments are expected to develop student learning outcomes that are clearly defined and encompass all of its degree programs. It is not necessary to create plans for separate specializations, minors, and certificates; however, departments may find it valuable to do so. Evaluation of student learning outcomes is an ongoing responsibility and cornerstone of the continuous improvement process at Central Washington University. The following explanation/guide and examples are designed to assist departments in developing student learning outcome assessment plans. The following elements should be included:

1. Specific student learning outcomes
2. Related CWU Strategic Outcomes
3. Methods of assessment
4. Identification of who or what is assessed
5. Identification of time/place of assessment
6. Measurable and specific criteria of achievement/standard of mastery

Student Learning Outcomes (performance, knowledge, attitudes): Program outcomes that relate specifically to student learning should be developed to provide information as to what students will know, do, and value at the end of the degree program. Although outcomes can vary with respect to specificity, they should be written in such a way to be measurable. Generally it is appropriate for each degree program to identify five to ten student learning outcomes. Note that many professional organizations provide lists of expected outcomes. These should serve as guides, particularly for accredited programs. (*See NWCCU Standard 4.A.3*)

Student Learning Outcome Examples

- Students will be able to demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills.

- Students can identify and describe legal and ethical issues surrounding financial activities.
- Students can apply financial knowledge, concepts, theories, models, and valuation techniques to personal and business decision-making.
- Students are able to interpret, prepare, and perform a variety of musical works through collaboration in musical ensembles sufficient to the requirements of their major.
- Students can use a variety of technologies to access, utilize, and disseminate academic and professional knowledge.
- Students are able to plan and deliver a series of standards-based lessons and assessments incorporating principles of differentiated instruction and acknowledgement of student voice.
- Students can evaluate scientific literature to inform evidence-based decisions that advance the profession.
- Students will demonstrate a positive attitude toward personal and professional development within the discipline.

Related CWU Strategic Outcome: It is expected that all student learning outcomes will relate to CWU Strategic Outcome 1.1.1: Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes. Outcomes may also address other elements of the CWU Strategic Plan in areas such as Inclusivity and Diversity (Core Theme 2) and Scholarship and Creative Expression (Core Theme 3). The CWU Strategic Plan is available at <http://www.cwu.edu/strategic-planning/>.

Method(s) of Assessment: The most important factor related to method selection is whether information can be collected that indicates whether students are learning and developing in ways that program faculty and professional associations deem important. Methods should be related to learning outcomes and the activities that support these outcomes. Methods should ideally include direct and indirect approaches to provide as complete a picture as possible. Direct measures ask students to display knowledge and skill as they complete the task/instrument (i.e., tests, essays, projects, assignments, etc.). Indirect measures ask students to reflect on learning rather than demonstrate it (i.e., surveys, focus groups, interviews).

Who/What Assessed: The identification of specific populations or items involved in the assessment process is important in explaining context and in making sense of data that is collected. Collecting data from or being able to disaggregate data by various groups

(e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, program location, or delivery mode) is necessary and helps demonstrate that students who complete their programs, no matter where they are or how they are offered, have achieved student learning outcomes.

When Assessed: Assessment processes and collection should be regularized and systematic throughout the academic year. Student learning outcome assessment plans should lay out a timetable of specific outcomes and when they are assessed, for example, each year, every other year, etc. This will help programs determine the measure of change it brings about in students and obtain information that can be applied regardless of time of year. In addition, collecting information at natural program transition points (entry into program, mid-program, and end-of program assessment) can provide information to determine possible “program added value” related to performance, knowledge, and attitude. Although not all program goals have to be assessed every year, a regularized schedule is necessary for effective continuous improvement. **All student learning outcomes should be assessed within a specified annual or multi-year cycle.**

Standard of Mastery/Criterion of Achievement: All assessment methods should have clear standards of mastery (criteria) against which results will be assessed. This helps programs clearly distinguish student proficiency and helps faculty understand areas of programmatic strength and challenge regarding goal achievement and student learning. Clear criteria also provide feedback and information for programmatic change and improvement. Standards of mastery may change over time as assessment processes and systems mature and student performance improves.

CWU Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan Directions

The following directions are intended to assist departments in preparing student learning outcome assessment plans. Questions or suggestions regarding the assessment templates, contents, or directions should be directed to Dr. Tracy L. Pellett, Associate Provost, or Dr. Bret P. Smith, Assessment Coordinator.

General Directions: Student learning outcome assessment plans should be completed and current copies maintained at the departmental, College and Associate Provost offices. Updated student learning outcome assessment plans should be attached to the following curriculum forms:

1. New Degree Proposal
2. New Specialization, Minor or Certificate Form
3. Major, Specialization, Minor or Certificate Change Form

Step 1: Complete student learning outcomes assessment plan

- Determine/revise specific programmatic student learning outcomes (performance, knowledge, attitude)
- Identify relationship between student learning outcomes and specific outcomes of CWU's Strategic Plan.
- Identify direct and indirect methods of assessment for each student learning outcome
- Identify student population assessed (specific courses, locations, etc.)
- Identify a criterion of achievement or standard of mastery for each student learning outcome
- Develop a timeline for when those outcomes will be assessed (e.g. each quarter, each year, biennially, etc.)

Step 2: Submit initial electronic version of student learning outcome assessment plans to Dean and the Associate Provost for each newly developed or revised program.

Step 3: Submit annual student learning outcome assessment report to Dean by the specified due date.