STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES & PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Student Learning Outcomes (LOs) and Program Objectives (POs) in Student Affairs

Criterion[1]	Initial	Emerging	Developed	Highly Developed
Alignment & Rationale	There is no clear relationship between the unit's POs or LOs and the unit's goals and mission. No explanation of the importance of the PO or LO to program improvement is provided.	Most POs and LOs are directly related to the unit's goals and mission. Some explanation of the importance of the PO or LO is provided.	The unit's POs and LOs clearly align with its goals and mission in an hierarchical fashion. The importance of each PO and LO is meaningfully articulated.	The unit's POs and LOs are targeted to improve key aspects of programming and services and thus, program goals. They reflect awareness of the professional standards of the field. The unit's goals and mission are tightly aligned with the mission of Student Affairs.
Assessable Program Objectives (POs)	POs are vague, non-specific. They do not describe program performance expectations related to quality, efficiency, etc. in a measurable way.	Through the use of specific, active verbs some POs indicate how a program can demonstrate its performance in relation to quality, efficiency, etc.	Each PO describes the quality, efficiency, etc. of performance in terms of demonstrable results, ex. "Increase student participation in…" or "Improve satisfaction..."	POs describe specifically how a program will demonstrate its performance, including specific expectations for judging achievement.
Assessable Student Learning Outcomes (LOs)	LOs are vague, non-specific; do not describe learning expectations in a measurable way. LOs are confused with learning processes; ex. describe participation not the abilities students gain as a result of the educational experience.	Through the use of specific, active verbs some LOs indicate how students can demonstrate their learning.	Each LO describes how students can demonstrate their learning, ex. "Students can describe three strategies for…"	LOs describe specifically how students can demonstrate their learning; staff have agreed on explicit criteria for student performance and identified examples of varying levels of performance for a given LO.
Assessment Measures	Selected measures are not clearly related to the stated PO or LO; the data or evidence will not enable evaluation of the extent to which the PO or LO was met.	Most measures will generate data enabling some conclusion about the extent to which the PO or LO was met. That is, measures are related in some way to the POs or LOs. May not provide the time frame for data collection or the population from which data will be collected. Lack criteria for evaluating degree of success.	Measures identify the time frame for data collection and the population from which this information will be collected. Data enable conclusions that directly speak to the degree to which a PO or LO was met. Some describe criteria for success. May use multiple lines of evidence to strengthen conclusions.	Selected measures align tightly with POs or LOs and involve, as possible, both direct and indirect lines of evidence. Measures specify the population, time frame, and establish criteria for success, ex. "85% of students will…" Criteria are benchmarked against previous performance and/or comparable programs/ institutions.
Communi-cation	There is no plan for communicating POs or LOs to students and stakeholders.	Plan for communicating POs and LOs to students and stakeholders is informal.	POs and LOs are publically available. Formal plans exist to ensure regular and consistent communication.	Plans for sharing POs and LOs include mechanisms to promote widespread awareness. Students maybe involved in LO assessment.

[1] Based on the WASC *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Program Learning Outcomes*.

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This rubric has five major criteria:

(1) Alignment: Alignment describes the degree to which a program's objectives and learning outcomes support attainment of its goals and mission. Are the objectives and outcomes tangentially or centrally related to the stated goals of the unit? As reported, do they address priorities in relation to these goals? Will assessment of these objectives and outcomes improve the program's ability to provide key services and thereby to meet its goals?

(2) **Assessable Program Objectives**: To be assessable, program objectives should include specific, active verbs with supporting details to describe how a program will demonstrate its performance related to service delivery involving issues like timeliness, efficiency (ex. numbers served), participant satisfaction, etc. For example, a program might state that "By implementing X activity, unit X will *increase* the number of students using X service."

(3) **Assessable Program Learning Outcomes**: To be assessable, program learning outcomes should include specific, active verbs with supporting details describing how students will demonstrate their learning. Avoid verbs of general cognition such as "know" or "understand" and instead use verbs like "demonstrate by" or "solve" that show how learning is applied. For example, "Participants in X program will be able to *identify* three resources for improving their academic performance and *describe* how to access each."

(4) **Assessment Measures**: To be valid, evidence or data must bear directly on the expectation(s) described by the text of the program objective or learning outcome and enable evaluation of the degree to which the objective or learning outcome was met. For learning outcomes, valid evidence must also be aligned with the criteria[2] used to evaluate student learning. Valid evidence also depends upon sample size or sampling approach, so as to enable the gathering of data that characterize the norm for the population being studied. Identifying criteria for success (ex. >90% of students will…) further clarifies expectations, particularly for external stakeholders. It is important that these targets be realistic, for example grounded in performance measures observed at comparable institutions or previously in your own program, while simultaneously stretching the program to improve.

Employing multiple lines of evidence can increase the utility of and confidence in assessment results and, in turn, actions taken on their basis. For example, assessment of a service-related objective might benefit from surveying aspects of user satisfaction while also gathering information on how users actually engage with the service.

(5) **Communication:** The success of many efforts to improve program performance is enhanced by student and stakeholder awareness. Programs should plan how they will share their program objectives and learning outcomes with relevant audiences.