

LEARNING ASSESSMENT BULLETIN

READ AND SAVE!

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE
LANEY COLLEGE LEARNING ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
APRIL 16, 2008
PART 2

SLOs vs. Objectives – They are NOT the same thing!

Starting this year, the curriculum committee is requiring that all course outlines include both course objectives AND student learning outcomes. These are not the same, but there is often confusion as to the difference between course objectives and outcomes (SLOs).

Objectives and SLOs are similar in some ways – both of them state what a student will be able to do by the end of the course. They both use active verbs from Bloom’s taxonomy. (To see the verbs from Bloom’s Taxonomy, visit the “documents” section of the “How to Write SLOs” website: <http://www.laney.peralta.edu/SLOs>).

What exactly is the difference? The following comparison may help:

| Course Objectives | Course SLOs |
|---|--|
| Objectives describe skills, tools or content that a student will master by the end of course. | Outcomes describe over-arching goals that a student will be able to demonstrate by the end of a course. |
| Objectives involve lower level thinking skills. They are written using verbs at the low end of Bloom’s taxonomy (such as identify, describe, explain, summarize, etc.). | Outcomes involve higher level thinking skills. They are written using verbs at the higher end of Bloom’s taxonomy (such as analyze, synthesize, and evaluate). |
| Objectives are sometimes content-specific. | Outcomes are usually not content-specific. |

| Course Objectives | Course SLOs |
|---|---|
| Objectives are usually numerous. Objectives include all of the small, basic, individual things students will learn how to do in a course. Think of objectives as the “nuts and bolts” or “building blocks” of what they will learn. | Outcomes are limited in number. Outcomes focus on the broader, overall goals of the course. Outcomes require <u>synthesis</u> of the smaller things learned in a course to produce an integrated, finished product. |
| Objectives do not necessarily result in a product. | Outcomes result in a product that can be measured or assessed. |
| <p>Example objective: “Calculate the mass of product formed during a chemical reaction.” (This is just one type of problem among many that the students will learn to do.)</p> | <p>Example outcome: “Solve quantitative problems in chemistry and evaluate results to see if they are physically reasonable.” (This is much more general than the corresponding objective. It is not content specific. It involves some integration and analysis.)</p> |

More information to follow. Stay tuned.

Resources:

Learning Assessment Committee Website:
<http://www.laney.peralta.edu/learningassessment>

How To Write SLOs Website:
<http://www.laney.peralta.edu/SLOs>

SLO and Assessment Reporting Forms:
<http://www.laney.peralta.edu/SLOforms>

Have questions? Need help? Contact Cheli Fossum, 464-3272 or
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Cheli is available and would love to meet with you and/or your department to train instructors and staff on developing SLOs and assessing those outcomes.