How to Write an Academic Student Learning Outcome (SLO)

SLOs are student-centered, data-informed, standards-based goals that measure student academic growth within a given interval of instruction. These behaviors can be measured at any point during a student's trajectory in earning a degree, such as: classroom assignments, capstone courses, and exit exams/interviews. They are developed and monitored through an ongoing, collaborative process.

Characteristics of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Describes what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce during a program of study (Maki, 2010)
- Relies on active verbs that identify what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce (Maki, 2010)
  - Aligns with the institution's program and University goals (Knowledge, Skills, Responsibilities)
  - Can be quantitatively and/or qualitatively assessed during a student's studies (Maki, 2010)
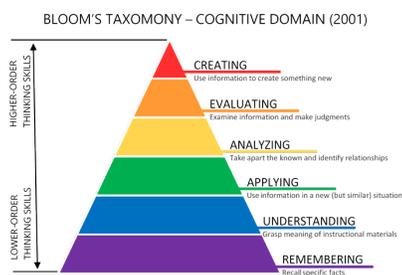
Three Components of SLOs:

WHO — The person ("student") that is the target of the SLO		ACTION VERB — A verb that identifies the performance to be demonstrated (levels of thinking - see Bloom's Taxonomy below)		DEMONSTRATED LEARNING — A learning statement that specifies what learning will be demonstrated in the performance
Students will	+	describe	+	the role that culture plays in our interpretations of developmental norms and individual differences across the lifespan
Students will	+	assess	+	the biographical and historical influences on the creation of a piece of literature
Students will	+	utilize	+	assessment techniques based on national standards to develop accurate clinical impressions of ill or injured patients

Questions that student learning outcomes address include the following:

- **What** knowledge, skills, abilities, and values should students from our program demonstrate?
- **What** evidence can we use to demonstrate growth in students' knowledge, skills, abilities, and values as they progress through our program?
- **How** will they be able to demonstrate these capabilities?
- **How** well does our program prepare students for careers, graduate school, professional study, and/or lifelong learning?

Bloom's Taxonomy

BLOOM'S TAXOMONY – COGNITIVE DOMAIN (2001)

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

- CREATING — Use information to create something new
- EVALUATING — Examine information and make judgments
- ANALYZING — Take apart the known and identify relationships

LOWER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

- APPLYING — Use information in a new (but similar) situation
- UNDERSTANDING — Grasp meaning of instructional materials
- REMEMBERING — Recall specific facts

Review the action verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy (www. bloomstaxonomy.net/) and the examples above. Try to use the higher-order thinking skills (last 3 columns) for most college courses. Depending on the level of the course, more basic Bloom's verbs may be used.

How Many?

3+

At UNM, all academic programs are required to provide three (or more) SLOs.

In accordance with the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation, student learning outcomes should be different for each undergraduate and graduate degree/certificate program.

Remember:

SLOs should state the program's expected impact on student learning, development, and/or growth.

Each SLO should measure one level of a learning behavior expected of your student population.

SLOs should be stated simply. Useful SLOs are clear and simple declarative sentences.

SLO statements should be unique to your programming and purpose. Some SLOs can be generic in nature while others can be more contextualized to your program.

Need more information about assessment and SLOs? Contact us at assess@unm.edu
Looking for good SLO examples? Visit our Assessment Examples & Mistakes to Avoid page.

UNM OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT & ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW