

Writing Student Learning Goals Help Sheet

Student Learning Goals answer the following question:

- At the end of the course or curriculum, what will the student know and be able to do?

A Basic Format for Student Learning Goals:

- By the end of the course, students will be able to:
 - <action verb> <something>.¹

Questions to ask yourself when writing Student Learning Goals:

- Aspiration - Does the goal represent an aspiration we have for student learning?
- Activity - Does the goal represent what students will do in the course?
- Assessable - Is the goal written in such a way that we have some means of measuring it?

Tips:

- Avoid goals with multiple <action verbs> and multiple <somethings>.
- If the goals have multiple action verbs use the highest order verb. Prioritize which verb is most important and use the most complex (synthesis is more complex than knowledge but includes knowledge).
- 4-7 goals should be enough at the course level (there may be more sub-goals at the unit level).
- Focus on important, non-trivial aspects of learning that are central to the discipline and based on professional standards of excellence.²

Levels of Goals³

- Unit: Goals for a unit of learning within a class.
- Class: Goals individual instructors have developed for their class.
- Course: Goals that are shared across all instructors teaching sections of the same course.
- Curriculum/Program: Goals for all students completing a given curriculum or program.
- Institution: Goals that the institution has defined for all graduates in all programs.

¹ "Coaching Assessment: Student Learning Outcomes, Avoiding Garbage In / Garbage Out," WEAVE Online Seminar, presented by Susan Hatfield, Professor, Communication Studies, Winona State University, Visiting Scholar, Higher Learning Commission.

² *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses, Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*; Huba, Mary E. and Freed, Jann, E.; Allyn & Bacon; © 2000; p. 98.

³ See also, *Assessment Clear and Simple, A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*, Second Edition; Walvoord, Barbara; Josey-Bass; © 2010, p. 14.