

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE
PLO STATEMENT DRAFTING WORKSHEET**

Reviewed by SLO Facilitator: _____ Date: _____

Reviewed by Sub-committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

PROGRAM NAME:

DIVISION:

PROGRAM MISSION:

DEVELOP INTO

PROGRAM GOALS:

DEVELOP INTO

PROGRAM LEVEL OUTCOMES:

<i>Aspects of a Strong PLO Statement:</i>	YES	NO
1. Does the outcome address Student Learning?		
2. Is the PLO written as an outcome rather than an objective (does the language indicate an important overarching concept vs. small lessons)?		
3. Does the PLO address one specific outcome or is it too broad in scope?		
4. Does the PLO use active verbs to describe the outcome?		
5. Is the expected outcome tangible and measurable?		
6. Does the statement link to an ILO?		
7. Will the students understand the PLO?		
<i>Recommendations:</i>		

Approved by SLO/ALC Co-Chair: _____ Date: _____

El Camino College Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Assessment Planning Guide 2013

Similar to course-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) focus on student learning. As you think about your program's PLOs, keeping the phrase "Graduates of our program will..." in mind help ensure that the focus is on student learning and abilities.

PLO Definition: PLOs are overarching, specific, and observable behaviors evidenced by students who have achieved your program's educational objectives. Learning outcomes are stated operationally, and describe the observable evidence of a student's knowledge, skill, ability, attitude, or disposition as a result of a specific course of study, activity, or service. Think about how to state clearly each outcome you are seeking: How would you recognize it? What does it look like? What will the student be able to do?

These are not PLOs!

- Students pursuing this degree will study the masters of French art.
- Our program is designed to create the leaders of tomorrow.

Learning outcomes should focus on the expected capabilities of the students upon successful completion of the program.

- NOT ACCEPTABLE: Historically, 86.5% of graduates ($\pm 3.2\%$) were able to correctly compute a standard deviation for a set of values.
- GETTING CLOSER: Our goal is to have at least 80% of students able to correctly compute a standard deviation for a set of values.
- ACCEPTABLE: Graduates will be able to correctly compute a standard deviation for a set of values.

The NOT ACCEPTABLE statement indicates measured performance, not an expected outcome. There is a place for these statements, but they are not learning outcomes.

Note that the GETTING CLOSER learning outcome has the target value (80%) built in. This is a good idea, but these targets should be included as part of the Assessment Plan not the PLO itself.

The ACCEPTABLE learning outcome simply states what the desired outcome will be and also shows how it is something that can be clearly understood by the students themselves.

How are PLOs different from SLOs?

Program outcomes are much broader in scope than course-level SLOs. A common set of PLOs contains:

- An outcome related to having the requisite knowledge for a discipline.
- An outcome related to being able to function as a professional in the discipline.
- An outcome related to critical thinking and higher-level cognitive skills.
- An outcome related to communication skills.
- An outcome related to ethical decision-making.
- Outcomes specific to a discipline.

While programs are certainly not required to use this set of outcomes, these are very common.

Examples of Effectively Expressed Learning Goals

Linda Suskie, a vice president of the Middle States Commission of Higher Education, provides examples of effectively expressed program learning goals. Note: In her examples, the PLOs are broad enough to capture significant, higher-order learning but are defined narrowly enough to be specific to the programs.

English

Present original interpretations of literary works in the context of existing research on these works.

Environmental Science

Critically evaluate the effectiveness of agencies, organizations, and programs addressing environmental problems.

Theater

Use voice, movement, and understanding of dramatic character and situation to affect an audience.

*Linda Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide, Second Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009, page 132.

One advantage of well-written goals is that they help guide the choice of assessment methods. It is easy to imagine how the goals stated above might be assessed: an English student could write a paper presenting original interpretations of literary works, or a theater student could demonstrate these skills in a performance.

THREE EASY STEPS TO PLO CONSTRUCTION

1. CLEARLY STATE PROGRAM MISSION (*Here you can utilize your stated Program Mission Statement from the College Catalogue*)

Definition of a Program Mission - The values and philosophy of the program; a vision of what the program is supposed to do. A mission statement might include a brief history and philosophy of the program, the type of students to be served, the academic environment and primary focus of the curriculum, faculty roles, the contributions to and connections with the community, the role of research, and a stated commitment to diversity and nondiscrimination. A program mission statement should be consistent with the Cal Poly mission statement [LINK](#). (adapted from M. Allen, 2002).

Example - Program Mission

The mission of the department of *Program X* is to provide students with educational experiences and environment that promote the mastery of discipline knowledge and methods, the ability to succeed in discipline-related graduate programs and careers, and the skills and dispositions needed for citizenship in our diverse culture and the world.

2. CONDENSE YOUR PROGRAM MISSION INTO SEPARATE PROGRAM GOALS

Definition of Program Goals - The general aims or purposes of the program and its curriculum. Effective goals are broadly stated, meaningful, achievable and assessable. Goals should provide a framework for determining the more specific educational objectives of a program and should be consistent with your program mission and the El Camino College mission.

Example - Program Goals

- Understand and can apply fundamental concepts of the discipline.
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Conduct sound research.
- Address issues critically and reflectively.
- Create solutions to problems.
- Work well with others.
- Respect persons from diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- Commitment to open-minded inquiry and lifelong learning.

3. FROM LISTED GOALS CREATE TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

Definition of Educational Outcomes - The knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions you expect students to acquire in your program. Educational objectives should be clearly stated, realistic and achievable. They should meaningfully define the related goal, and, where possible, indicate desired level of attainment. Educational objectives should be assessable.

Example - Listing the educational outcomes for each goal

Goal - Students understand and can apply fundamental concepts of the discipline.



Educational Outcomes connected to Goal

1. Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in the following areas of the discipline: _____, _____, _____ and _____.
2. Recognize the source(s) of major viewpoints in discipline.
3. Apply concepts and/or viewpoints to a new question or issue.

Example - Listing the educational outcomes for each goal

Goal - Respect persons from diverse cultures and backgrounds.



Educational Outcomes connected to Goal

1. Interact positively with those from groups other than the student's own.
2. Entertain, empathetically, viewpoints from a variety of perspectives.
3. Demonstrate awareness of cultures and backgrounds other than the student's own.

How are PLOs different than Goals? – PLOs are specific, observable behaviors evidenced by students who have achieved your educational objectives. Learning outcomes are stated operationally, and describe the observable evidence of a student's knowledge, skill, ability, attitude or disposition. Make sure the PLO addresses these questions: How would you recognize it? What does it look like? What will the student be able to do?

Example One - Clearly stating the learning outcomes you are seeking

Goal: Understand and can apply fundamental concepts of the discipline.



Educational Outcomes connected to Goal

1. Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in the following areas of the

discipline: _____, _____, _____ and _____.



Possible Active Verb setups for PLOs to ensure that they relate to the Objectives and are tangible and measurable:

1. Describe...
2. Classify...
3. Distinguish...
4. Give examples of...
5. Explain...
6. Interpret...

Finally, Think About Assessment of Your PLOs...

Once a program has developed a set of student learning outcomes, faculty members can focus on these and ask, “How can we measure this outcome? What specific student behaviors, skills, or knowledge demonstrates that they have learned what we expected them to learn? How could we convince a skeptic that our teaching has achieved a successful outcome?” Programs should choose assessment goals that they themselves will find useful, that is, gather information on those aspects of student learning that the faculty members really want to know about.

Assessment need not involve a great deal of additional work for the faculty members. Methods chosen must be reasonable in terms of time and implementation. Often, programs can build upon measures already in place, such as capstone courses or exhibitions, combined with new assessment tools like rubrics. Assignments and tests already being used in courses are potential sources of evidence, and the work of assessment can be done alongside the work of grading if planned properly.

Ultimately, programs may use multiple methods of assessment, some combination of direct and indirect and qualitative and quantitative. Direct evidence of student learning comes from the work produced by students, such as examinations, written papers, capstone projects, portfolios, graded performances, and exhibitions. These products demonstrate actual learning. Though not sufficient, indirect evidence can be usefully compared to direct evidence. Indirect evidence can come from the perceptions of students and other stakeholders (such as employers) as to how students have achieved a program’s goals, perceptions reported through focus groups, surveys, and other research methods. Indirect evidence can also come from other indicators that imply the achievement of program learning outcomes, for example, job placements, graduate school placements, aggregated grades, etc.

The broad statements typically used as PLOs can be handled by assessing numerous components separately. You may need to use multiple assignments, possibly from multiple

courses, to assess all components. For example, a “Students will communicate effectively” outcome might involve a writing assignment and an oral presentation. You generally try to use assignments from upper-division courses (capstone courses are commonly used) to better assess the capabilities of (soon-to-be) graduates.

The “IDM” Method of Assessment

When you thinking about how to assess PLOs, it is important to consider the skill level that you expect your students to achieve in your program. Typically, students completing programs should have attained a fairly high level of performance in most of the PLOs. That is, they should have a well-developed cognitive skill level in most areas.

To think about cognitive skill level, consider this abbreviated table of Bloom’s Taxonomy verbs:

I: Introductory Level		D: Developing Level		M: Mastery Level	
Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Defines	Comprehends	Applies	Analyzes	Categorizes	Concludes
Describes	Distinguishes	Computes	Compares	Composes	Critiques
Identifies	Interprets	Demonstrates	Contrasts	Creates	Defends
Lists		Solves		Devises	Evaluates
Recognizes				Designs	Interprets
				Modifies	Justifies

While it is appropriate to focus on introductory level skills in lower-level courses, most graduates are expected to function at the mastery level. This is obviously not always true and introductory courses can elicit higher-level skill demonstrations, but the basic breakdown is useful to think about how to assess PLOs.

You can use the I-D-M (Introductory-Developing-Mastery) type of breakdown in capstone course or experience scoring rubrics used to assess PLOs. The way you demonstrate that students have these skills is to use the introductory-, developing-, and mastery-level verbs in scoring rubrics.

Another option for PLO Assessment is to use the I-D-M to identify which courses throughout the program curriculum address certain skill-levels and to develop PLO assessments for those target courses. Your program would most likely examine courses where students will demonstrate higher-level skills.