

ASSESSMENT: HELPFUL TIPS

Student Learning Objectives

Student Learning Objectives Defined

- Nichols on learning objectives: "...descriptions of what academic departments intend for students to know (cognitive), think (attitudinal) or do (behavioral) when they have completed their degree programs, as well as their general education or 'core' curricula."

Planning versus Student Learning Objectives

- *Student Learning Objectives*—the focus of the objective is on "student learning"; defined in terms of: knowledge, skill, ability, value. What students will know, think or do.
- *Planning Objectives*—the focus is on administrative outcomes within the department; those things other than student learning that the department is currently working on.

3 Types of Learning Objectives

- Three types of learning objectives, which reflect different aspects of student learning:
 - Cognitive Objectives--What do you want your graduates to know?
 - Affective (Attitudinal) Objectives --What do you want your graduates to value or care about?
 - Behavioral Objectives --What do you want your graduates to be able to do?

Developing Student Learning Objectives

- Program objectives transform the general program goals into specific student performance and behaviors that demonstrate student learning and skill development along these goals.
- Objectives should describe, using action verbs, intended student learning or behavior rather than merely subject matter coverage.
- At both the course and program level, it is critical that they be *measurable* and *actionable*.
- We must also be keenly aware of the *level* of objective –graduate should be higher than baccalaureate.
- When writing program objectives, describe realistic and achievable outcomes in simple language.
- Even if a learning objective that is important to you seems difficult to measure, try to word the objective into language that focuses on student behavior.

Ask 3 Questions

1. For each of your stated goals, what are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities that would tell you this goal is being achieved?
2. Ideally and briefly, what would a skeptic need (evidence, behavior, etc.), in order to see that your students are achieving the major goals you have set out for them?
3. In your experience, what evidence tells you when students have met these goals - how do you know when they're "getting" it?

Assessment Measures

Assessment Measures (Key Performance Indicators) Defined:

- The specific items of information that track successes on an objective.

Direct measures:

- Direct measures require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself and include capstone courses, theses, dissertations, portfolio assessments, pre-and post-testing, standardized exams –*where there is a one-to-one relationship to specific student learning objectives.*

Indirect measures:

- Indirect measures ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it (Palomba and Banta, 1999, pp. 11-12) and include surveys of alumni, students, and employers, as well as retention studies, course performance analysis, end-of-course evaluations, and job placement data.

Characteristics of an Effective Assessment Measure

- Measurable-We can observe it, count it, weigh it.
- Actionable-If a concern is identified we can do something to address it.
- Unambiguous-It is specific enough that we'd all agree on it if we saw it.
- Meaningful-It captures enough of the essential components of the objective to represent it adequately. If we saw it, we'd agree that the objective has been achieved.
- Timely-It is likely to occur within the designated time frame and/or to occur often enough to be useful.
- Unbiased-It does not work to the advantage or disadvantage of this client group or this situation.
- Acceptable-The key stakeholders accept this as a description of what the objective looks like when it occurs.
- Manageable-It can be measured without excessive cost or effort.

Types of Assessment Measures

- Counts and ratios
- Surveys (attitudinal assessment)
- Focus Groups
- Informal one-on-one meetings with key clients
- External Evaluation (Ex: Fire Marshal's report following inspection of facilities)
- Analysis of service use
- Outputs per budget \$ calculations
- Observations

Developing Assessment Measures

- Make sure your assessment methods:
 - answer questions that are important to you
 - are manageable, given available resources (including time and money)
 - result in useful feedback that highlights accomplishments and identifies areas requiring attention.

Source: <http://oie.eku.edu/assessment-resources/>