

# FORMULATING PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

## QUICK GUIDE FOR NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

(Contact [ipa@fsu.edu](mailto:ipa@fsu.edu) with any questions and feedback requests)

Degree Level	Minimum Number of Program Outcomes	Minimum Number of Student Learning Outcomes
Bachelor's	1	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At least 1 for content/discipline knowledge &amp; skills,</li><li>• At least 1 for communication skills,</li><li>• At least 1 for critical thinking skills</li></ul>
Master's	1	2
Specialist	1	2
Doctorate	1	2
Professional	1	2
Certificate	1	2

### Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

SLOs are knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that students are expected to attain throughout their studies in a program and/or in a specific course. SLOs encapsulate what students will be able to know, do, and care about as a result of their learning experiences by the time they have completed the program. When developing expectations for learning outcomes, program faculty are asked, in addition to their own expert opinion, to also take into consideration perspectives of appropriate constituencies, such as actual/potential employers and graduate programs, recent alumni and current students, and/or if available, discipline-specific accrediting agencies and governing bodies.

**SLO Name:** Provides a succinct yet descriptive name for the Outcome.

**Example:** *SLO – Application and Interpretation of Statistical Tests.*

**SLO Statement:** Adheres to the S.M.A.R.T. mnemonic – Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Appropriate, Results-Oriented, and Time-Bound. An SLO should: express a single idea, use [concrete action verbs](#) that describe what students will be able to do, be achievable by a typical student as a result of learning experiences in the program, reflect what students will have learned rather than what content will be taught or what teaching activities will take place, and be attainable by a specific milestone in the program.

**Example:** *Upon completion of Research Methods in Psychology (PSY 3213C), the students will be able to choose the appropriate statistical analysis for a particular research design and interpret the results of common statistical tests.*

**SLO Assessment Process:** Describes how the assessment of the SLO will be conducted and is designed to yield an observable, valid and reliable measure of student learning. Relevant details may include information about who will assess student learning, in which course(s), during which semester(s), under what circumstances, and how the assessment instrument will be used. Assessment instruments may include a standardized or instructor-constructed quiz/test/exam, select items on a quiz/test/exam, a lab assignment, capstone project, juried performance, essay paper, etc. Final course grades are not suitable for assessment because they are summative measures that do not allow for evaluation of specific skills or knowledge sets. Consider aligning intended SLOs with program curriculum and assignments in a [curriculum map](#), which will visually represent what is taught to students, where and how.

**Example:** *We will assess this outcome by testing students in all sections of PSY 3213C (Research Methods in Psychology) offered during the academic year (Fall and Spring). This is the core research methodology course for students who major in Psychology. To assess this learning outcome, we will use a final exam that was written and is curated by our program faculty. The exam has strong content validity and reliability as it was established by the Undergraduate Studies Curriculum Committee for the Psychology Department. The entire final exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. 15 of these questions will be used to assess student's 'Application and Interpretation of Statistical Tests' for this outcome. (Assessment Instrument – Instructor-constructed exam).*

**SLO Goal/Benchmark:** Specifies a measurable standard that defines success in attainment of the learning outcome. Must include the level of sought mastery, which is a minimally acceptable level of student performance on a measure of learning (e.g., minimum number of correct answers on a test, accumulated points on an exam, rating on a rubric criterion, etc.) and the threshold of acceptability, defined as the minimum percentage of students who must attain the mastery level on a measure of learning in order for the outcome to be considered successfully achieved by the students in the program.

**Example:** *By the end of the Research Methods in Psychology course (PSY 3213C), at least 75% of students majoring in Psychology will achieve mastery on the SLO by correctly answering at least 10 out of the 15 final exam questions testing this learning outcome.*

## Program Outcomes (POs):

POs reflect the broader priorities of the academic program and should align with the University [Strategic Plan](#). POs may also support state funding [metrics](#), [strategic plan of the program's College](#), and/or the requirements of [discipline-specific accrediting agencies](#). POs are typically conceptualized as: 1) desired final products and results (e.g., increased graduation or retention rates, greater number of applicants, more diverse departmental faculty) or 2) activities and strategies aimed at achieving a goal (e.g., enhancing the quality of academic advising as a way to support timely graduation). A PO should be chosen because of its assumed or proven positive impact on faculty and student success.

**PO Name:** Provides a succinct yet descriptive name for the Outcome.

**Example:** *PO – 2-Year Transfer Students Graduation Rate.*

**PO Statement:** Adheres to the S.M.A.R.T. mnemonic – Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Appropriate, Results-Oriented, and Time-Bound. It should be clear what quantifiable, appropriately ambitious, concrete goal the degree/certificate program will strive to achieve.

**Example:** *Transfer students in Criminology will graduate from FSU within two years at a higher rate.*

**PO Assessment Process:** Describes how the assessment of the PO will be conducted. Assessment should be methodologically sound, reliable, and consistent from year to year. It is often best to use officially-reported data available on FSU Institutional Research (IR) [website](#) for university-level outcomes that are tracked centrally (e.g., enrollment, retention and graduation rates, post-graduation success).

**Example:** *For this PO, we will track 2-year graduation rates of undergraduate students who transferred to FSU from the Florida College System (FCS) and declared Criminology as their major. FCS transfer students already have an Associate's degree and, in most cases, should be able to graduate with a Bachelor's degree from FSU in two years. 2-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of transfer students who graduated from FSU by the end of their second year by the total number of transfer students in the original cohort. Graduation rates will be retrieved from the Graduation/Retention reports published by the FSU Office of Institutional Research at [https://ir.fsu.edu/graduation\\_retention\\_secure.aspx](https://ir.fsu.edu/graduation_retention_secure.aspx). Full methodology is described on the first page of the report.*

**PO Goal/Benchmark:** Specifies a measurable standard that defines success in attainment of the outcome. When deciding how the PO goal/benchmark should be set, it is useful to study performance on the same metric by peer institutions and other academic programs at FSU and/or review program's own past levels of achieving the PO. The goal/benchmark should be set at a level that is ambitious, yet achievable with some effort. The typical 'lifespan' of a PO is 3-6 years; a longer implementation period allows for more thoughtful planning, consistent multi-year assessment, and data-based, sustained enhancement efforts.

**Example:** *According to the most recent available data, Summer/Fall 2017 FCS transfer student's cohort had a 2-year graduate rate of 46.0%. Over the next five years, beginning with the Summer/Fall 2018 FCS transfer student cohort, we want to increase the 2-year graduation rate to at least 51%.*

*Baseline: 2017 cohort = 46.0% 2-year graduation rate. Year 1 Plan: 2018 cohort = at least 47%. Year 2 Plan: 2019 cohort = at least 48%. Year 3 Plan: 2020 cohort = at least 49%. Year 4 Plan: 2021 cohort = at least 50%. Year 5 Plan: 2022 cohort = at least 51%.*