Setting Program Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Goals (Optional)

Program Goals are general statements of what the program intends to accomplish. They are broad statements of the kinds of learning we hope students will achieve – they describe learning outcomes and concepts (what you want students to learn) in general terms (e.g., clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.) Program Goals are statements of long range intended outcomes of the program and the curriculum. They describe the knowledge, skills, and values expected of graduates and should be consistent with the mission of the program and the mission of the institution. They provide the framework for determining the more specific educational learning objectives and outcomes of a program. Program Goals answer the following questions:

- How does this program fit into a student's overall development?
- What general categories of knowledge and abilities will distinguish your graduates?
- What are the key competency categories graduates of the program should know or be able to do?

Examples of goals include:

- Graduates will be competent in critical questioning and analysis.
- Graduates will have an appreciation of the necessity and difficulty of making ethical choices.
- Graduates will have the ability to design and conduct experiments as well as analyze and interpret data.
- Graduates will be prepared for careers in industry.

Objectives

Objectives are brief, clear statements that describe the desired outcomes of instruction; i.e., the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader goals. They are generally less broad than goals and more broad than student learning outcomes. In many cases, program goals and objectives are combined. There are three types of learning objectives, which reflect different aspects of student learning:

- Cognitive objectives: “What do you want your graduates to know?”
- Affective objectives: “What do you want your graduates to think or care about?”
- Behavioral Objectives: “What do you want your graduates to be able to do?”
Examples of objectives include:

- Students will gain an understanding of the historical origins of art history.
- Students will be able to discuss seminal works in 20th Century American literature.
- Students will obtain a global awareness through a wide range of international literary and language experiences that are critical in today's world.

Outcomes

Learning Outcomes are statements that describe significant and essential learning that learners have achieved, and can reliably demonstrate at the end of the program. They identify what the learner will know and be able to do by the end of the program – the essential and enduring knowledge, abilities (skills) and attitudes (values, dispositions) that constitute the integrated learning needed by a graduate of the program. Learning outcomes are statements that specify what learners will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity; i.e., the outcomes that students must meet on the way to attaining a particular degree.

Examples of outcomes include:

- Students will be able to demonstrate graphically and explain how a change in expectations affects the loanable funds market.
- On hearing musical selections, students will be able to identify the form, texture, and makeup of the ensemble.
- Students will be able to distinguish between different psychological issues.
- Students will be able to use word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation graphics to prepare projects and reports.
- Students will be able to create a hypothesis and determine the methods necessary to test their hypothesis.