

4 Steps to Writing Program Outcomes

How do you write program outcomes?

Imagine the ideal graduate of your program. The student who has completed the program successfully with all of the skills, abilities and knowledge needed to succeed in the workplace.

Program outcomes define that student.

Writing program outcomes is slightly different from writing course outcomes. But there is a simple process to follow.



Step 1: Conduct Research

The first step involved in program outcomes is research. What does industry require for the graduates in this program? You might answer the question by looking at national or industry standards, reviewing a DACUM or other type of occupational task analysis, or by interviewing potential employers. Research helps you determine the skills that are needed for the occupation.

Step 2: Draft Outcomes

Once you have completed the research, draft the outcomes. Usually you will draft the outcomes with your department or program teaching team. You might start by conducting a team brainstorm of the broad categories represented in the research. For example, a Facilities Maintenance Technician program might address these broad categories:

- Electrical
- Preventative Maintenance
- Interior Repairs
- Hand Tools
- Sustainability



Using your categories, draft one or more outcomes for each broad category.

Program Outcome Examples

Electrical: Repair basic electrical components

Preventative Maintenance: Perform preventative maintenance procedures

Interior Repairs: Perform basic plumbing repairs AND Perform basic drywall repairs

Hand Tools: Use portable hand tools safety

Sustainability: Apply sustainable practices to facility operations

Use this checklist to help you draft the program outcome statements.

- ✓ Program outcomes begin with a single action verb
- ✓ Program outcomes describe for learners the broad occupational or field-specific skills, attitudes, and abilities they must master in order to successfully complete a program
- ✓ Program outcomes describe outcomes that are addressed throughout the program and across courses
- ✓ Program outcomes pertain to all of the learning experiences (e.g. courses, labs, clinical experiences, capstone projects, and internships) that make up a program
- ✓ Program outcomes encourage learners to integrate related course outcomes and perform at higher, more complex levels

Once you have drafted your program outcomes, you can further define them by drafting performance standards (criteria and conditions). For each outcome, brainstorm the criteria for successful demonstration of the outcome. For example:

Perform preventative maintenance procedures

Assessment Strategy

1. Project in the capstone course

Criteria

- Perform shaft alignments
- Replace bearings
- Align and replace belts
- Select and apply proper lubricants
- Use diagnostic instruments to predict proper maintenance interval
- Perform basic preventative maintenance procedures on HVAC equipment

Step 3: Validate outcomes with industry

Once the program outcomes and criteria have been defined, validate them with industry representatives. Share them at an advisory committee meeting or conduct an online survey. Ask, “Do these skills represent your expectations for an entry level employee?”

Step 4: Finalize the Outcomes

Use the industry input to inform the outcomes and performance standards. Make sure they communicate clearly and accurately the outcomes for your program.

Finally-- begin using them! You can map outcomes to courses where they are taught or assessed. Or use them for marketing your program. They will also serve as tools for helping you plan program improvement strategies.

Want to learn more about Program Outcomes?

Find out how WIDS Software and Services can help you write, manage, and assess your program outcomes. Download the [Program Outcomes Checklist](#).

Contact us for more information or a free webinar:

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