Course Outcome Summary Guidelines

Course Outcome Summary (COS): The COS is the official documented information about a course or other learning experience that documents Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) title, course number, credits, hours of instruction, instruction type, course description, prerequisites and corequisites.

Course Information: Course information such as credits, course description, etc. must match the course catalog exactly, therefore check the course information, and if you need to change any of this information, you must submit a [Course Update form](#). Once you submit the completed form, the Curriculum department updates the course information on the COS and the catalog to ensure they are exactly the same.

Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Aligned COSs
Some COSs are aligned by WTCS and when that is the case, that COS must be used without removing any content from it. This may include a lack of minimum learning objectives, criteria, etc., so Developers/Programs must **add** to a COS if it is missing minimum information such as (at least 2) learning objectives, and must follow these guidelines (such as writing learning objectives properly).

Click this [List of WTCS Aligned COSs](#) to determine if your COS is WTCS Aligned.

Note: Career Essentials **must be present/added** to WTCS aligned COSs. See the Career Essentials section below for guidance.

Career Essentials: Career Essentials are skills, knowledge and attitudes that augment the content-area outcomes.
- MATC requires Associate Degrees to have a minimum of 4 Career Essentials identified in an Associate Degree program, and Technical Diplomas and Certificates have a minimum of 3 Career Essentials identified in a program.
- Every course must have a minimum of one Career Essential identified. All identified Career Essentials must be linked to at least one Competency in a COS.
- The new Introduce/Reinforce/Assess Career Essentials must be used.

Note: Not every competency must have linked Career Essentials, but every Career Essential identified in the COS must be linked to at least one competency.

Related Outcomes
Program Outcomes: Many programs identify Program Outcomes, and will appear on the COS. If present, every program outcome identified must be linked to at least one competency on the COS. Contact Lead Faculty or Chairs within your program/department for further guidance. Program Outcomes are used at WTCS for TSA. Contact [Jennifer Mikulay](#) for more information.

External Standards: Some programs have External Standards they must follow, and should appear on the COS. If present, all of the external standards identified must be linked to at least one competency on the COS. Contact Lead Faculty or Chair within your program/department for further guidance.

Competency: Knowledge, ability, or expertise in a specific subject area or skill set. Competencies are broad skill tasks that the faculty deems necessary for the student to achieve in order to pass the course.

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- MATC specifies that each course contains a minimum of two, and recommends a maximum of ten competencies per credit.
- Competencies should begin with a verb.
- Each competency should have only one verb, hence only one action, although functions of the same verb may be used if they are relatable.
  - Example: Exhibit correct grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation per MLA Standards.
- The verb should be tangible (seen/observed) so that it may be assessed. Do not use verbs such as: appreciates, believes, comprehends, examines, explores, feels, hears/listens, knows, learns, memorizes, perceives, realizes, recognizes, reviews, sees, thinks, understands **etc**., because they are intangible and difficult to assess (If the action cannot be seen/heard, it is intangible.) Also, do not use derivatives that are intangible such as "demonstrate understanding."
- The language used in the COS file should be at an appropriate level for the student.
- Note: Adult High School courses allow for 8 competencies per a total of 80 hours.

Performance standards define the skill described in the competency and clarify required levels of performance. They are observable and measurable criteria and conditions for performance assessment. They provide structure in which to answer the question: "Did the learner achieve the stated competency?" The two primary areas are Assessment Strategies and Criteria.

Assessment Strategies: These define the setting in which the competencies will be performed, and how specifically with what material.
- Each competency must have at least one assessment strategy.
- Competence will be demonstrated such as: through written examination, with the use of the
software application (specify), through oral presentation, in a project (specify), skill demonstration, by participating in a discussion.

Criteria: helps measure the threshold performance for the Competency. Each competency must have at least two criteria. A minimum of 1 criterion per Competency should display some kind of numerical accuracy measurement such as: *Cookie measures within +/- .25 centimeters of 6 centimeters in diameter*, *Learner bakes 6 dozen cookies in 2 hours, completed within 180 seconds with 1 error allowed.* **Note**: Select a Criteria Lead-In that flows with the Criteria following it from the Drop-Down menu before the Criteria.

Two types of Criteria can be used:
- Process Criteria (this type is usually used) - evaluates what process the learner follows.
  - They follow the same rules as the competencies.
    - They begin with one, tangible verb (allowing for "learner" or "you" for transition from the lead-in statement).
    - Each competency must have a minimum of two criteria.
    - Example of Process Criteria with lead-in statement: Performance will be satisfactory when: learner produces a 5-slide PowerPoint presentation with at least 3 different template styles (note this example displays a numerical accuracy measurement).
    - Example of Process Criteria with lead-in statement: Performance will be satisfactory when: learner creates a custom themed document for content.
- Product Criteria (option to use when a product is involved, but not required) - evaluates quality standards of the finished product.
  - They follow similar rules as the competencies.
    - Use only one, tangible verb per criteria, but the focus may be more on the nouns and outcomes.

- They do not always have to lead with a verb.
- Each competency must have a minimum of two criteria.
- Example of Product Criteria with lead-in statement: Performance will be successful when: project contains fonts you determine appropriate for content.
- Example of Product Criteria with lead-in statement: Performance will be successful when: project contains all seven foundational specifications.

Learning Objectives: Learning objectives are in essence, the parts of the competency. They describe the knowledge and skills that a student is expected to demonstrate upon completion of the course. Ideally, each of these learning objectives relates, in some discernible way, to the competencies for the overall program of study. Learning objectives are often provided by textbook publishers as part of their curriculum package. They might also be adapted or completely written by a school, department or learning team to reflect the specific needs of a school.

Example of relationship between competencies and learning objectives:
- Competency: Use statistical software in the evaluation of health-related data.
- Learning objective: Perform a regression analysis with appropriate SAS.

Learning Objectives follow the same rules as competencies.
- Each competency must have a minimum of two, with a recommended range of two to ten learning objectives.
- They begin with a tangible verb and use only one verb per learning objective.

Note: The Competency, Criteria, and Learning Objectives should not be identical to each other; something should set them apart otherwise they are redundant.

Example of differences between competencies, learning objectives, and criteria:
- Competency: Use statistical analysis software in the evaluation of health-related data.
- Learning objective: Perform a regression analysis with appropriate SAS.
- Criteria: Performance will be satisfactory when: Learner determines data trends found in an SAS report with 70% accuracy.

In the example above, notice how the competency is a course outcome, and the objective is a more detailed element of the competency. The criteria example identifies the standard of performance connected to the learning objective and competency. They all should be related, but not identical or redundant.

Name and Date: Include your name and creation/revision date found in Custom Fields under the Course Information in the COS in WIDS.

Deviations from these guidelines: There may be occasional instances (such as accrediting body requirements) in which you may need to deviate from these guidelines. To avoid the COS being declined, contact the Curriculum department before submitting the COS for guidance. The Curriculum department has a procedure in place to approve the COS with a special circumstance.