

Writing Student Services



Student Learning Outcomes

SLO Basics



What is a Student Services SLO?

A Student Services Student Learning Outcome (SLO) describes the:

- knowledge
- skills
- abilities
- attitudes

that students have attained by the end of any set of college experiences with a Student Service department or in a class offered by Student Services, such as Counseling and Guidance. The stress is on what students can **DO** with what they have learned. The SLO does not describe what the department does.



Who writes them?

Department members! Everyone should be involved in writing and approving the SLOs created by the department.



When are SLOs written?

- Every department in Student Services has written SLOs.
- It's always okay to revise the SLOs, if the department feels that they need tweaking. You'll know if they need improving after you assess them. A good

question to ask is: Has this assessment given us enough information so that we can see what students are learning and can help them improve? If not, is it the assessment method that needs changing or is it the SLO itself?

- A good time to evaluate the SLOs is when you are in the program planning process. Take a look and see if the department wants to make any changes
- Course SLOs can be revised each time a department goes through program planning and curriculum review.
- Departments often work with the SLO Coordinator to make sure that their SLOs are written correctly.



Where do SLOs live?

- Departmental SLOs are posted on the Student Services website, along with the SLO Website.
- Course SLOs are housed in the college's curriculum program, CurricUNET, as part of the official course outline of record.
- Course SLOs are also listed on each instructor's syllabus for the course.



Why do we write and assess SLOs?

Because, as Student Service professionals, you know that you are constantly teaching students when you work with them. They learn how to be successful as students from many of your interactions: filling out a financial aid form, making an educational plan, enrolling in classes, getting help from Learning Skills or the Disabled Students Program and Services. Research shows that the interventions you make, the services you offer, can be the crucial factor in whether a student achieves a degree, certificate or transfer. Writing and measuring SLOs just formalizes a process that most Student Services professionals use anyway: "Gee, that student meeting went well. But the one before it didn't. What should I do differently? What might make a difference for all the students that I help?"



Writing SLOs

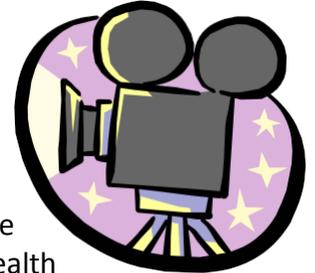
SLOs versus Departmental Goals or Mission

A Student Service SLO articulates the knowledge, skills, abilities or attitudes that a student can **demonstrate** by the end of an interaction with your department or a series of meetings.

- don't think about the services you offer – consider what students should be able to DO with them.
- How will students demonstrate this?

SLOs capture the big picture. SLOs:

- Describe the main thing that a student learns from interactions with your department.
- Ask students to **produce, show** or **do** something as a result of their learning, for example: write an education plan, present a requisite challenge through the Matriculation office, locate the Student Health Services.



Department goals or mission, on the other hand, describe the services that the department offers and set a goal for improving them. At first, this difference can seem confusing. The key is **thinking from a student perspective**, instead of thinking from the department's point of view.



Want an example of how this works?

Take a look at the example below from the Student Employment Center. Their first attempt at writing SLOs was actually a description of the department's services. The revised SLO captures what students can actually do as a result of those services.

Student Employment Center

First SLOs	Revised SLO
The SEC assists students in their written and verbal communication with employers by providing assistance with job application materials such as resume preparation and workshops on interviewing skills.	Students will be able to locate and appropriately apply for job openings.
The SEC provides access to and trains students in the use of web based job search technology, how to review job postings to comply with entry level requirements, and how to best market their skills to meet the needs of the employer.	
The SEC promotes the development of workplace skills by counseling students regarding appropriate job search techniques and counseling them when employers notify us that a student does not understand basic workplace skills and requirements.	

How were the SLOs changed? The director of the Student Employment Center met with the SLO Coordinator in 2010 to rewrite the SLOs. Together, they examined the services offered to students by the department, including access to various job boards, internships and volunteer opportunities, plus workshops on resume writing and interviewing skills and, before it went on hiatus due to budget cuts, a campus job fair. “But what can students do after using these services?” they asked. “What have they actually learned?” After much discussion, the three departmental SLOs were reduced to one, which the Student Employment Center 2011 Program Plan calls an “achievable student learning outcome.”



Sample Student Services SLOs

Here are some yummy Student Service SLOs written by your fellow Student Services professionals at Cabrillo. Note how they describe the experience of each department from the student perspective and also reflect what a student can actually do as a result. The verbs used capture student activity.

Assessment: Students will **utilize** services provided by WebAdvisor to enroll in courses and track academic progress.

Counseling: Students will **create** a plan to facilitate education and career goals.

Financial Aid: Students who apply for financial aid will be able to **complete** the application process and **meet** deadlines.

Learning Skills: Student who commit to the learning disabilities evaluation process will **analyze** their learning challenges and **create** a plan of study strategies they can use to improve their learning.

Extended Opportunities, Programs and Services (EOPS)

1. Student will **articulate, identify and clarify** career, vocation and transfer goals on their educational plan.
2. Semester Orientation – Students will **take responsibility** for colleges success by becoming familiar with resources on campus and in the program.
3. Students will **communicate** directly, in person, with instructors and be able to **participate** in their own academic program evaluation process.
4. Ongoing Counseling – After a year in EOPS, student will **persist** to a third semester as full time students.



Some Do's

1. Do begin with "Students will."
2. Do keep the number of outcomes short. Use the outcomes to describe the **major** skills or knowledge students will take away from your department. If the department includes several different areas, like Student Affairs, write an SLO for each major area or skill the students learn.
3. Do consider naming the type of student serviced if it's a distinct group, such as those who commit to a learning disabilities evaluation in Learning Skills or those involved with student government in Student Affairs.



Some Don'ts

1. Don't use lower level thinking verbs in your SLO. Try to use verbs in Bloom's Taxonomy that capture higher-level thinking skills when appropriate, such as "analyze" rather than "understand." However, these higher-level verbs may not be appropriate for all departments, depending on the services it offers. The Writing Instructional SLOs workbook contains a "cheat-sheet" of verbs on pages 12-14. Check it out if you are not sure which words to use.

Guide to Writing SLOs



Beginning is often the most difficult step. Remember that you have been doing this all along. Now is your chance to put what you know intuitively as a professional into words. Use the Worksheet below and:

- 1) In one sentence, describe one **major** piece of knowledge, skill, ability or attitude that a student will have gained by the end of an interaction or series of interactions of your department. Describe what students will **do** — not the services you provide.
- 2) Write it in language that a student will understand.
- 3) Make sure that the outcome is something that can be assessed or tested.

Writing Student Learning Outcomes Worksheet

Department _____

Outcome One sentence that describes a major piece of knowledge, skill, ability or attitude that students can demonstrate by the end of an interaction with your department.	Assessment Describe how you might be able to measure that outcome

Final Checklist for Writing Student Learning Outcomes

Now that you've written your SLOs, it's best to show them to other student services professionals to see if what you've written is understandable and concise. Use the following checklist:

1. Have you used action verbs in describing your SLOs?
2. Is it written as an outcome rather than departmental goal?
 - Language indicates the BIG PICTURE rather than nuts and bolts
 - Describes what students can DO
 - Asks students to apply what they've learned by producing or showing something
3. Is the SLO appropriate for the department?
 - Represents a fundamental result or outcomes of working with the department.

