University of Toronto
Faculty of Information
Council

iSchool Policy on Defining Student Learning Outcomes in Course Syllabi

This policy defines Student Learning Outcomes and describes what must be included in Faculty of Information Course Syllabi in order to articulate how individual course goals and student learning outcomes relate to program-level outcomes. A set of guidelines is also provided in Appendix A of this policy document to help instructors apply the policy in their course syllabi and ensure cohesion between their courses and the wider context of the Faculty of Information programs.

1. Student Learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) define the appropriate knowledge and skills that students are expected to achieve at the end of a course (course-level student learning outcomes) or at the end of a program (program-level student learning outcomes). Each of the degree programs offered by the Faculty of Information has a defined set of program-level SLOs. These SLOs in the Faculty of Information are consistent with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) Degree Level Expectations[1].

2. Requirements for Faculty of Information Course Syllabi

In addition to other sections in course syllabi (as might be recommended/required by the School or Graduate Studies or the Faculty of Information), instructors must include a section with each of the following in each of the Faculty of Information course syllabi:

- **Course Objectives:** The course objectives describe what the instructor plans to present or deliver in the course.
- **Course Learning Outcomes:** The student outcomes or course outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies that the students should have or be able to demonstrate upon completion of the course (most courses will have a mix of different kinds of outcomes). It is also considered best practice to clearly articulate how students will demonstrate that they have achieved each of the student learning outcomes or course learning outcomes (for example through assignments, presentations, activities in class, discussions, etc.).
- **Relationship between Course Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes:** Instructors should provide a link to the appropriate program-level Student Learning Outcomes[2] and include a paragraph describing how the course and its learning outcomes relate to the program-level Student Learning Outcomes.

3. Timeline

All Faculty of Information Syllabi should adhere to this policy by September 2014.

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[1] Council of Ontario Universities, *A Guide to Learning Outcomes, Degree Level Expectations and the Quality Assurance Process in Ontario: Ensuring the Value of University Degrees in Ontario,* http://www.cou.on.ca/publications/reports/pdfs/ensuring-the-value-of-university-degrees-in-ontari

[2] Master of Information Program Student Learning Outcomes can be found here: http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes

Appendix A: Guidelines to Support the Policy on Defining Student Learning Outcomes in Course Syllabi

These guidelines are meant to help instructors adhere to the policy on articulating degree level expectations in their course syllabi. Along with guidelines, examples are provided that may prove useful. Instructors are encouraged to seek additional help from the Faculty of Information Programs Committee or the Dean's Office if necessary as they develop their course syllabi.

Course Objectives: [these should be articulated in terms of objectives that describe what the instructor plans to present or deliver in the course]

Wording might be:

The goal of this course is to …

This course presents ….

Examples:

"This course is intended to help prepare students for successful careers in the information professions where much of the work is organized through projects conducted by a designated project team. The course is designed to help students understand the terminology used in and theories behind project management and to help them function successfully in project environments." -- INF2040 Project Management [K. Lyons]

"The objective of the course is to provide students with the tools and skills required to understand research terminology and assess published research" -- INF1240 Research Methods [S. Grimes]

Course Learning Outcomes: [these describe knowledge, skills, and/or competencies that the students should know or be able to do after completing the course -- note: most courses will have a mix of different kinds of outcomes. It is also considered best practice for instructors to describe how the outcomes will be demonstrated by students. In some cases it will be through activities in class, assignments, discussion of readings, exams, etc.]

Wording might be:

Students who have successfully completed the course will:
Or
Upon completing the course, the student will be able to do [or know] the following:

- [Know how to]
- [Be able to do]
- [suggested verbs include: identify; summarize; list; calculate; estimate; describe; explain; predict; model; optimize; explain; interpret; apply; derive; classify; formulate; design; create; or determine.]

Example:

"At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Apply project management principles and practices (including specific techniques) in a variety project contexts (demonstrated in all three assignments)
- Describe the role and importance of project management in an organization and identify projects that support organizational goals and strategy (demonstrated through in-class activities and assignment 1)
- Determine and describe their own personal goals, motivations, and ways of working individually and within teams (demonstrated in assignment 1)
- Explain and interpret the social dynamics of teamwork and how people work individually and in teams (demonstrated in assignment 2, through in-class activities)
- Apply and describe the management and communication techniques and skills that lead to successful project outcomes (demonstrated in assignment 2 and through in-class activities)
- Determine when and under which circumstances to apply specific project management techniques (demonstrated in assignment 3)
- Identify the role of time, cost and quality management in successful projects and determine trade-offs (demonstrated in assignment 3 and through in-class activities)
- Explain the role of communication in project management and demonstrate effective communication both orally and in writing (demonstrated in all three assignments and through in-class activities)
- Put into practice effectively working on a project team and as a project manager (demonstrated in assignment 3 and through in-class activities)" -- K Lyons (INF2040)

Relationship between Course Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes: [provide a link to the appropriate program-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and include a paragraph describing how the course and its learning outcomes relate to the program-level Student Learning Outcomes]

Example:

"Project management is becoming a fundamental practice in information disciplines and this course will help students understand and be conversant in the practice of project management (Program Outcome 1). The knowledge and values imparted in INF2040 are appropriate to students' future exercise of leadership and the provision of information services for all (Program Outcome 2). In INF2040, students will determine and describe their own personal goals and articulate ways they hope to attain their goals. In doing so, they will learn how to continue in life-long intellectual growth beyond graduation (Program Outcome 6)." -- K Lyons (INF2040)