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A Rubric-Based Approach to Assessing Resources for Writing Student Learning Outcomes

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies

About
The Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies is primarily responsible for student success. The areas within the office that facilitate student success are the professional and faculty advisers, the Center for Academic Success Programs (CASP) and the Office of Faculty Development (OFD). The Associate Provost for Assessment and Undergraduate Studies works with the Faculty Senate, the Graduate College and various university administrators to coordinate all efforts related to assessment of student learning and general education. In addition, the associate provost works closely with the Registrar's Office as the curriculum manager for the university.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies is to take the lead in assisting faculty, staff, administrators and students:
• Develop effective and informative strategies to assess student learning
• Facilitate an integrative general education program
• Ensure quality undergraduate advising in concert with the college advising directors
• Help develop relevant and engaging pedagogy through the Office of Faculty Development
• Provide academic assistance through the Center for Academic Success Programs
• Assure timely progression of curriculum changes

Context for Project

The Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies is focused on student success. In order to do this, instructors must be equipped with the proper tools to aid in the assessment of student learning. Learning outcomes are key to assessing student learning and thus the office wants to provide resources for instructors to write student learning outcomes. Currently, there are no resources available through the office for instructors to use when writing student learning outcomes. This aligns with the office's mission statement of developing effective and informative strategies to assess student learning. Furthermore, it supports the university's mission of being learner-centered.

Project Goals

The purpose of the project was to identify resources for use by university instructors and staff to provide guidelines for writing simple and effective learning outcomes. This includes the following goals:

1. Research best practices for writing student learning outcomes.
2. Create a rubric for use in assessing current resources for writing student learning outcomes.
3. Seek out current resources to evaluate using the rubric.
4. Propose a recommendation on what resources to provide for writing student learning outcomes.

Method of Assessment

The method of assessment for this project is a rubric. First, best practices for writing student learning outcomes were identified. This informed the creation of the rubric to assess current resources on writing student learning outcomes. The resources that were assessed were provided by both the course instructor and the staff contact for the project. A rubric approach was selected in order to provide a tool that would standardize the assessment of resources. It allows for an organized way to present the data and also provides the opportunity for a mixed methods approach. The resources are rated on a scale that measures the degree to which the resource meets the criteria and there is a section for comments in each area. Criteria for assessing the resources are as follows:

1) Resource provides correct and current information on the topic of writing student learning outcomes
 - learning outcomes should be measurable, specific, and use action verbs
 - updated within the last few years
2) Resource is easy to use and provides clear and concise information
 - it is navigable, succinct, and includes visuals
3) Resource provides definitions of student learning outcome terminology
 - addresses the difference between outcomes, objectives, and goals
4) Resource provides easy to follow examples
 - examples are of both good and bad learning outcomes
5) Resource is free of spelling errors and technology errors
 - no broken links
6) Resource references sources for the information shared to support its validity
 - references are properly cited so that source can be located

Rubric for Assessing Resources for Writing Student Learning Outcomes

Rate the degree to which the resource meets the following criteria on a scale from 1 to 3, with 3 being the highest.

	Rating (1–3)	Comments
Resource provides correct and current information on topic of writing student learning		
Resource is easy to use and provides clear and concise information		
Resource provides definitions of student learning outcomes		
Resource provides easy to follow examples		
Resource is free of spelling errors and technology errors		
Resource references sources for the information shared to support its validity		

Results & Analysis

Below are the results of assessing the resources for writing student learning outcomes on the rubric.

	provides correct and current information on the topic of writing student learning outcomes	is easy to use and provides clear and concise information	provides definitions of student learning outcome terminology	provides easy example	is free of spelling errors and follow technology examples	references sources for the information shared to support its validity	Total out of 18 possible points	Comments
Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (Dropbox/Assessment Resources/Learning Outcomes)	3	3	3	2	3	3	17	Very good resource. Met all of the criteria, but lost points because there weren't examples of writing a poor learning outcomes.
University of Oregon	3	3	3	1	3	3	16	This resource is very easy to follow but lost points because there aren't any examples of good or bad learning outcomes.
IUPUI (Indiana University- Purdue University)	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	This source provides tips for writing learning outcomes. It gives an illustration of how to write learning outcomes and it provides references throughout the entire page. It also incorporates Blooms Taxonomy which is great.
Kent State University	3	3	3	3	3	1	16	This resource provides an overview of learning outcomes. There were videos created to help visual learners. The videos were very insightful. This website also provided handouts which could be helpful for explaining learning outcomes. This is a very good resource. The only issue with this source is that reference sources could not be located to validate the information.
ULIB	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	This is a helpful source because it was very organized and easy to read. This information is very detailed.
Guidelines for writing SLOs	3	2	1	2	3	1	12	There were no visuals provided and no definitions of student learning outcomes. There were examples of good learning outcomes but not bad. In addition there were no references provided.
UCONN How to Write Program Objectives/Outcomes	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	This resource is helpful because it met all of the requirements.
Implementing Bologna	1	2	3	3	3	3	15	This information is not recent. Also it is not concise but it would be a good reference.
UMASS.edu	2	1	3	3	3	3	15	This was a good resource but it is too long to read. This source loses points because it is not concise. This source does provide references and could be more helpful if it were shorter.
University of Rhode Island	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	This source was helpful because it was very concise.
tltc.edu	3	2	1	3	3	3	15	There were no definitions provided.
University of Central Florida	3	3	1	3	3	3	16	There were no definitions provided.
University of West Florida	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	This is a very good resource as each criteria was met.
http://www2.bakersfieldcollege.edu/courseassessment/Section_3_SLOs/Section3_1.htm	3	3	3	3	2	3	17	This resource was helpful but there were some broken links on the pages.
Professional Development Course	3	2	3	3	3	3	17	This is a very good resource but there is a lot of information. It doesn't appear that the information is in the best order. It was very interactive though.
Introduction to Student Learning Objectives Powerpoint	3	3	1	1	3	3	16	This is not a very good resource because it did not give examples of how to write good learning outcomes.
University of Minnesota	3	3	2	3	3	3	17	There are examples on a different page but there are no definitions of the terms.

Most of the resources were rated with a 15 or higher on the rubric. There were 5 which earned a perfect score by meeting all of the requirements. These include those from University of Connecticut, University of Rhode Island, and University of West Florida, and two from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. The resources present information for writing student learning outcomes in different ways. While some are to the point, others go into detail. This will help appeal both to instructors that require more background information and those that simply want the necessary information.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the rubric assessment, there are five resources that we recommend be made available to instructors.

The following are our recommendations:
- List the five resources that we have identified as meeting all of the criteria on the rubric on the office website for instructors to access.
- Utilize the rubric to assess additional resources in order to provide more resources to instructors.
- Create worksheets and video tutorials as tools for writing student learning outcomes to accommodate different ways of learning.

Implications

This project will contribute to establishing evidence of student learning. As institutions, divisions, departments, and programs engage in strategic planning, student learning outcomes will become even more important. It is essential to create a culture that values assessment in order to be prepared for the direction in which higher education is headed.

References

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