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

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

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EDLD 6548: Assessment and Accountability in Higher Education and Student Affairs
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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
- Ensure 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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource provides correct and current information on topic of writing student learning outcomes</th>
<th>Rating (0-3)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

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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