



Quick Guide to Developing Departmental Learning Goals

Based on information from *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. 2004. Suskie, Linda. Towson University

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

- **Learning Goals** - what the program or department aims to achieve, expressed in the acquisition of basic skills.
- **Outcomes** – the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience.
- **Objectives** - detailed aspects of goals.
- **Behavioral Goals** – goals stated through use of *concrete action items*.

Examples of concrete action words:

Describe	Create	Explain
Give examples	Evaluate	Design
Use (data, literature, etc.) to	Locate	Analyze and evaluate
Make inferences	Develop	Present
Apply --skills to	Conduct and present	Use --as an analytical category to critique
Conceive of	Judge the effectiveness of	Identify

For example, in PHILOSOPHY (with thanks to the department)...

AN ORIGINAL GOAL	re-cast as	CONCRETE, ACTION GOAL
An understanding of the nature of philosophy and philosophical analysis		Analyze and evaluate the most popular approaches to philosophical analysis.
Basic knowledge of the history of Western philosophy		Explain “x” schools of philosophical thought.

As for number, limit the number of major program goals to three to six.

Again, for PHILOSOPHY, here’s an example of developing broadly-based, assessable learning goals from the original, more intangible iterations...

Original goals for HISTORY and CONCEPTS

- Basic knowledge of the history of Western philosophy
- An awareness of philosophical perspectives emerging out of differences in gender, race, class, and culture
- An understanding of the nature of philosophy and philosophical analysis.

NEW: *Describe historical tenets of Western philosophy, perspectives, and analysis emerging out of differences in gender, race, class, and culture.*

Original goals for ISSUES

- An awareness of leading issues in various areas of philosophy
- An understanding of alternative philosophical view on these leading issues and an appreciation of the reasons and arguments that may be advanced in support of these competing views

NEW: Identify leading issues and compare/contrast alternative philosophical views.

Original goals for ANALYSIS

- The ability to articulate one's own interpretation of reality and one's own self-concept or identity
- The ability to identify philosophical problems and formulate philosophical questions
- The ability to apply philosophical techniques (such as conceptual analysis, the making of distinctions, the identification of arguments, and the analysis of arguments) in an effort to resolve philosophical problems
- The ability to analyze critically and evaluate the assumptions underlying systems of belief (including value systems)

NEW: Analyze and evaluate philosophical problems, techniques, and questions as related to interpretations of reality, issues of identity, and systems of belief.

Original goals for CORE SKILLS

- The ability to think, write, and speak in a clear, logically sound, and coherent manner.

NEW: Explain, critique, and/or evaluate philosophical perspectives in a clear, logically sound, and coherent manner.