

Program Outcomes and Performance Criteria

Performance criteria are a means to focus on specific expectations of a program. They facilitate the curriculum delivery strategies, and assessment procedures. There is an important first step that must come before the development of performance criteria, and that is deciding on program outcomes. These are usually communicated to students in the program description, and are stated in terms that inform the students about the **general purpose** of the program and expectations of the faculty. The primary difference between program outcomes and performance criteria is that program outcomes are intended to provide general information and thus are not measurable, while performance criteria indicate concrete measurable expectations. Performance criteria are developed from program outcomes.

Sample program **outcomes**:

- Students will have an understanding of the social influences that affected technology in culture.
- Students will work effectively as a member of a team.
- Students can apply the principles of math and science to a technical problem.
- Students will have an appreciation for the need to be lifelong learners.

Performance criteria indicate what concrete actions the student should be able to perform as a result of participation in the program and state minimum criterion for evaluation. Once program outcomes have been identified, the knowledge and skills necessary for the mastery of these outcomes should be listed. This will allow the desired behavior of the students to be described, and will eliminate ambiguity concerning demonstration of expected competencies. Performance criteria are made up of at least two main elements; action verb and content (referent). The expected behavior must be specified by name, using an observable action verb such as demonstrate, interpret, discriminate, or define.

Sample performance criteria:

- Students will know of a professional code of ethics. (knowledge)
- Students will be able to locate technical information independently. (comprehension)
- Students will solve research problems through the application of scientific methods. (application)

Cunningham, G. K. (1986). *Educational and psychological measurement*. New York: MacMillan Publishing.

McBeath, R. J., Ed. (1992). *Instructing and evaluating in higher education: A guidebook for planning learning outcomes*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

COGNITIVE learning is demonstrated by knowledge recall and the intellectual skills: comprehending information, organizing ideas, analyzing and synthesizing data, applying knowledge, choosing among alternatives in problem-solving, and evaluating ideas or actions.

Level	Illustrative Verbs	Definition	Example
Knowledge	arrange, define, describe, duplicate, identify, label, list, match, memorize, name, order, outline, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, select, state	remembering previously learned information	memory of specific facts, terminology, rules, sequences, procedures, classifications, categories, criteria, methodology, principles, theories, and structure
Comprehension	classify, convert, defend, describe, discuss, distinguish, estimate, explain, express, extend, generalize, give examples, identify, indicate, infer, locate, paraphrase, predict, recognize, rewrite, report, restate, review, select, summarize, translate	grasping the meaning of information	stating problem in own words, translating a chemical formula, understanding a flow chart, translating words and phrases from a foreign language
Application	apply, change, choose, compute, demonstrate, discover, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, manipulate, modify, operate, practice, predict, prepare, produce, relate, schedule, show, sketch, solve, use, write	applying knowledge to actual situations	taking principles learned in math and applying them to figuring the volume of a cylinder in an internal combustion engine
Analysis	analyze, appraise, break down, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, identify, illustrate, infer, model, outline, point out, question, relate, select, separate, subdivide, test	breaking down objects or ideas into simpler parts and seeing how the parts relate and are organized	discussing how fluids and liquids differ, detecting logical fallacies in a student's explanation of Newton's 1st law of motion
Synthesis	arrange, assemble, categorize, collect, combine, comply, compose, construct, create, design, develop, devise, design, explain, formulate, generate, integrate, manage, modify, organize, plan, prepare, propose, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, reorganize, revise, rewrite, set up, summarize, synthesize, tell, write	rearranging component ideas into a new whole	writing a comprehensive report on a problem-solving exercise, planning a program or panel discussion, writing a comprehensive term paper
Evaluation	appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, conclude, contrast, defend, describe, discriminate, estimate, evaluate, explain, judge, justify, interpret, relate, predict, rate, select, summarize, support, value	making judgments based on internal evidence or external criteria	evaluating alternative solutions to a problem, detecting inconsistencies in the speech of a student government representative

Gronlund, N. E. (1981). *Measurement and evaluation in teaching, 4th ed.* New York, Macmillan Publishing.

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AFFECTIVE learning is demonstrated by behaviors indicating attitudes of awareness, interest, attention, concern, and responsibility, ability to listen and respond in interactions with others, and ability to demonstrate those attitudinal characteristics or values which are appropriate to the test situation and the field of study.

Level	Illustrative Verbs	Definition	Example
Receiving	asks, chooses, describes, follows, gives, holds, identifies, locates, names, points to, selects, sits erect, replies, uses	willingness to receive or attend	listening to discussions of controversial issues with an open mind, respecting the rights of others
Responding	answers, assists, complies, conforms, discusses, greets, helps, labels, performs, practices, presents, reads, recites, reports, selects, tells, writes	active participation indicating positive response or acceptance of an idea or policy	completing homework assignments, participating in team problem-solving activities
Valuing	completes, describes, differentiates, explains, follows, forms, initiates, invites, joins, justifies, proposes, reads, reports, selects, shares, studies, works	expressing a belief or attitude about the value or worth of something	accepting the idea that integrated curricula is a good way to learn, participating in a campus blood drive
Organization	adheres, alters, arranges, combines, compares, completes, defends, explains, generalizes, identifies, integrates, modifies, orders, organizes, prepares, relates, synthesizes	organizing various values into an internalized system	recognizing own abilities, limitations, and values and developing realistic aspirations
Characterization by a value or value complex	acts, discriminates, displays, influences, listens, modifies, performs, practices, proposes, qualifies, questions, revises, serves, solves, uses, verifies	the value system becomes a way of life	a person's lifestyle influences reactions to many different kinds of situations

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PSYCHOMOTOR learning is demonstrated by physical skills: coordination, dexterity, manipulation, grace, strength, speed; actions which demonstrate the fine motor skills such as use of precision instruments or tools, or actions which evidence gross motor skills such as the use of the body in dance or athletic performance.

Level	Illustrative Verbs	Definition	Example
Perception	chooses, describes, detects, differentiates, distinguishes, identifies, isolates, relates, selects, separates	using sense organs to obtain cues needed to guide motor activity	listening to the sounds made by guitar strings before tuning them, recognizing sounds that indicate malfunctioning equipment
Set	begins, displays, explains, moves, proceeds, reacts, responds, snobs, starts, volunteers	being ready to perform a particular action: mental, physical or emotional	knowing how to use a computer mouse, having instrument ready to play and watching conductor at start of a musical performance, showing eagerness to assemble electronic components to complete a task
Guided response	assembles, builds, calibrates, constructs, dismantles, displays, dissects, fastens, fixes, grinds, heats, manipulates, measures, mends, mixes, organizes, sketches	performing under guidance of a model: imitation or trial and error	using a torque wrench just after observing an expert demonstrate a its use, experimenting with various ways to measure a given volume of a volatile chemical
Mechanism	(same list as for guided response)	being able to perform a task habitually with some degree of confidence and proficiency	demonstrating the ability to correctly execute a 60 degree banked turn in an aircraft 70 percent of the time
Complex or overt response	(same list as for guided response)	performing a task with a high degree of proficiency and skill	dismantling and re-assembling various components of an automobile quickly with no errors
Adaptation	adapts, alters, changes, rearranges, reorganizes, revises, varies	using previously learned skills to perform new but related tasks	using skills developed learning how to operate an electric typewriter to operate a word processor
Origination	arranges, combines, composes, constructs, creates, designs, originates	creating new performances after having developed skills	designing a more efficient way to perform an assembly line task

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