Work-Integrated Learning
and
Program Learning Outcomes

Work-integrated Learning and Program Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, and values/ attitudes that students are expected to attain by the end of a unit of study. Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are broad statements of what students should be able to know and do upon completion of a program (Harden, 2002).

PLOs are intended to be met when a student is at the end of their academic program. However, unlike other PLOs which are met through a series of courses, PLOs related to Work-integrated Learning (WIL) may be met through a single WIL opportunity. Therefore, they may look similar to a course outcome.

Questions to Guide Writing Learning Outcomes for WIL

The following list provides prompts to think about when writing program learning outcomes for Work-integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities.

What type of WIL experience will students be participating in? Is there a particular focus that should be considered when writing learning outcomes (entrepreneurship, service learning, other)?

What disciplinary knowledge, skills and approaches will students develop and/or apply in their WIL experience?

What skills or knowledge should students learn from their WIL experience?

What skills or knowledge do students want to learn in their WIL experience?

What types of projects will students design, manage, collaborate on and/or evaluate as part of their WIL experience?

What connections should students develop between their WIL experience and course learning?

What communication skills should students develop in their WIL experience?

What values, perspectives and beliefs should students reflect upon as part of their WIL experience?

What particular aspects of professionalism, autonomy and/or lifelong learning should students demonstrate as part of their WIL experience? (Stirling et al., 2016)

How can you capture the relationship between the student, community partner, and the University in the learning outcomes?

What is realistic to expect in terms of student learning given the length of time and scope of the WIL experience?

Program Learning Outcome Stems

Program learning outcomes include a stem, a verb, and a statement of expectations of student learning. You may want to consider the following stems for your PLOs:

> By the end of the program, students will be expected to...
> By the end of the program, students should be able to...
> Students who are successful in the program will be able to...

Examples of PLOs by Category

Knowledge of the field or discipline and its application:
- … integrate and apply authentic professional and technical knowledge and skills relating to (the field of study) in a work setting.
- … integrate and apply professional and technical knowledge and skills relating to (the field of study) in a work setting, under supervision.
- … apply course concepts, theories and skills to professional settings.
- … apply knowledge and skills to design, manage, and deliver a project. (Stirling et al., p. 36)

Professionalism:
- … apply ethical standards for the discipline in a work setting with guidance from a mentor.
- … demonstrate integrity and professional conduct according to norms in the workplace.
- … respect individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, and acknowledge their contributions.
- … accept responsibility for one's own growth and development (Davis et al., 2006).
- … demonstrate responsibility for analyzing work situations, making appropriate decisions and following through with them (Stirling et al., 2016).

Communication:
- … clearly communicate to community/ industry partners in appropriate formats such as oral presentations, technical reports, and program evaluation reports, appropriate for the audience and purpose.
- … apply principles of effective collaboration in a work setting.
- … develop effective team work and communication skills and apply them in a work setting.
- … respect confidentiality in the workplace and apply principles of confidential treatment of information.

Critical Reflection/ Metacognition:
- … engage in critical reflection to process the learning experience and apply new insights to future learning.

- … engage in critical reflection to understand various perspectives and/or exercise thoughtful judgment (HEQCO, p. 24)
- … engage in critical reflection to understand one's own perspectives and beliefs.
- … engage in critical reflection to understand various cultural perspectives and beliefs.

Problem Solving:
- … examine workplace settings to understand context, issues, assumptions, and parameters.
- … consider all relevant stakeholder positions, cultural perspectives and alternative pathways to solving workplace problems.
- … think independently and cooperatively to identify relevant existing ideas and generate original solution ideas (Davis et al., 2006).
- … solve or resolve a workplace problem under supervision.

Leadership:
- … motivate others to achieve individual and organizational goals.
- … provide support and removes barriers to aid the success of others
- … encourage achievement by recognizing individual and group successes (Davis et al., 2006).

Community and Industry Research and Projects:
- … formulate new research questions relating to a work setting.
- … apply appropriate techniques to investigate research questions.
- … use appropriate data analysis procedures to infer trends and results.
- … clearly communicate findings to community/ industry partners in appropriate formats such as technical reports or program evaluation reports (CEWIL, 2021).

Entrepreneurship:
- … leverage resources, space, mentorship and/or funding to engage in entrepreneurship.
- … advance external ideas that address real-world needs (CEWIL, 2021).
- … demonstrate entrepreneurial thinking skills, such as design thinking, systems thinking, or transdisciplinary thinking, to identify opportunities for impact.
- … look for and identify opportunities for improvement, innovation or creativity.
- … explore strategic partnerships and forge working relationships that can help to solve problems.
- … engage in social entrepreneurship to identify ways to for people to live in a way that is more sustainable, economically viable, culturally responsive, and/or educationally supported.
- … identify resources and innovate to generate value.
- … develop an understanding of their level of risk tolerance.
- … identify the usefulness of new learning and how it can be applied in creative or innovative ways.

For more information on writing program learning outcomes for WIL, please see *A practical guide for Work-integrated Learning* (Stirling et al., 2016).

References:

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