



Day 2

Learning Outcomes for Research Assignments

Successful assignments bring focus to the development of research and information-seeking skills, both those related to the information-seeking process and those related to the products of research. The articulation of learning outcomes provides a framework for the assignment design and instructional support.

Learning Outcomes...

- Emphasize what the instructor intends students to know or be able to do as a result of an activity, assignment, course, or curriculum.
- Make explicit the development and assessment of transferable skills.
- Are stated in terms of observable behaviors students will exhibit.
- Motivate students and influence the way they experience the assignment.

The Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education

(ALA, 2000) describe the characteristics of an information literate student: one who is able to recognize when information is needed and has the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information. The Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education include five standards, each subdivided into performance indicators and learning outcomes.

An information literate student is able to:

1. Determine the extent of the information needed.
2. Access needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

Some disciplines have developed their own descriptions of information literacy. **Information Literacy in the Disciplines** (ACRL, 2005) has gathered links and citations to information literacy standards and curricula developed by accrediting agencies, professional associations, and institutions of higher education.

Considerations When Prioritizing Learning Outcomes

1. Learning outcomes reflect your intent by making clear what students will know and be able to do as a result of the assignment.
2. The learning outcomes you prioritize provide a pivot for assignment design and assessment.
 - a. For outcomes you prioritize, students should be required to do something more extensive such as create a product and receive feedback.
 - b. For outcomes not prioritized, consider narrowing the scope of the assignment or the extent of what students must do.
 - c. For outcomes related to the information-seeking process, work with your I-Team to develop instructional support.
 - d. For outcomes related to mechanical aspects of the research product, consider developing models or guides to support students.
3. The number, cognitive complexity, and range of the outcomes you prioritize must be appropriate to the size and content of your course, the characteristics of your students, and the amount of time you will spend on the assignment.

Sources:

Battersby, Mark and the Learning Outcomes Network. "So, What's a Learning Outcome, Anyway?" Vancouver, B.C.: Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, July 1999, ERIC Document ED430611.

"Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education." American Library Association. 2004. Online: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm> (accessed 23 May, 2006).

"Information Literacy in the Disciplines." Association of College and Research Libraries. Instruction Section. Teaching Methods Committee. 2005. Online: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/is/projectsacrl/infolitdisciplines/> (accessed 23 May, 2006).