

Evaluating Outcomes

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What are Outcomes?

“Outcomes are the changes in service recipients (clients), i.e., the results of the inputs enacting the processes.”

(Baudouin, et al 2007, pg 148)

Purposes of Measuring Outcomes

Overall, measuring outcomes allows you to evaluate what you are achieving and what impact you are having. This can be useful for:

- providing greater clarity about the purpose and intentions of a program/service
- seeing if you are accomplishing what you hope to be accomplishing
- identifying which programs or program components are not meeting desired goals and therefore need changes
- demonstrating the value of a program/service/office to stakeholders
- reinforcing anecdotal evidence that “we know this service is good and helps students” with concrete data that demonstrates that students do reach desired outcomes
- collaborating and aligning yourself with the academic areas in your institution that may also be working on setting and evaluating outcomes, in particular learning outcomes
- providing answers to questions such as
 - What does the career centre do?
 - What is the value of the career centre to the university?
 - What impact are we having?
 - What difference does the career centre make?

Types of Outcomes

The [CRWG Framework](#) classifies outcomes into three categories: learning outcomes, personal attribute outcomes, and impact outcomes.

Definitions of the Three Categories of Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Personal Attribute Outcomes	Impact Outcomes
Knowledge and skills that can be linked directly to the program or intervention being used	Changes in attitudes or intrapersonal variables such as self-esteem, motivation, that change as a result of participation	Impact that the learning outcomes or the personal attribute outcomes have on the client's life, such as employment status, enrolled in training, etc. Social and relational impact Economic impact

(definitions from Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007), p 148)

Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes

Learning and personal attribute outcomes are sometimes seen as two different types of outcomes, and sometimes seen as being within the same category.

Why Is It Important to Measure Learning?

Learning as a variable of interest for career centres has become very popular. Consider

- “the ACPA (1996) affirmed in its hallmark document, *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs*, that learning and development are “inextricably intertwined and inseparable” (Green, Jones, & Aloï, 2008, p. 2).
- “ACPA and NASPA (2004) reaffirmed these calls for reform by stressing the importance of learning “as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development” (Green, Jones, & Aloï, 2008, p. 22).

Why might learning be important for career centres specifically?

- Assessing learning can help demonstrate how the career centre supports any university-wide learning outcome goals and contributes meaningfully to the student experience.
- Framing career centre activities as supporting student learning helps to align the career centre with the rest of a learning-based institution.
- A lot of career centre activities can be seen as educational or psychoeducational.

Organizing Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes

When considering learning outcomes, there are several options for how to identify or develop appropriate learning outcomes. For example,

- a career centre can develop its own set of desired student learning outcomes, based on a discussion of the particular things that you believe are important for students to learn (these may be aligned with institutional priorities or desired graduate attributes).
- your institution, or division of student affairs may have a set of learning outcomes that you could use and/or adapt

- there are several sets of learning outcomes available from organizations outside of your particular institution which may be applicable.

Of those sets of learning outcomes that are available, the CRWG Framework recommends using the [Blueprint for Life/Work Designs](#) for organizing learning outcomes

The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs: (a summary)

1. Personal management outcomes
 - Build and maintain a positive personal image
 - Interact positively and effectively with others
 - Change and grow throughout one's life
2. Learning and work exploration outcomes
 - Participate in lifelong learning supportive of life/work goals
 - Locate and effectively use life/work information
 - Understand the relationship between work and society/economy
3. Life/work building outcomes
 - Secure, create, and maintain work
 - Make life/work-enhancing decisions
 - Maintain balanced life and work roles
 - Understand the changing nature of life/work roles
 - Understand, engage in, and manage one's own life/work process

Each of these points listed above is further refined by stages of development - a version of the full Blueprint is available on the [website](#) for the Blueprint.

Two other sources for suggested learning outcomes are Learning Reconsidered and The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Learning Reconsidered

[Learning Reconsidered](#) lays out a set of seven learning outcomes

1. Cognitive Complexity
2. Knowledge Acquisition, Integration, and Application
3. Humanitarianism
4. Civic Engagement
5. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal competence
6. Practical Competence
7. Persistence and Academic Achievement.

For more information, including dimensions of each outcome area, and sample developmental experiences for learning for each outcome area see [Learning Reconsidered \(2006\)](#) pgs 21-22.

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

The [Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education](#) (CAS) has outlined a set of learning and developmental outcomes. They have also integrated the outcomes from Learning Reconsidered.

CAS identifies six Student Outcome Domains:

1. Knowledge Acquisition, Construction, Integration, and Application
2. Cognitive Complexity
3. Intrapersonal Development
4. Interpersonal Competence
5. Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
6. Practical Competence.

Each domain is then broken down into several dimensions. In addition, they provide specific examples of learning and development outcomes for each of the outcome domains. A full chart of the domains, dimensions, and examples is available on their [website](#).

Writing Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes

If you are planning to set learning and/or personal attribute outcomes for your programs and services, it can be helpful to have some tools to assist with writing good outcome statements.

This section will provide:

- two possible “formulas” for structuring learning outcome statements
- an introduction to Bloom’s taxonomy which helps you think about the levels of learning that you want to facilitate

“Formulas” for Writing Learning Outcomes

One simple structure for formulating a learning outcome is complete the following phrase:

- At the end of instruction, students will be able to ...

For example, some possible learning outcomes using this structure could be

By the end of the workshop, students will be able to explain why networking is important for finding jobs in the hidden job market.

A second simple structure for formulating a learning outcome is the ABCD Method (Heinich, et al., 1996).

This structure consists of four parts:

- A. Audience – Who? Who are your learners?
- B. Behavior – What? What do you expect them to be able to do? This should be an overt, observable behavior, even if the actual behavior is covert or mental in nature.
- C. Condition – How? Under what circumstances or context will the learning occur?
- D. Degree – How much? How much will be accomplished, how well will the behavior need to be performed, and to what level

For example, a possible learning outcome using this structure could be:

Audience:	all students in the career planning workshop
Behaviour:	will identify possible career options that they want to research further
Condition:	by the end of the workshop
Degree:	at least 3 options for each student

By the end of the career planning workshop, all students in attendance will identify at least 3 possible career options that they want to research further.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

A popular tool for helping instructors identify the type of learning that they want to facilitate is Bloom’s Taxonomy. This taxonomy classifies learning into six categories, each one more complex than the previous.

1. Evaluation	Higher order
2. Synthesis	↑
3. Analysis	↑
4. Application	↑
5. Comprehension	↑
6. Knowledge	Lower order

There are several websites that provide information to help you apply this taxonomy as you develop learning outcomes.

For example:

<http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learning/exams/blooms-taxonomy.html>

<http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/Dalton.htm>

Impact Outcomes

Impact outcomes are the “ultimate, hoped-for end result of an intervention” (Baudouin, et al 2007, pg 150). They occur after the end of the intervention, sometimes long after. Examples of possible impacts include:

- receiving a job offer
- accepting a job
- maintaining a job
- acquiring an income
- receiving acceptance into further education (graduate program, professional program, college program)
- satisfaction with career choice

Impact outcomes can be challenging to define and measure because:

- They can only be measured after a client has completed a program or finished using a service. It can be difficult to reach clients and get sufficient numbers of responses.
- Impact outcomes can be influenced by many external forces. For example, if employment is the desired impact outcome, in addition to any contribution a career centre program has made to a students’ ability to find employment, their likelihood of securing employment can also be affected by
 - labour market trends and unemployment rates
 - other experiences (such as internships, summer jobs, volunteer work) they did, or did not, participate in while students
 - how well the curriculum in their program developed the skills and knowledge required for the work they are targeting
 - other variables outside of the control of the career centre
- It can be challenging to ascertain what impact outcomes are reasonable to expect from a particular service or intervention. For example, what is a reasonable impact outcome to expect from a student participating in a single one-hour practice interview session?

Note: Often measures such as client satisfaction are gathered at the end of service and considered an outcome. Remember that in this model, outputs (such as client satisfaction) are considered not outcomes (indicators of client change) but part of processes (as indicators that processes were followed well).

Probably the most common method that career centres have used to try to measure impact outcomes is graduate or alumni surveys. In some cases these surveys are conducted by the career centre, while others are done at the institutional level. Some are given as exit polls around the time of graduation, others follow up with graduates after some time has passed.

Examples of graduate surveys conducted by career centres:

[CAPS Employment Survey of University of Alberta graduates](#) (2000)

[Queen's University Exit Polls](#) See page 60 for “Satisfaction with career counselling services” and page 72 for expectations (related to work and further education) after graduation.

Example of a provincial post graduation survey:

[Council of Ontario Universities](#)

Example Tools for Measuring Outcomes

Here are several tools that have been used to look at outcomes:

Each section of this guide contains tools that allow you to document and evaluate a specific component – either inputs, processes, or outcomes. However, often a single tool can in fact be used for multiple assessment purposes. For example, a post-service questionnaire can capture information about both processes and outcomes. The tools below are designed for measuring outcomes, but may overlap with inputs and processes.

Program Outcomes Planning Worksheet for Proposed Employment Prep Program for International Students, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview	
	Worksheet	
Volunteer Internship Program Learning Outcomes tools, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers learning outcomes)	Overview	
	Outcomes Tracking form	
	Orientation Survey	
	Ongoing Reflection Workbook	
Past Participant Follow Up Survey for Volunteer Internship Program, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers personal attribute outcomes)	Overview	
	Worksheet	

Resume Research Project tools, Career Services, University of Waterloo (covers learning and personal attribute outcomes)	Overview	
	Resume Rubric	
	Student Survey	
Career Advising Appointment Evaluation, Career Services, University of Waterloo (covers learning and personal attribute outcomes)	Overview	
	Evaluation form	
Communication Internship Program, University of Toronto (covers impact outcomes)	Overview	
	Survey form	
Career Counselling Evaluation Form, Career Centre, Trent University (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview	
	Evaluation Form	
Interview Workshop Evaluation, Career Centre, Trent University (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview	
	Evaluation Form	
Workshop Evaluation Form and Process, Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo	Overview	
	Process	
	Evaluation Form	

Outcomes References

Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007). Demonstrating value: A draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions, *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 41(3), 146-157.