

# Learning Goals / Outcomes

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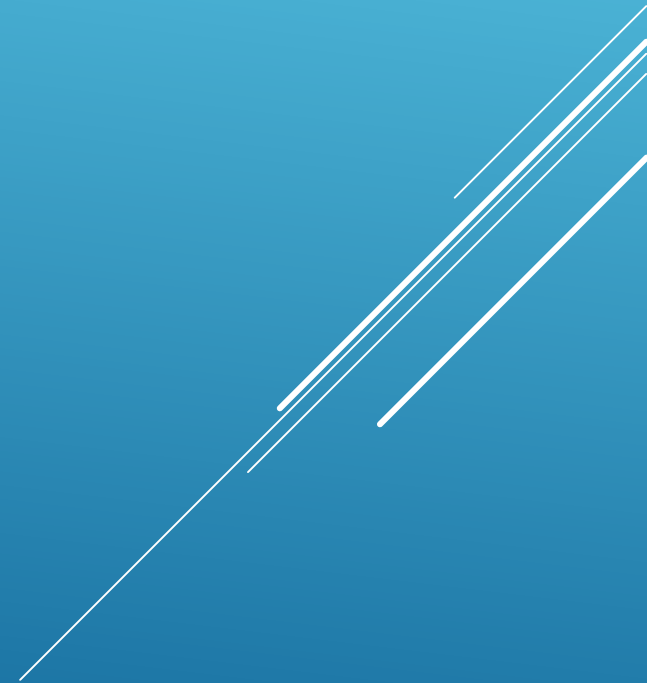
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# Learning Goals / Outcomes

Some reminders from before...



# Assessment is...

“the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning.”

*Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments and General Education* by Barbara E. Walvoord (John Wiley & Sons, 2004, pp. 2-3.)

# Levels for Assessment

NEASC notes that assessment of student learning takes place at three levels:

1. Course
2. Program
3. Institution

Ideally, these aren't really distinctive and disconnected from each other...

# Levels...

Institutional Goals for student learning should be reflected in the goals of academic programs, which should be reflected in the goals of individual courses

Graduates of our College will be critical thinkers...

(Institution)

... Psychology majors will think critically about the human condition...

(Program)

... by the end of the semester, students in Psych Stats will use statistical methods to critically evaluate claims about the human condition.

(Course)

# Learning Goals, not Teaching Goals

## ▶ Teaching Goals

*The educational objectives in the undergraduate program in the Department of Chemical Engineering are to:*

- *educate students in chemical engineering fundamentals and practice;*
- *train students in chemical process design and integration;*

## ▶ Learning Outcomes

# Terminology

Learning *Goals*

Learning *Objectives*


Learning *Outcomes*

... Specialists discriminate these terms (from broad to specific) and for good reasons. But ultimately:

*What do you want students to learn,  
and how will you know?*

# Definition

*Learning Outcomes* describe the specific and measurable learning that students should achieve by the end of an activity, course, or program. They identify what students will know, what they will be able to do, and what they value (**knowledge, skills, and dispositions**).






# Measurable Goals

The Right Verbs...

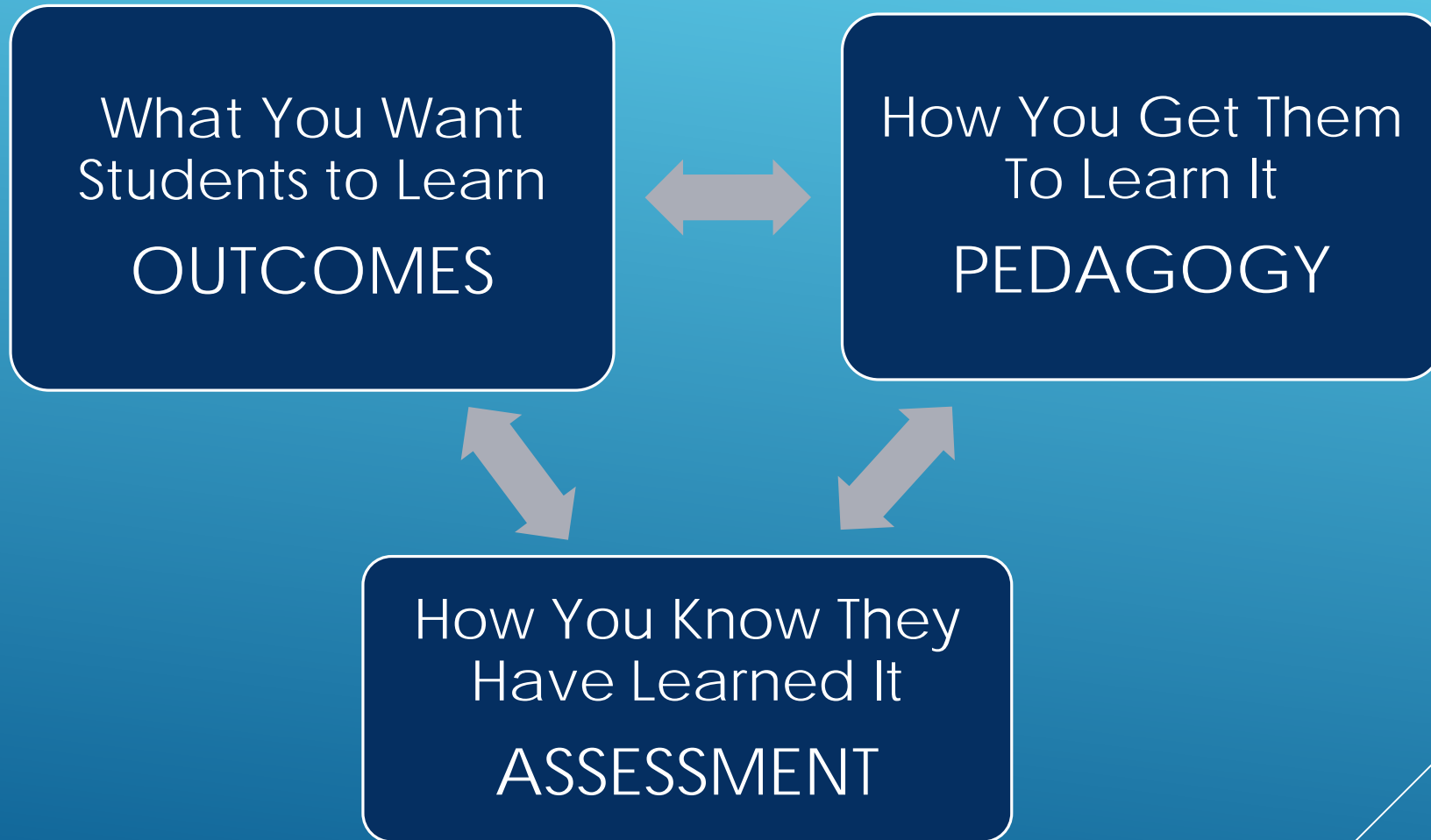
Measurable Learning Goals/ Outcomes

Appreciate vs. Demonstrate

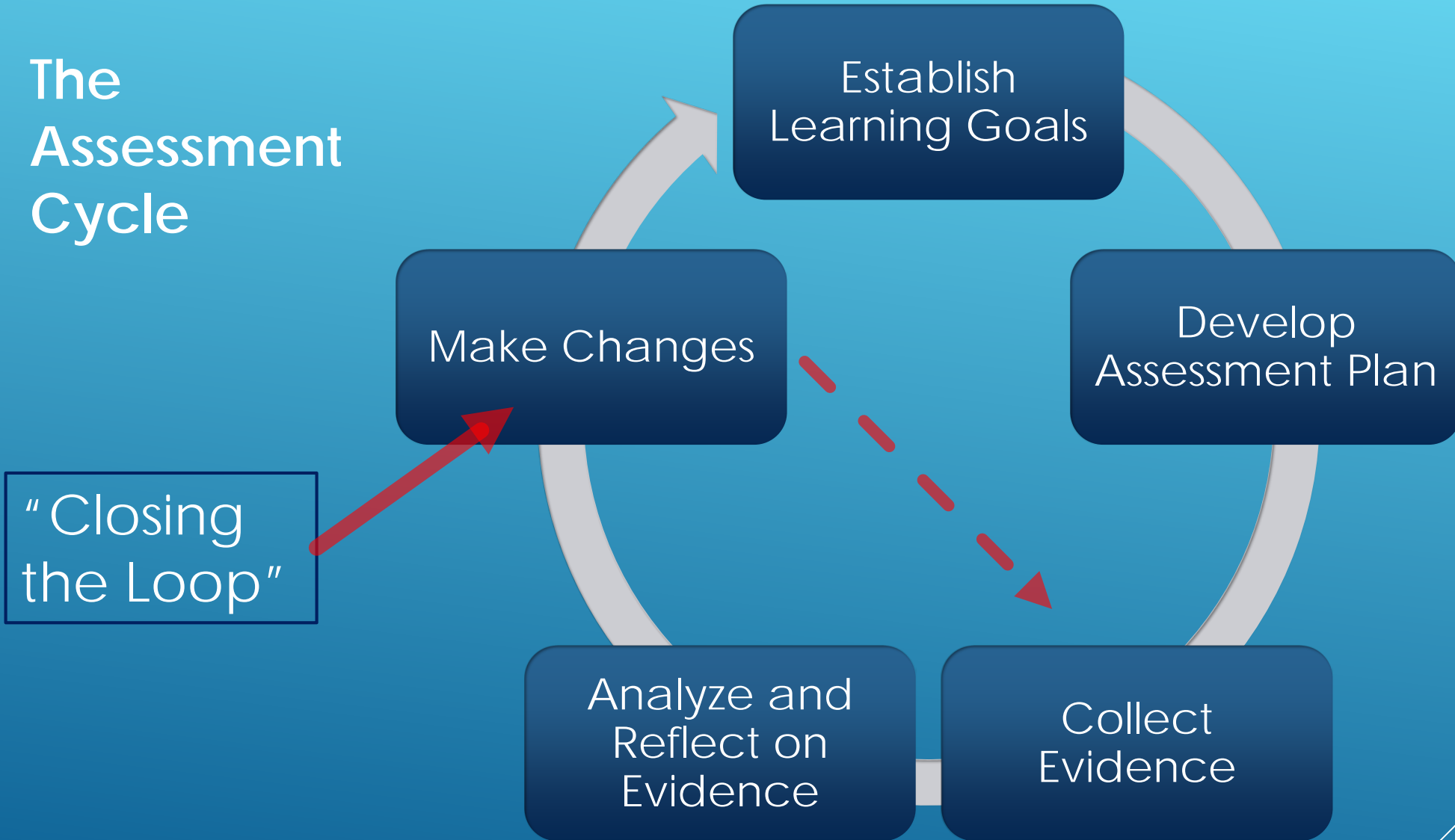
*What do you want students to learn,  
and how will you know?*

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# Process



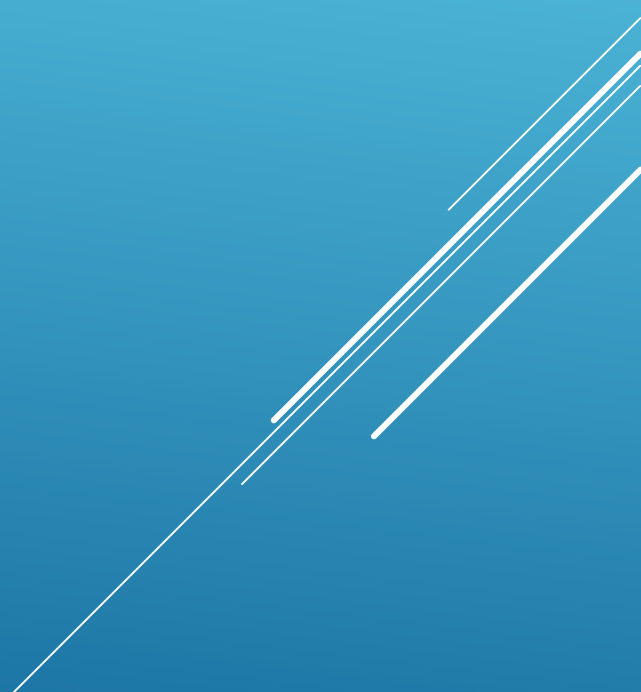
# The Assessment Cycle



# So how do I write program learning goals?

It takes time. Respect that.

My approach involves multiple drafts.



# So how do I write program learning goals?

Version 1. Don't worry about language; generate an idea about what you want students to be like after completing your program.

*I want my students to be critical thinkers.*

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# So how do I write program learning goals?

Version 2. Now think about what kind of behavior would serve as evidence of that – generate a “behavioral” description.

*I want my students to be critical thinkers.*

*I want my students to consider a variety of issues and perspectives to reach a defensible position.*

# So how do I write program learning goals?

Version 3. Think about a context in which students will demonstrate that behavior.

*I want my students to consider a variety of issues and perspectives to reach a defensible position.*

*I want my students to be able to make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories and the strength of evidence for each.*

# So how do I write program learning goals?

Version 3b. Rewrite it in “Student learning outcome” language.

*I want my students to be able to make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories and the strength of evidence for each.*

*After completing the Psychology program, students will be able to evaluate competing psychological theories.*



These two versions are useful – the second one is a “publishable” learning goal; the first is your “internal” goal that provides a basis for assessment.

*Students will be able to make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories and the strength of evidence for each.*

*After completing the Psychology program, students will be able to evaluate competing psychological theories.*

Differing levels of specificity:

*Students will be able to ...*

**Program**

*make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories and the strength of evidence for each.*

*... make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories in experimental psychology and the strength of evidence for each.*

*... make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates structural versus process theories of memory and the strength of evidence for each.*

**Course or assignment**

# The “right verbs”

Learning outcomes should be measurable – how do you measure “appreciate” or “understand” ?

Demonstrate an understanding... ?? [“cheating”]

Bloom’s Taxonomy [handout]

ABCD format: B is for *behavior* [handout]

# Components to include

## ABCD format

Audience	students
Behavior	what activity, behavior reveals learning
Condition	or context in which the behavior occurs
Degree	level of performance, criterion

Students attending the smoking cessation program will identify the five main effects of smoking on one's health

## ABCD format – sometimes D is implied

*Students will be able to make an argument for a theoretical position that evaluates competing theories and the strength of evidence for each.*

Degree tells you how to evaluate student performance. For evaluating this learning goal, the faculty would have a rubric assigning scores to different levels of performance.

So if Degree isn't stated, you'll need to identify it when you are scoring student work.

# Student Learning Outcomes Checklist [handout]

The handout identifies 10 criteria to consider

1. Describe what students should be able to demonstrate, represent or produce (behavior)
2. Describe discrete activities that lead directly to assessment (measurable, observable)
3. Use "operational" verbs (describe student actions that are directly observed and subject to judgment)

# Student Learning Outcomes Checklist [handout]

4. Represent the level and type of competence expected at that point in the program (Degree)
5. Focus on the learning result and not the learning process (they are learning goals, not teaching goals)
6. Do not indicate a quality that the student possesses prior to learning
7. Are simply stated so that outcomes requiring different assessment methods are not bundled into one statement

# Student Learning Outcomes Checklist [handout]

8. Are framed in terms of program, rather than individual courses (level of specificity)
9. Are challenging but attainable
10. Lend themselves to diagnosing areas for improvement (closing the loop)

So let's evaluate your program learning outcomes!

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