At Shorter University, institutional assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) occurs at the program level. While there are some SLOs that are constructed and implemented at the course level, their assessment is conducted by the faculty member overseeing the course.

Program SLOs are created and amended at the beginning of a five-year Program Review cycle. While not every SLO is assessed every year, every SLO should be thoroughly assessed at least once during a Program Review cycle, and some should be repeated if deemed necessary by the Department Chair. Every Program SLO should correspond to at least one of the eight Shorter University Educational Principles.

Course SLOs are created at the time of course creation. It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure that the Course SLOs are fulfilled during the semester.

A Student Learning Outcome has three components:

- A phrase or sentence beginning with “Students will” or “Students will be able to”
- A verb that captures the action the student will be able to take that demonstrates the knowledge (articulate, explain, describe...) or skill (analyze, design, write, develop, create, test...) in question
- A concluding phrase that elaborates on the verb (explain how socialization works in everyday life; analyze DNA using electrophoresis)

Strong versus Weak Learning Outcomes

The table on the next page compares strong and weak Student Learning Outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Direct Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Weak Direct Learning Outcomes</th>
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Updated 04/2015.
### Meaningful: get at faculty interests regarding student learning of relevant knowledge/skills
- Not meaningful; selected for ease rather than actual value or meaningfulness; perhaps chosen in a hurry or under pressure

### Focus on skills/knowledge to be gained in a specific course, minor, or major
- Not meaningful; selected for ease rather than actual value or meaningfulness; perhaps chosen in a hurry or under pressure

### Outcome verbs are sharp clear, and specific (write, calculate, explain, predict, describe, create, analyze, evaluate…) and make it crystal-clear what students should know and be able to do at the end of the course/minor/major
- Outcome verbs are vague (understand, comprehend, demonstrate an understanding of) and don’t really get at the intended outcome (how exactly students demonstrate “understanding” or “comprehension”?)

### One verb per learning outcome
- Multiple verbs per learning outcome

### Brief and to the point – bullet-point length is fine in most cases. “Students will be able to…”
- Wordy, packing in multiple ideas and perhaps including assessment demonstrations, which are ideally separated from the outcomes

### Readily observable/demonstrable/measurable through a thoughtful assessment process
- Not easy to observe/demonstrate/measure, usually because the verbs are not clear

### Manageable: not too many outcomes (not more than 8 for a course; not more than 20 for a department/program, and fewer can be better)
- Unmanageable: too many outcomes, overwhelming as departments/programs try to figure out what to assess and when

### Discipline-specific much of the time
- Overwhelmingly general education skills, even within a department/program

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*Updated 05/2015.*

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