

## LAC Task Force discussion items (2/21/2014 Meeting)

The LAC Phase II Task Force has been assigned to look at our current process for writing course-level outcomes, especially as they pertain to assessment and consider if the process is working for us now and in the future, or if we should consider implementing a new faculty driven/supported process at PCC.

### Some background information

Current guidelines for course outcomes at PCC ask faculty to state what a student will be able to do “out there” in the “real world”, or in future classes once they have completed the class. This approach was adopted back in the mid-90’s during a period well before the expectation of assessing each outcome.

“Out there” moved us from CCOGs that focused on “classroom objectives” or a list of “100 factoids/competencies” to a more integrative and holistic view of the course content and its higher purpose for learning. While the “out there” focus has been good in certain ways, there is a sense that this focus, without qualifications, may have tensions with how assessment and outcome expectations are evolving on the national scene, including meeting Standard 4.A.3 by our accreditation body (NWCCU).

Additionally, while the “out there” focus may work well for some SACs, there is a concern that it might be limiting for other SACs.

It is time to re-evaluate and, perhaps, broaden our current guidelines for how course outcomes are written. The EAC/LAC Phase II workgroup began this conversation in 2012-13 and created a “Best Thinking” document to help inform future discussions.

For 2013-14, the conversation on course-level outcomes is being expanded upon, led by LAC’s Phase II Task Force Subcommittee using the “Best Thinking” document to help guide the conversation. While the work is being led by the LAC Phase II Task Force, this work is a collaborative effort between the LAC, Curriculum Committee, and members of the EAC/LAC Phase II Workgroup.

After discussion and feedback by the LAC and Curriculum Committee, the conversation will be taken to the EAC for additional discussion and feedback.

### Timeline:

- LAC feedback in February
- CC feedback in March/April
- EAC feedback in April/May

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### Current Guidelines for Course-Level Outcomes:

If you are curious as to the current guidelines for course-level outcomes they can be found at this link: <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/curriculum/course-development/new/outcomesguidelines.html>:

### NWCCU “Troublesome” Standard 4.A.3:

**Standard 4.A.3** The institution documents, through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, that students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes.

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## Requested Feedback from LAC Members:

As you read the 6 items below, please consider each as representative of your SAC and as an individual who is knowledgeable in assessment and carries a wide-view. ☺ Free to make your comments on this document and send them to a task force member for inclusion in our notes. Please do not distribute this document to others as it is not ready for wide distribution.

1. Does the “out there” focus work for your discipline/program? If so, what do you like about this focus? If not, what do you not like about this focus?
2. Some SACs have unmeasurable course outcomes that might be best described as “aspirational” (eg, enjoy a life enriched by calculus). This is problematic for Standard 4.A.3 and assessment in general. However, capturing the “hope” for the course is important. If this is a concern for your discipline/program, do you think your SAC might utilize a new field in the CCOG where aspirational goals for the course could be articulated?
3. If course outcomes represent what students have “achieved” (per Standard 4.A.3), should we alter the frame given on the CCOG’s? Possible revised framing for course-level outcomes on the CCOGs follow:
  - a. Keep the current wording:  
Upon successful completion students should be able to: . . . . <outcome>
  - b. Keep “should,” but emphasize “demonstrate”:
    - i. Upon successful completion students should be able to demonstrate they have knowledge of . . . <outcome>
    - ii. Upon successful completion students should be able to demonstrate what they know and can do relating to . . . . . <outcome>
  - c. Replace “should” with “will” and emphasize “demonstrate”
    - i. Upon successful completion of the course, students will have demonstrated the ability to: . . . <outcome>.
    - ii. Upon successful completion students will have demonstrated they have knowledge of . . . <outcome>
    - iii. Upon successful completion students will have demonstrated what they know and can do relating to . . . . . <outcome>
4. The current “out there” focus does not specify a timeframe for expectation of when the student should be able to demonstrate the outcome. What time frame is reasonable for displaying outcome? For example, should “upon successful completion of the course” indicate what students know and can do *immediately* after completion of the course vs the next month or next year?
5. To meet NWCCU Standard 4.A.3, we need to move to outcome statements which are measurable (expectational). However, faculty often have ideals and hopes for a course that are not measurable or easily measurable. Sometimes the ideals and hopes are aspirational. These statements might include words such as appreciate, enjoy, and understand. Does your SAC have outcomes that are not measurable? What would be the pros/cons of having a new optional CCOG field where unmeasurable and/or aspirational goals for the course could be articulated, but assessment would not be required or expected?

6. In your opinion - what role do outcomes play in a course? Which of the following do you agree and/or disagree with:
- A. Course outcomes should collectively represent the totality of the expected learning in a course- a thorough description of the course.
  - B. Course outcomes should only the main key/critical elements for a course that will be covered and assessed in all sections, but may not capture all the expected learning for a course.
  - C. Course outcomes should the absolute minimal expectations for student learning in the course (eg, in some way representing "C level").
  - D. Is this dependent on the course and/or the SAC?

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**Members of LAC's Phase II Task Force Subcommittee:**

Sally (leader), Gabe, Lisa, Amara, Jamee, Michele

Working Document