

Guidelines for Writing Differentiated Learning Outcomes **Office of Continuous Improvement**

The following guidelines for writing differentiated learning outcomes was influenced by the Degree Qualifications Profile (Adelman, Ewell, Gaston & Schneider, 2014). The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) is a guide for writing learning outcomes that advance program rigor and relevant student learning at all degree levels. DQP is based on the concept of tuning, which is “a faculty led, discipline-by-discipline attempt to determine what students should learn and be able to do (often referred to as learning outcomes mapping or alignment) at applicable stages of the disciplinary curriculum” (page 45). The described guidelines and examples of differentiated learning outcomes should be used as a tool to help guide program and course learning experiences. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp-web-download.pdf>

Differentiated Learning Outcomes Guidelines:

1. **Multiple degree levels:** program learning outcomes for bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees within the same field of study will include knowledge and skills that are expected by students completing the specific degree level.
2. **Program competency:** program learning outcomes describe the achievements expected at the level of mastery for each degree level.
3. **Measurable outcomes:** program learning outcomes in all degree levels include active learning verbs and increase in rigor as students move up the degree ladder. All outcomes must be measurable.
4. **Specialized knowledge for fields of study:** program learning outcomes include specialized knowledge required for the field of study at the specific degree level.
5. **Undergraduate degree learning levels:** program learning outcomes for undergraduate programs include lower-level and higher-level cognitive skills.
6. **Graduate degree learning levels:** program learning outcomes for graduate programs include higher-level cognitive skills. Graduate level course assignments may include lower-level cognitive skills, but at the end of the assignment and course student learning achievement should reflect higher-level cognitive skills.
7. **Doctoral degree learning levels:** doctoral program learning outcomes include learning at the highest level. Specialized knowledge and skill should be delineated from the master’s degree level.
8. **Certificate Levels:** undergraduate and graduate certificates include learning outcomes appropriate to the course level and are different from the corresponding program.
9. **Lower-level cognitive skills:** lower-level cognitive skills include recognizing and recalling facts and understanding what the facts mean (Bloom’s Taxonomy).
10. **Higher-level cognitive skills:** higher-level cognitive skills include applying the facts, rules, concepts, and ideas; breaking down information into components parts; judging the value of information or ideas; and combining parts to a make a new whole (Bloom’s Taxonomy).
11. **Undergraduate/Graduate cross-listed course:** An undergraduate 3000 or 4000 level course may be cross-listed at the 6000 level. Learning experiences must include additional advanced learning outcomes for graduate level credit.

Example:

Students will:

Bachelor’s level: Differentiate and evaluate theories and approaches to selected complex problems within (field of study).

Master’s level: Disaggregate, reformulate, and adapt principal ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of (field of study) in carrying out an essay or project.

Doctoral level: Design principal ideas, models, techniques or methods in (field of study) in carrying out a dissertation or publication.