

## How do course objectives differ from learning outcomes?

Objectives	Outcomes
Objectives represent valuable skills, tools, or content (nuts and bolts) that enable a student to engage a particular subject.	<i>SLOs represent overarching products of the course.</i>
Objectives focus on content and skills important within the classroom or program: what the staff and faculty will do. Often termed the input in the course.	<i>Outcomes express higher level thinking skills that integrate the content and activities and can be observed as a behavior, skill, or discrete useable knowledge upon completing the class.</i>
Objectives can often be numerous, specific, and detailed. Assessing and reporting on each objective for each student may be impossible.	<i>An assessable outcome is an end product that can be displayed or observed and evaluated against criteria.</i>

## Examples of Objectives Vs. Outcomes

Nutrition Course	
Objectives	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review nutritional recommendations and components.</li> <li>Discuss differences in nutritional requirements associated with sex, age and activity.</li> <li>Describe causes and consequences of nutritional problems.</li> <li>Explain complications of underlying physiologic conditions.</li> <li>Identify key factors involved in correcting nutritional behaviors.</li> <li>Describe resources and strategies the treat nutritional disorders.</li> </ul>	<i>Analyze a document's nutritional problem, determine a strategy to correct the problem, and write a draft nutritional policy addressing the broader scope of the problem</i>
Speech Communication Course	
Objectives	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will learn to accommodate the learning styles of their audience in order to maintain audience attention.</li> <li>Students will learn to choose and narrow topics in order to focus an audience's attention.</li> </ul>	<i>At the end of this course you should be able to</i> <i>~analyze your audience for differences and similarities in</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>socio-economic background</i></li> <li><i>learning styles</i></li> <li><i>personal interests and needs</i></li> </ul>

## ASSESSMENTS

*When SLOs are well-written the methods or tools for assessment become clear. One size does not fit all, so selecting the appropriate assessment tool requires a basic understanding of: 1) the types of tools available, 2) the nature of data, 3) the process used to select appropriate assessment tools, 4) and the tool's ability to investigate (measure, assess, describe) the observable learning outcome.*

---

### Quality data can be defined as:

**Valid** - the data accurately represents what you are trying to measure. For instance, the numbers of people that graduate don't necessarily represent good data on what has actually been learned.

**Reliable** - the data are reproducible. Repeated assessment yields the same data.

**Authentic** - the assessment simulates real-life circumstances.

**Relevant** - the data answers important questions and is not generated simply because it is easy to measure.

**Effective** - the data contributes to improving teaching and learning.

### Definitions of Contrasting Types of Assessment

---

**Direct data.** Direct data measures the exact value. For instance, a math test directly measures a student's learning in math by defining a criteria and standard, then having the student analyze a problem.

**Indirect data.** Data that measures a variable related to the intended value. For instance, a person's math skills may be indirectly measured through an employer's questionnaire asking about the computational skills of graduating students.

---

**Qualitative data.** Data collected as descriptive information, such as a narrative or portfolio. These types of data, often collected in open-ended questions, feedback surveys, or summary reports, are more difficult to compare, reproduce, and generalize. It is bulky to store and to report; however, it is often the most valuable and insightful data generated, often providing potential solutions or modifications in the form of feedback.

**Quantitative data.** Data collected as numerical or statistical values. These data use actual numbers (scores, rates, etc) to express quantities of a variable. Qualitative data, such as opinions, can be displayed as numerical data by using Likert scaled responses which assign a numerical

value to each response (e.g. 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree). This data is easy to store and manage; it can be generalized and reproduced, but has limited value due to the rigidity of the responses and must be carefully constructed to be valid.

---

**Formative assessment.** Formative evaluation involves assessment and analysis that generates useful feedback for development and improvement. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to perform and receive guidance (such as in-class assignments, quizzes, discussion, lab activities, etc.) that will improve or shape performance on a final or summative evaluation.

**Summative assessment.** Summative evaluation is a final determination of particular knowledge, skills, and abilities. This could be exemplified by exit or licensing exams, senior recitals, or any final assessment which is not created to provide feedback for improvement, but is used for final judgments.

---

**Criterion-based assessments.** Assessment evaluated or scored using a set of criteria to appraise or evaluate work. Criterion-referenced evaluation is based on proficiency, not subjective measures such as improvement.

**Norm-referenced assessment.** Assessment of an individual is compared to that of another individual or to the same individual's improvement over time. Individuals are commonly ranked to determine a median or average. This technique addresses overall mastery, but provides little detail about specific skills.

---

**Embedded assessment.** Embedded assessment occurs within the regular class or curricular activity. Class assignments linked to student learning outcomes through primary trait analysis serve as grading and assessment instruments. Individual questions on exams can be embedded in numerous classes to provide departmental, program, or institutional assessment information. An additional benefit to embedded assessment is immediate feedback on the pedagogy and student needs.

**Standardized assessment.** Assessments created, tested, and usually sold by an educational testing company e.g. GRE's, SAT, ACT for broad public usage and data comparison, usually scored normatively.

**Homegrown or Local assessment.** This type of assessment is developed and validated for a specific purpose, course, or function and is usually criterion-referenced to promote validity.