

The best way to create new SLOs for a course is to use backward design.

- (1) Ask yourself: “What are the most important skills or attitudes that my students should take away from my class?”
- (2) Once your course goals are identified, determine the *action* that students must take to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome. (Note: Bloom’s Taxonomy words can very useful here. The phrase “demonstrate understanding” is not specific enough. After all, how will the students demonstrate understanding? A better phrase would be “demonstrate understanding by . . .”

Course-level Outcomes versus Course Objectives

Course SLOs and course objectives are intricately linked to one another. Course SLOs describe the broadest goals for the course, ones that require higher-level thinking abilities; require students to synthesize many discreet skills or areas of content; ask them to then produce something - papers, projects, portfolios, demonstrations, performances, artworks, exams, etc., – that applies what they have learned; and require faculty to evaluate or assess the product to measure a student’s achievement or mastery of the outcomes. The assessment of SLOs is useful in helping professors know where their teaching and learning activities have and have not been successful. SLOs also let students know what they can expect to attain as a result of completing the course.

Course objectives are on a smaller scale, describing small, discrete skills or “nuts and bolts” that require basic thinking skills. Think of objectives as the building blocks used to produce whatever is assessed to demonstrate mastery of an outcome. Objectives can be practiced and assessed individually but are usually only a portion of an overall project or application. Objectives guide how professors plan the class lessons or activities that will lead to the desired outcomes as stated in the SLOs.

Table 1: Some examples of wording differences between course objectives and their related SLOs

Course Objectives	Related Student Learning Outcome (SLO)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinguish between the goals of scientific psychology and common sense 2. Evaluate the various psychological research methods 3. Discuss the important ethical principles in research 	Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to critique psychological research studies.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the theory of homeostasis. 2. Describe the body systems that follow homeostatic principles. 3. Recognize common pathological caused by homeostatic failure. 	Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to analyze the homeostatic mechanisms maintaining the human body