PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES RUBRIC
Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Academic Program Learning Outcomes

Criterion	Initial	Emerging	Developed	Highly Developed
Comprehensive List	The list of outcomes is problematic: e.g., very incomplete, overly detailed, inappropriate, and disorganized. It may include only discipline-specific learning, ignoring relevant institution-wide learning. The list may confuse learning processes (e.g., doing an internship) with learning outcomes (e.g., application of theory to real-world problems).	The list includes reasonable outcomes but does not specify expectations for the program as a whole. Relevant institution-wide learning outcomes and/or national disciplinary standards may be ignored. Distinctions between expectations for undergraduate and graduate programs may be unclear.	The list is a well-organized set of reasonable outcomes that focus on the key knowledge, skills, and values students learn in the program. It includes relevant institution-wide outcomes (e.g., communication or critical thinking skills). Outcomes are appropriate for the level (undergraduate vs. graduate); national disciplinary standards have been considered.	The list is reasonable, appropriate, and comprehensive, with clear distinctions between undergraduate and graduate expectations, if applicable. National disciplinary standards have been considered. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria for assessing students' level of mastery of each outcome.
Assessable Outcomes	Outcome statements do not identify what students can do to demonstrate learning. Statements such as "Students understand scientific method" do not specify how understanding can be demonstrated and assessed.	Most of the outcomes indicate how students can demonstrate their learning.	Each outcome describes how students can demonstrate learning, e.g., "Graduates can write reports in APA style" or "Graduates can make original contributions to biological knowledge."	Outcomes describe how students can demonstrate their learning. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria statements, such as rubrics, and has identified examples of student performance at varying levels for each outcome.
Alignment	There is no clear relationship between the outcomes and the curriculum that students experience.	Students appear to be given reasonable opportunities to develop the outcomes in the required curriculum.	The curriculum is designed to provide opportunities for students to learn and to develop increasing sophistication with respect to each outcome. This design may be summarized in a curriculum map.	Pedagogy, grading, the curriculum, relevant student support services and co-curriculum are explicitly and intentionally aligned with each outcome. Curriculum map indicates increasing levels of proficiency.
Assessment Planning	There is no formal plan for assessing each outcome.	The program relies on short-term planning, such as selecting which outcome(s) to assess in the current year.	The program has a reasonable, multi-year assessment plan that identifies when each outcome will be assessed. The plan may explicitly include analysis and implementation of improvements.	The program has a fully-articulated, sustainable, multi-year assessment plan that describes when and how each outcome will be assessed and how improvements based on findings will be implemented. The plan is routinely examined and revised, as needed.
The Student Experience	Students know little or nothing about the overall outcomes of the program. Communication of outcomes to students, e.g. in syllabi or catalog, is spotty or nonexistent.	Students have some knowledge of program outcomes. Communication is occasional and informal, left to individual faculty or advisors.	Students have a good grasp of program outcomes. They may use them to guide their own learning. Outcomes are included in most syllabi and are readily available in the catalog, on the web page, and elsewhere.	Students are well-acquainted with program outcomes and may participate in the creation and use of rubrics. They are skilled at self-assessing in relation to the outcomes and levels of performance. Program policy calls for inclusion of outcomes in all course syllabi, and they are readily available in other program documents.

Guidelines on Using the Learning Outcomes Rubric

This rubric is intended to help teams assess the extent to which an institution has developed and assessed program learning outcomes and made improvements based on assessment results. For the fullest picture of an institution's accomplishments, reviews of written materials should be augmented with interviews at the time of the visit.

Dimensions of the Rubric:

1. **Comprehensive List**. The set of program learning outcomes should be a short but comprehensive list of the most important knowledge, skills, and values students learn in the program. Higher levels of sophistication are expected for graduate program outcomes than for undergraduate program outcomes. There is no strict rule concerning the optimum number of outcomes, but quality is more important than quantity. Learning processes (e.g., completing an internship) should not be confused with learning outcomes (what is learned in the internship, such as application of theory to real-world practice).
    Questions. Is the list reasonable, appropriate and well organized? Are relevant institution-wide outcomes, such as information literacy, included? Are distinctions between undergraduate and graduate outcomes clear? Have national disciplinary standards been considered when developing and refining the outcomes? Are explicit criteria – as defined in a rubric, for example – available for each outcome?

2. **Assessable Outcomes**. Outcome statements specify what students can do to demonstrate their learning. For example, an outcome might state, "Graduates of our program can collaborate effectively to reach a common goal" or "Graduates of our program can design research studies to test theories." These outcomes are assessable because the quality of collaboration in teams and the quality of student-created research designs can be observed. Criteria for assessing student products or behaviors usually are specified in rubrics that indicate varying levels of student performance (i.e., work that does not meet expectations, meets expectations, and exceeds expectations).
    Questions, Do the outcomes clarify how students can demonstrate learning? Are there agreed upon, explicit criteria, such as rubrics, for assessing each outcome? Are there examples of student work representing different levels of mastery for each outcome?

3. **Alignment**. Students cannot be held responsible for mastering learning outcomes without a curriculum that is designed to develop increasing sophistication with respect to each outcome. This design is often summarized in a curriculum map—a matrix that shows the relationship between courses in the required curriculum and the program's learning outcomes. Pedagogy and grading aligned with outcomes help encourage student growth and provide students feedback on their development.
    Questions. Is the curriculum explicitly aligned with the program outcomes? Do faculty select effective pedagogy and use grading to promote learning? Are student support services and the co-curriculum explicitly aligned to reinforce and promote the development of student learning outcomes?

4. **Assessment Planning**. Programs need not assess every outcome every year, but faculty are expected to have a plan to cycle through the outcomes over a reasonable period of time, such as the timeframe for program review.
    Questions. Does the plan clarify when, how, and how often each outcome will be assessed? Will all outcomes be assessed over a reasonable period of time? Is the plan sustainable, in terms of human, fiscal, and other resources? Are assessment plans revised, as needed?

5. **The Student Experience**. At a minimum, students need to be aware of the learning outcomes of the program(s) in which they are enrolled. Ideally, they could be included as partners in defining and applying the outcomes and the criteria for varying levels of accomplishment.
    Questions: Are the outcomes communicated to students consistently and meaningfully? Do students understand what the outcomes mean and how they can further their own learning? Do students use the outcomes and criteria to self-assess?
    Do they participate in reviews of outcomes, criteria, curriculum design, or related activities?