# Essential Design Step One: Create your Learning Outcomes

For right now, set aside any learning outcomes/learning objectives/course goals you may already have.

## Essential Understandings

First, list what you want students to understand or learn or know in the course. To help narrow down this list, concentrate on what is *essential* for them to know. If they left your course only remembering three to five concepts, what would those be?

[List your essential understandings in the space below.]

## Learning Outcomes

Now, begin thinking about these essential understandings in terms of performance; each learning outcome should begin with an active verb. Use the active verb handout to help write learning outcomes that state what students will be able to *DO* by the end of the course. What skills and abilities will they develop with their new knowledge? In essence, fill in these blanks: How will I know students understand/have learned \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? Because they can \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.Your outcomes should be measurable, specific (consider even the degree of proficiency), and in simple language that any incoming student to the course can understand. They should be broad enough that they are *major* outcomes for the course, meaning they either form a significant portion of the course concepts, or they are ideas that are touched upon more than once throughout the course.

Remember, this is not everything they will learn about or do in the course; these are the *essential* skills and abilities they will leave with. There is no set number of learning outcomes you should have, but a good rule of thumb is 6 – 10.

By the end of this course, students will be able to: [do what?]

[List your course learning outcomes in the space below]

These are the performance-based learning outcomes on which your course design will be based.

While it’s important to create a firm “foundation”, understand that you can (and probably will) be tweaking these throughout the design process, as you consider your assignments and content.

If you have learning outcomes (from the current course, from the department, from accrediting bodies, etc.), get those out now. Sometimes these are referred to as course goals, learning objectives, course objectives, etc. Compare any of these existing learning outcomes with what you have created above to ensure that the learning outcomes you will use for the design of your course reflect the essential learning objectives that the course is required to have.

If you have mandated outcomes, you can, of course, continue to list those in your syllabus and also ensure that the core ideas behind them are in the course. Mandated outcomes, however, are often not suitable for course design; they are frequently not measurable or in language that students can easily understand. Many faculty list the mandated outcomes in their syllabus, and then a simple statement, such as: “These outcomes ensure that by the end of this course, you will be able to…”, and then list their new, measurable, student-centric, performance-based learning outcomes.