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Intro to Improve and Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes statements clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that students are expected to acquire at an institution of higher education. Student learning outcomes statements should be:

- Specific to institutional, program (curricular or co-curricular), and/or course level
- Clearly expressed and understandable by multiple audiences
- Updated regularly to reflect current global, societal, or disciplinary needs
- Receptive to feedback or comments on the quality and utility of the information provided

Explicitly-stated learning goals give students a way to think about and integrate what they have learned. They make it easier for students to “know what they know” and give students a language to communicate what they know to others. Such awareness is considered central to learning that lasts.

Well-defined student learning outcomes are valuable in course design and redesign. Faculty often find that it is much easier to plan a course when they begin with where they hope their students will end. Identifying student learning outcomes helps faculty structure their courses, identify pedagogical strategies, and design assignments, tests, projects, class discussion, and other course elements to help students meet those goals. Course-based learning outcomes can serve as criteria that faculty can use both to assess students’ progress and to direct course revision.

Program learning outcomes help faculty and staff plan the curriculum or co-curricular program’s activities, assess coherence and sequencing, and evaluate the learning of their students. In addition, they publicize the programs identity and role in student learning and success.

Accreditation agencies have modified their criteria to include student learning outcomes and evidence of achievement of those outcomes as part of their requirements for maintaining accreditation. In addition, programs must demonstrate that they use this assessment evidence to improve student learning.

Purdue has chosen to support its goals for assessment of student learning outcomes by utilizing the software, Improve. In the next few pages, you will be guided through a general process of how to use Improve to manage your program’s student learning outcomes. Improve will not only support your ability to record this information, but will also allow you to run reports that will aggregate the data at different levels or track achievement over time.
Improve Login

Improve is a web-based application that can be accessed through any web browser. First, open a browser and enter the following URL: https://outcomes.itap.purdue.edu/

Using your standard Purdue Career account login, enter your username and password in the fields as shown in the screen shot below.

After logging in, you will be directed to a page specific to you and the program(s) to which you are assigned. This page will be your Home page and will show you any assignments you have been given as well as provide a brief summary of your program’s assessment status.

Before we start getting into the assessment details, let’s look at the basic Home page navigation in Improve. Look for and note the following items in the preceding screen shot.
UNDERSTANDING YOUR HOME PAGE

- Starting at the top of the screen next to the “Improve” logo is the “Unit” textbox. The unit listed should represent the unit or major you are assigned to. If you are responsible for multiple programs, you can use the Smart Search capability to locate the program you are searching for. Single click in the drop-down box, and start typing the name of the program in the search box. It will automatically limit your search down in order to get to the program a little more quickly.

- On the right hand side of the screen next to the Welcome box, is the Notification box. If an assignment has been made to you by your program coordinator, this red icon will have a number appearing in it. Click on the red icon and it will display a brief description of the assignment.
  - If you hover over the title of the notification, it will give a brief description of what needs to be done.
  - If you click on the title of the message it will take you to the assignment page where you can review your assignment in detail and begin supplying the data requested by your coordinator. (Note: You would have also received an email notification giving you a detailed explanation of what was being requested from your coordinator.)

- Your Home page will serve as a landing page and provide summary information on your program(s).
Since this page also acts as a dashboard, you will be able to click on any of the **blue text** or numbers, and Improve will take you to the area that stores that information. This can be a real time saver. You can also use the **Navigation Menu** to move to the same location as those locations with the active links.

In editing an existing **Learning Outcome**, you can navigate to its location by using either of the links in the green boxes in the screen shot below. Editing **Results** would be done by using either of the links in the blue boxes. Editing course information would be done by using either of the links in the orange boxes.

Your **Home** page also gives you an indication of the progress being made in the learning outcome process. The **green check marks** indicate that all requirements for a learning outcome have been met. This would include having the results recorded and any actions or follow-up that is required entered. The **red flags** indicate that something is missing. In the example below, since there were no results recorded for LO #1, there is a red flag. If you hover over the red flag, it will provide an explanation as to why it appears. (Note: the conditions for setting the green check marks and the red flags are set up by your Improve coordinator.)

The difference between the **Navigation Menu** and the **Summary Panel** is that if you want to enter NEW learning outcomes you are required to use the **Navigation Menu**. Once the information has been entered it will then appear on the **Summary Panel**.

The **Navigation Menu** contains four different color icons. These icons will remain on each of the pages throughout Improve. Their function, however, will change based on the page you are on at the time.
• The green icon is an Instructions/Help icon. Clicking on it will provide an explanation supplied by the vendor of what is present on the page. So, this icon is page specific. Here’s an example of the Home page instructions.

• The purple icon is tailored to meet institution specific needs. Since various institutions may use their own nomenclature to define their programs and fields, and since some fields are customized specific to a program, this icon will provide you more detailed instructions and is specific to the page you are on.

Below is an example of Purdue specific instructions on the Home page. In order to display any specific instructions, you will need to click on the purple icon as the instructions do not automatically appear as the general instructions indicate. **THIS IS A KNOWN ISSUE and is scheduled to be fixed in the next release.** Specific instructions for that page will then be displayed in a purple instruction box at the top of the screen.

To remove the display from the page, you can either click on the X in the right hand corner of the purple text box, or click the purple icon in the Navigation Menu.

• The orange icon is used to view an audit log. This icon will only appear on the Program Planning>Program Assessment page. When on this page you can click on the icon to display any add, edit or delete events that appear. **Note:** Because this icon was added after the majority of
Learning Outcomes were entered in Improve, there will likely be nothing to display. Here’s an example of how having deleted results would look:

Here’s an example of what would happen if a performance measure was deleted:

Here’s an example of what would happen if a Learning Outcome is deleted:

- The blue icon is the filter icon. It too is page specific, so depending on your location in Improve, the filter will be different. Perhaps the most useful is the filter that is on the Learning Outcomes page. You must put your cursor in the individual text boxes and click on it in order to display what filters are available. Since Improve will store learning outcomes from multiple years, you may want to only filter on those that are active. Here’s an example of how that would be done.
The information appearing on your Learning Outcomes screen will then be limited to the filters you have set. If you forget to remove the filter, Improve will remind you a filter has been used on this page by putting a red box around the **filter icon** at the top of the page.

To remove the filter, just click on the blue **filter icon** and select Clear Filters.

**NOTE**: When entering data in Improve, make sure you use the Save button at the top of the page. **Do not use your browser’s navigation or back arrows since you may lose data that you intended to save.** After saving your data, click on the Return button.

If you try to navigate back to another location without saving your data first, you will get a pop-up reminder.

Just click on Stay on this Page, and then click on the yellow Save button at the top of the screen and you’re done.
USING THE NAVIGATION MENU

Program Section – Basic Program Information

Entering Basic Program Information

- **Program section and the General Information sub-tab**: You can edit/enter the information on this page by selecting the **edit icon** on the right hand side of the screen.
  - Enter the assessment contacts(s) for your program. (This is optional)
  - Add a Mission Statement
  - Add your programs Vision Statement
  - Use the Our Story text box to give more details on your program that you would like to have included in the final assessment report.

- **Program section and the Assignments sub-tab**: This is where you review who has been assigned a responsibility for outcomes in the program. It is not where you enter the assignment itself. The assignment of a responsibility is done in the **Program Planning** section.

- **Program section and the Personnel sub-tab**: This is where you review who has been assigned a role in Improve for the selected program. You should review this tab at the beginning of each academic year to make sure the list is up to date. You will not be able to update the list. The list of personnel
is imported from HR, and the assignment of roles is done by your Improve coordinator. Contact your Improve coordinator to make changes.

**Program Planning Section**

**Entering and Editing Your Learning Outcomes**

- **Program Planning section and the Program Assessment sub-tab**: This is where the majority of your work will be done. You enter any new Learning Outcomes, Performance Measures, Results, Actions and Follow-Ups in this section. New entries are made by using the green plus icon. Editing existing entries is done using the edit icon.

**Adding a New Learning Outcome**

While still on the **Program Planning section and the Program Assessment sub-tab**:
• After clicking the plus icon you will be presented with this screen.

- Enter a short title for the Learning Outcome Name (for example, Written Communication).
- Under Learning Outcome, enter a more detailed description of that outcome (for example, Students will be able to write a variety of technical documents, taking into account the purpose and audience.)
- Highlight that this learning outcome is Active.
- Next, highlight the academic year in which that outcome WILL BE ASSESSED by your program. Remember, best practice is NOT to assess every outcome every year.
- The Start date should be the September 1 of the assessment year cycle. The end date is entered only when the outcome is no longer applicable to your unit. It can usually be left blank.
- When finished, be sure to click the Save button at the top of the page.

Once a learning outcome has been created and saved, it will appear under the Learning Outcomes section of the Program Assessment sub-tab. You will then be able to access the learning outcome by using either the Navigation Menu or the Summary Panel.

Note: DO NOT DELETE your learning outcomes. If you do, you will delete the results, the use of the results and any other information associated with the outcome. Instead, set the Outcome Status to Inactive, and enter the End date so the outcome will not display in your active outcomes report.
Re-arranging the Order of Outcomes on a Page
You can easily re-arrange the order of your learning outcomes. To do so, just hover over the target icon alongside the name of the outcome. The icon with four directional arrows will appear, and a pop-up box saying Learning Outcome will appear:

Now, just hold down your left mouse button, and drag the learning outcome so that it appears in the list in the order you want.

Filtering

While on the Program Planning>Program Assessment tab
You may want to view a sub-set of your outcomes, such as seeing only the active outcomes, or the outcomes related to the Embedded Learning Outcomes: (Communication, Interpersonal Skills and Intercultural Knowledge, Ways of Thinking).

• Click on the blue filter icon in the Navigation Menu. You will be presented with a screen that looks like this:

The Program Goal Filter Section:
• The Program Goal Filter section allows you to limit your display to a specific Embedded Learning Outcome or some other accreditation outcome that is specific to your program. So, select the program outcome you want to limit your display to.
• You won’t need to select Active or Inactive in this section.
The Learning Outcome Filters:

- This section will allow you to limit your display to the Active or Inactive outcomes, and/or select the academic year the outcome will be assessed.
- To apply your selected filters, click on the grey “X” in the upper right hand section of the filter screen:

After the filters have been applied, the blue filter icon in the Navigation Menu will be outlined in red:

- To remove filters, click on the blue icon circled in red.
- To clear all the filters, click on the Clear Filters buttons in the section where the filter was applied:

- To edit filters, click on the blue icon circled in red.
- Click on the grey “X” in the section of the filter screen that contains the filter you want to edit:
Click on the blank filter box and re-select your filter.

Click on the grey “X” in the upper right hand corner of the filter section to apply the new filter.

Adding a Performance Measure

Next, we are going to work on entering Performance Measures. These are the methods that will be used to gauge the students’ success at achieving each of the learning outcomes.

While still under the Program Assessment sub-tab

- First, click on the triangle appearing alongside the outcome to expand the display.
- Then, click on the plus sign to add a new performance measure.

You will be presented with this screen:
If you have multiple learning outcomes, confirm that you have selected the learning outcome you want to work on.

- Next, choose the assessment type used to measure student achievement of the learning outcome. This can be an exam, a project, an oral presentation, etc.
- Under Performance Measure, enter a more specific description. For example, you might enter “oral presentation of project”.
- Next enter the target or threshold that your program expects students to achieve (75% of students will complete the outcome with 75% accuracy).
- Be sure to click the Save Changes button at the top of the page.

Please note: It is best practice for each outcome statement to have 2 assessment methods but, it is not required.
Adding a Related Document

While still under the Program Planning section on the Program Assessment sub-tab:

- First, click on the triangle appearing alongside the outcome name, then alongside the Performance Measure being used. You will be presented with the screen below.
- Click on the green icon that looks like a wrench on the far right side of the row.

You will then be presented with the following screen. You have the opportunity to associate any documents that support the findings by clicking on the green icon at the end of the row. However, any associated documents must already be in the Document Repository. This can be done from the Navigation Menu under the Documents link. Once the document is uploaded to the Document Repository, you can associate it with a Result here. Refer to the Documents section of these materials for instructions on how to do the uploading of documents.
USING THE NAVIGATION MENU

Automating the Program Assessment Results Entry Using the Assignment Function

Assigning an Outcome to Another Person in Your Program

This is not something that needs to be set up now, but is a nice feature when you are ready to do assessment. This page will allow you to assign this performance measure, or responsibility for the entire outcome, to someone else in your program. The assignee will be asked to provide assessment through an email message.

While still in the Program Planning section on the Program Assessment sub-tab:

- Make sure the triangle has been clicked to expand the performance measure you will be using.
- Click on the green icon that looks like a wrench on the far right side of the row

You will then be presented with the following screen. Click in the “Assign To” box and a list of available personnel will be displayed. If the name of the person that is to have responsibility for completing the assignment isn’t present, contact your Improve coordinator.
• Select the individual you are assigning this to.
• Enter the due date the information needs to be completed.
• Enter the subject of your email in the Subject box.
• Enter the instructions to the recipient in the Notes/Instructions box.
• Generally the Repeats box is left at Once unless you want a more frequent entry of the information.
• Give the recipient the type of information you are expecting to be returned: Data, Results and Actions, Data and Results, or Data Only.
• Then, select the location the documents should be stored in.
• Next, click the Email assignment to Assignee(s) checkbox; if you want a copy of the email to be sent to you, click that checkbox as well.
• Return to the top of the screen and select Save.

Once you have created an assignment, the information will appear in the Program>Assignments section of the navigation menu. This is where you will be able to monitor the status of the assignments you have made.
Manual Entry of Program Assessment Results Related to an Assessment Method

- To add results that are related to an assessment method, select which outcome you would like to enter results for by clicking on the plus icon on the far right side of the screen.

- You will be presented with a screen like this:

- After entering your results, click on the yellow Save button at the top of the screen.
- Your results will then appear on the Results tab, and there will be a grey icon with a number inside it that will tell you the number of results recorded for the selected outcome.
Creating an Action Plan

Program Planning section on the Results sub-tab:

If the desired target for a learning outcome was not met, or if your outcome didn’t collect the information you expected to get, an Action Plan can be entered.

- First, you will need to click on the triangle alongside your outcome with results. Once you can see the results, there will be a section below the results that will allow you to click on the green plus icon to the right hand side of the screen.

- Enter your Action plan start date
- Enter your Action plan statement in the second text box
• Click the yellow Save button at the top of the screen.
• Once an Action Plan has been entered, it will appear in the results section, and it will allow you to edit it, establish a date for any Follow-Up that will be needed, as well as to assign any needed actions to another individual by clicking on the green icons alongside these items.
Adding Follow-up For the Action Plan

*Note:* The Follow-up field will only appear after you have entered an Action Plan for closing the loop in an assessment tool.

**Program Planning section on the Results sub-tab:**
- Click on the triangle alongside the outcome that already has a result entered.
- Then click on the triangle alongside the assessment tool that was used to assess the outcome.
- Click on the triangle alongside Actions.
- Click on the plus sign to the far right of the screen. This will open the Follow-up entry screen.

- Add the follow-up data including any intended date for the completion of the action plan.
- Click on Save at the top right hand side of the screen.
- Click on Return at the top right hand side of the screen.
Relate Documents to Results

*Program Planning section on the Results sub-tab:*

- You can also Relate Documents to a Result. You can attach a copy of the assignment, a sample of student work, or an Excel file with the complete distribution of grades.
- Click on the **green icon** that looks like a wrench to the far right side of Related Documents.

*Note: Any documents you upload must be done from the Navigation Menu under the Documents link. Refer to the Documents section of these materials for instructions on how to do the uploading of documents.*
Reports

While on the **Reports tab**

After you have entered all your learning outcomes, your performance measures, you may wish to verify that all of the information was entered correctly by running a report.

- On the **Navigation Menu**, click on **Reports** to expand the display.
- Click on **Standard Reports**

You will then be presented with this screen:
Report Definitions

Program Reports

- **Learning Outcomes List with Tool and Target (Assessment Unit Planning)** – This report shows the Learning Outcomes for each selected Program, along with any information contained in the Program Assessment area related to each Learning Outcome and any recorded Results. This may include any Mapping for the Learning Outcomes you wish to display. The report is displayed in a narrative layout. In addition, any reportable fields from the General Information page display at the top of the report.

- **Program Learning Outcomes Summary List** – This report shows the Learning Outcomes for each selected Program, along with any information contained in the Program Assessment area related to each Learning Outcome. This may include any Mapping for the Learning Outcomes you wish to display. The report is displayed in a narrative layout. In addition, any reportable fields from the General Information page display at the top of the report.

- **Program Outcome Results Report** - This report shows the Learning Outcomes for each selected Program, along with any Performance Measures, Results, and Actions for each Learning Outcome. The report is displayed in a four column layout. In addition, any reportable fields from the General Information page display at the top of the report.

Running Program Reports

While on the *Reports tab, Standard Reports sub-tab*

- Click on the name of the report you want to run.

- In the *Report Layout section*:
  - Select how you would like to have the report results returned: PDF, HTML, or Word.
  - You can rename the Report Title to anything you like. Or, you can leave the title as is, and enter a Report Subtitle in the box below it if you like.
  - If you have a program logo you would like to use in your reports, you can select it from the Report Logo drop down box. If one has not been loaded for you, contact Ada Uche ([auche@purdue.edu](mailto:auche@purdue.edu)) to have one uploaded for you.
• In the Filter section:
  o Place your cursor in the Outcome Status box and click to select Active or Inactive. Generally you will want to run a report on Active learning outcomes.

  ![Filter section screenshot]

  o Place your cursor in the AY Outcome Will Be Assessed box and click to select the year. This is useful when running historic reports.

  ![Filter section screenshot]

  o If you want to report on a specific type, place your cursor in the Assessment Types box and select the assessment you would like to report on. Otherwise, leave this option blank.

  ![Filter section screenshot]
Select the Results Date Between boxes. (Optional)
Select the Results from AY. This is useful when doing historic reports.
Select the Target Met of Yes, No, or N/A.

In the Options section:
- All of these are optional, but it is generally best to leave the two check boxes as is in order to return a full set of data.
- Click Open Report from the top of the screen.

**DOCUMENTS**

*While on the Documents tab, Document Repository sub-tab:*

The Document Repository is where you can upload and store documents related to your assessment and results. You can associate these documents within your program, or across larger units. There is no limit to the number, size, or type of the supporting data you can upload.

When uploading documents related to your assessment work, try to be as descriptive and complete as possible. The description text will not show on the final report, but it will help your program stay organized in Improve as the information grows over time. When running reports in Improve, the filenames become clickable hot links to those documents, and an explanatory text will make things more clear to people reading the reports.

When you open the Document Repository link, you will be presented with the following screen.

- There are two sections to the screen. The General folder and the Purdue University folder. The Purdue University folder is where this training manual is stored so it can be shared across all the Improve
programs. You will be able to download it from here but you will not be able to upload documents to this folder.

- The General folder is where we will begin. When you open the Document Repository, the General folder will appear. Since the name of the folder will more than likely not be specific enough for you, you will either want to rename it, or add an additional folder for the document you are going to upload.
- Place your cursor alongside the word General, and an icon will appear:

• Clicking on the icon, you will be presented with a menu of options:

• For this training we will rename the folder. So, click on Rename and enter the new name for the folder. It will now appear on the repository screen with the new name.

• For this training, you will be storing a document in this folder. Once you have returned to your office you can create a new folder to better represent the needs of your program.

• Click on the green plus icon to the far right hand side of the screen.
You will be presented with the following screen:

- The default folder for storage of documents is the General folder (which you just renamed). If you had multiple folders to select from, they would appear in the drop down box and you could select the folder you want to store the document in.
- In the Files box, click to browse to the location where the supporting documentation is stored.
- Double click on the file and it will be pulled in to the Name field on the screen. Create a clear description of the file in the Description box.

Click on the yellow Save button at the top of the screen.
Now that you have uploaded a document to the repository, it will appear on the original Document Repository screen similar to this:

After it is appearing in the Repository, you will be able to View, Download, Edit, Delete, or Send the document to someone. (Note: Both the View and Download will function the same for PDF files. If you have uploaded another file type, such as xlsx, Word, etc., you would have been able to view the document on line and the download would have functioned purely as a download.)

The Co-curricular Assessment Cycle

- **August 1:** Begin developing your SLOs & determining methods for measuring SLOs for the current academic year.
- **September-May:** Collect SLO data using the assessment methods you identified in August/September.
- **July 15:** Enter your year end findings for closing the loop in Improve.
- **June 1:** Review and analyze your data.
- **September:** Enter your SLOs with assessment methods identified in Improve.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Green Check Mark" /></td>
<td>These appear most frequently on your program “Home” page and are used to indicate all requirements for completing an assessment have been met. Requirements for completion are defined by the assessment coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Red Flag" /></td>
<td>These appear most frequently on your program “Home” page alongside a numbered item. It indicates there is action that needs to be taken in order to complete the requirements that have been defined by the program. You can hover over the flag and it will display the explanation as to what is needed in order to complete the requirements for meeting the outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Plus Sign" /></td>
<td>These appear throughout Improve. Whenever you want to add a Learning Outcome or a Result, clicking on the plus sign will allow you to add the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Question Mark" /></td>
<td>This icon appears alongside a large number of fields and is used to provide you with pre-defined help suggestions. These suggestions were set up by the vendor and may not provide the detailed explanation you are looking for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Expand Icon" /></td>
<td>This icon is used to expand the display and is found throughout Improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Arrow Icons" /></td>
<td>This icon is used when you want to re-arrange the order of information appearing on the screen. Hover over the icon, then click and drag it to place it in the order on the page you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Directory Icons" /></td>
<td>In the order as they appear here, the edit, copy and delete icons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Document Icon" /></td>
<td>This icon is used as a way to allow you to upload documentation to your repository and appears in the Results section after having entered your findings for the learning outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Counter Icon" /></td>
<td>This icon is used to provide you with a count on the number of results that have been entered for a learning outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>