

## 6.5 Drafting programme learning outcomes: criteria-based approach

This is another popular approach to drafting programme learning outcomes (PLOs) that is based on the criteria all PLOs should meet irrespective of discipline or level:

### **Specific:**

What precisely will be achieved by students – knowledge and/or skills, and how – what approach be used to achieve it?

Have you been too prescriptive or provided too much detail, such that you have imposed unnecessary constraints on how you teach or what you cover, limiting your ability to modify the course content or assessment approach?

### **Demonstrable:**

What opportunities exist for students to show they have achieved the learning outcome – homework, learning activities, assessment?

Has the learning outcome been expressed in outcome-oriented language that states clearly which specific skills/knowledge the student is expected to gain and how it can be demonstrated?

Do they give the students an idea of what will be covered (teacher-oriented) or what they will be able to do (student-oriented)?

### **Attainable:**

Is this outcome appropriate for this level - undergraduate or postgraduate?

Can it be attained in the specified time period?

Does the PLO accurately describe the pass threshold for the course i.e. is the vast majority of students on the course likely to attain it?

### **Assessable:**

How can the outcome be measured i.e. how will you assess what the students have learned?

How will students know if they have achieved it?

Are there opportunities for them (or for the course convener) to track their progress in achieving the PLO?

While these criteria are useful in creating PLOs, they should be discussed with and explained to students throughout the course, so that they understand how the different elements of the programme cohere and come together such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Clear, well-defined PLOs are useful in helping students make decisions about course selection and advising them on their progress through the programme.

This guide ([Programme learning outcomes makeover: before and after](#)) shows examples accompanied by brief annotations.

For more information please visit [Programme Learning Outcomes](#) webpage.