Mission and Goals
A Mission Statement communicates the overarching purpose of the degree program.

A well-written Mission Statement includes a brief statement of the general values and principles which guide the program curriculum and is specific to the degree program/major (as opposed to the department). The mission statement sets the foundation for the program’s overall direction, position, objectives and goals. The Mission Statement (and goals, if included), should answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree program name?
2. What is the educational purpose of the program?
3. What is the primary function of the program?
4. What are the primary activities or learning experiences provided by the program?
5. Does the mission implicitly or explicitly align the program with the mission of the department, college, and university?

If including Goals:

1. Do the Goals flow from and align with the Mission Statement?

Meets Standard Criteria:
Mission and goals are clear statements of the broad aspects covered within the major; mission is aligned with the college mission and the university mission; goals are aligned with mission.

Format:
The mission of the (1. degree program name) is to (2. educational purpose) in order to (3. primary function). The program seeks to (4. primary activities or learning experiences).

Example 1: Undergraduate

1. Degree Program Name

The mission of the [1] Bachelor of Arts in Political Science is to [2] provide students with skills and dispositions in the areas of political systems, government relations and international organizations in order to [3] prepare students for careers in government services, non-profit agencies or the private sector. The program seeks to [5] prepare thoughtful citizens and productive members of society [4] through the utilization of diverse, pluralistic curricula.
Example 2: Graduate

The mission of the [1] Masters of Science in Special Education in the Darden College of Education is to [5] prepare teachers and leaders to educate students with special needs in the K-12 school systems. [2] The focus of the program is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective practice in [3] research, teaching, and service in the areas of services for young children and families, school readiness, at-risk and special needs populations, and developmentally appropriate practices for children ages 5 thru 18, with and without disabilities.

Example 3: Certificate

[5] In keeping with the Darden College of Education theme of preparing professional educators, the [1] Autism Certificate Program has identified the following mission statement. The program is designed [2] to prepare professional educators to implement research-based methods and procedures [3] to deliver high-quality academic and nonacademic instruction to students with autism spectrum disorder and to maintain lifelong professional development.

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Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are the specific knowledge, skills, or abilities (KSAs) that students should be able to demonstrate or perform at the end of the program. Each SLO should align with general values and principles established in the Mission Statement of the degree program.

A well-written SLO includes a concrete action verb that conveys the appropriate level for the KSA. This is best accomplished by using Bloom’s Taxonomy, whose levels are:

I. Knowledge (action verbs include: arrange, define, describe, select, state)
II. Comprehension (action verbs include: explain, summarize, give examples, paraphrase)
III. Application (action verbs include: demonstrate, apply, predict, produce, write)
IV. Analysis (action verbs include: interpret, analyze, compare, manipulate, solve)
V. Evaluation (action verbs include: critique, justify, evaluate, defend, rate, argue)
VI. Synthesis (action verbs include: create, design, formulate, generate, synthesize)

Student learning outcomes should answer the following questions:

1. At what level of Bloom’s Taxonomy should the student be able to demonstrate this knowledge or perform this skill?
2. What KSA should the student be able to demonstrate at the end of the program?

There should be no fewer than three (3) SLOs and no more than 15 SLOs. This is because a student should gain at least three specific KSAs as a result of completing a degree program curriculum, and anything more than 15 SLO becomes burdensome on the program’s faculty to adequately assess. The actual number of SLOs will vary by program.

Meets Standard Criteria:

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) aligned with the mission and goals; at least 3 but no more than 15 SLO; concrete action verbs are used to indicate the specific behavior will be performed (e.g. Bloom’s Taxonomy); degree and criterion for accomplishment of behavior are stated.

Format:

Students will be able to (1. action verb that communicates level of Bloom’s Taxonomy) (2. specific knowledge, skill, or ability).

Example 1: Undergraduate

1. Action verb that communicates level of Bloom’s Taxonomy
   
   Students will be able to [1] write [2] an essay with clearly stated objectives, showing logical consistency and reasonable freedom from mechanical errors.

2. Specific knowledge, skill, or ability
Example 2: Graduate

Students will be able to [1] relate, integrate, and apply [2] theories of crime and criminal justice to research and public policies.

Example 3: Certificate


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Measures

Measures are opportunities for programs to collect information about how well students are demonstrating or performing the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Well-written measures will yield information that is relevant, meaningful, and actionable to the program. There should be at least two measures for every SLO and the measures should incorporate the majority of students in the program. At least one of the measures should be a direct measure of student learning. This ensures the validity of the data. In addition, a measure should provide the same type of information at the same level of quality regardless of year or person(s) collecting it. This ensures the reliability of the data and increases the trustworthiness of the information within the program.

Direct Measures: A direct measure of student learning are those that assess actual samples of student work. These are regularly employed to measure learning in the classroom. They provide evidence of student learning that is tangible, visible, and measureable. Direct measures are assessed by faculty, professionals in the field, or experts regarding what a student learned and how well they learned it. Here are some examples of direct measures:

- Essays,
- Performances,
- Presentations,
- Course projects, capstone projects,
- Final papers, research papers,
- Exams, final exams,
- Scores on standardized tests, scores on regional, national, or certification exams,
- Ratings or evaluations forms from field or clinical supervisors,
- Comprehensive or oral examinations, etc.

Indirect Measures: An indirect measure of student learning provides a less concrete view of student learning. Indirect measures can help to substantiate instances of student learning. These measures often assess opinions or thoughts about students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, and perceptions. Here are some examples of indirect measures:

- Graduation or completion rates,
- Advisory board feedback,
- Course grades,
- Interviews,
- Focus groups,
- Self-assessments,
- Surveys (student, department, student evaluation of instruction, alumni, employer, faculty),
- Employment or placement rates of graduating students into appropriate career positions,
- Number or rate of students involved in faculty research, collaborative publications and/or presentations, service learning, or extension of learning in the larger community, etc.
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Measures should answer the following questions:

1. Where or when are students demonstrating their skills or abilities?
2. How many students will be evaluated?
3. How are students demonstrating their skills or abilities (project, presentation, portfolio, paper, final exam)?
4. How are these demonstrations of SLOs evaluated (rubric, faculty panel, answer key)?
5. What scale, criteria or standard is used for evaluating student demonstrations of SLOs?

Meets Standard Criteria:

Measures directly assess intended SLO (validity); results are consistent across administrations (reliable); results will yield meaningful information for improvement(s); there is at least 1 direct measure for each SLO; multiple types of measures are present.

Format:

(1. Where or when students demonstrate SLO), (2. How many students will be evaluated), must (3. Demonstration of SLO). Student [demonstration of SLO] is evaluated by (4. Evaluation process), on a scale of (5. Criteria or standard).

Example 1: Undergraduate

In [1] DANC 389W, [2] all graduating seniors must successfully [3] compose and present a historical research project on the topic of their choosing. Student projects are evaluated by [4] a rubric, with one rubric area directly evaluating the student’s ability to articulate in written form the social, historical, and cultural dimensions of the topic. Rubric sections are scored on a scale of [5] 1-4, with 4 for Exemplary, 3 for Good, 2 for Acceptable, and 1 for Unacceptable.

Example 2: Graduate

[2] [Implied all] Thesis students must satisfy their committee that the [3] thesis meets professional standards of writing. The theses must be [5] rigorous pieces of writing that are produced in a directed process of writing and revising under the supervision of the thesis director. They must meet standards for professional writing, and [4] are reviewed by the thesis committee [1] before and after the oral defense [4] and are reviewed by the college editor before final acceptance. Members review [5] for content, form, and conformity to the professional standards of the field of history.
Example 3: Certificate


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Targets

A Target is an established achievement level that states how well students in the program should overall be able to demonstrate a particular knowledge or skill.

A well-written target clearly establishes a performance level that the program would like to (and could realistically or potentially) achieve. That is, targets should be aspirational, rather than minimal.

Targets should answer the following questions:

1. What is the standard level of performance expected? That is, how well are students expected to perform? (Note: this information may be incorporated in the Measure category – ex. Rubric scale scores that indicate “Meets Standard”)
2. How many students should be able to achieve this standard level of performance? Or, what is the expected composite score for students in the program as a group?

Meets Standard Criteria:

Target performance level for the program is stated.

Example 1: Exam Pass Rate

In order to be licensed in Virginia, IDS-TP teacher candidates must pass the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA). [1] A composite score of 470 and scores of 235 on both the Reading and Writing sections is required in order to pass the VCLA. IDS-TP targets a [2] 90% pass rate overall (470 composite score) as well as a 90% pass rate (235 section score) on each section of the VCLA (Reading and Writing).

Example 2: Rubric Scores


Example 3: Satisfaction Ratings

[2] At least 80% of our students who respond to the Senior Student Satisfaction Survey will report being [1] “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their experience in the major.

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Findings

Findings are the information collected through the Measures that, when reported, tell a program how well students are performing relative to the Target or Benchmark set. The Findings should be a succinct summary statement.

The information reported in the findings should answer the following questions:

1. What additional detail or context is needed to fully explain the findings so that any reader can make sense out of what is written?
2. If using percentages or some other calculated final tally, what are the numbers involved in creating that final result? (e.g. 87/94=92.55%) If a program has both on-campus and online students, how do these numbers break out for each group?
3. Did the program meet its target for the specific measure?

When identifying whether or not the program met its target for a particular finding, please refer to the following glossary and use the term that is most appropriate:

- **Met**: All data reported achieve or surpass the target / benchmark set
- **Partially Met**: A portion of the data reported do not meet the target / benchmark set
  - Example 1: When reporting findings for two or more groups, one or more group achieves or surpasses the target but other(s) do not.
  - Example 2: When reporting multiple Meets Standard Criteria, one or more Meets Standard Criteria achieves or surpasses the target but other(s) do not.
- **Not Met**: All data reported do not meet the target / benchmark set

**Meets Standard Criteria:**

Findings are related to the specific measures of SLO; data provide evidence of target achievement level.

**Example 1: Undergraduate**

1. **Additional detail/context**
2. **Numbers involved**
3. **Indicates whether program met its target**

[1] 12 graduating seniors completed their historical research project.  [2] Three students earned scores of 1 - Unacceptable and nine students earned scores of 4 - Exemplary.  [3] The average score for this class was 3.25, well above the target class average score of 2.75.
Example 2: Graduate


Example 3: Certificate

[1] In fall 2015 the total number of online students who took HSC 555 was 41. [2] The total number of online students who “meet standard” on the final paper rubric was 27 with an [3] average pass rate of 65.9%.

[1] The total number of main campus students who took HSC 555 was 11 and [2] 10 students scored “meet standard” on the final paper rubric, resulting in a [3] pass rate of 90.9%.

[1] The total number of students who took HSC 555 during fall semester was 52 and [2] 37 students scored “meet standard” on the final paper rubric, resulting in an [3] average pass rate of 71.5% for all students.

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Analysis of Findings

The Analysis of Findings is the opportunity for programs to extrapolate meaning about their students’ learning from the information reported in the Findings. This is where programs answer the “So what?” question: the findings indicate that students performed at XX level – so what? What does that say about how well students are learning?

A well-written analysis of the findings should answer the following questions:

1) What does the finding tell us about how well students are achieving this specific outcome?
2) What are the students’ specific strengths and/or weaknesses in this area?
3) How do the findings compare to findings from previous years?
4) What improvements do the findings suggest need to be implemented in the next year?
5) For programs with both online and on-campus degree earners: how does the performance of these unique cohorts compare?

Meets Standard Criteria:

Analyzes at least two findings; reflects on findings and/or processes that lead to current results; evaluates specific strengths and/or weaknesses related to the SLO; may analyze findings from previous years; if appropriate, compares data from differing delivery methods; if appropriate, proposes strategies for improvement as a result of the findings/analysis.

Example 1: Analysis of Rubric Scores

1. How well students achieving outcome

[1] Overall, students in the program are able to articulate the historical, social, and cultural dimensions of a topic of their choosing. [2] Students who earned a score of 1 - Unacceptable on this area of rubric failed to articulate at least one of the required dimensions of the topic. Most projects who earned this score confused the social and cultural dimensions, although they were able to articulate the historical dimension. Students who earned scores of 4 - Exemplary were able to connect their topic to the present day in addition to the required discussion of each dimension. [3] An analysis of last year’s data shows that students continue to struggle with this connection. [4] These findings suggest that the program should emphasize the distinction between social and cultural dimensions when discussing historical topics.

2. Strengths/weaknesses

3. Improvements

3. Compare to previous years

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Example 2: Analysis of Comprehensive Exam – Question related to methods and analysis

[4] There were no evident weaknesses that need to be addressed with a course or program modification. [2] One student presented a qualitative methodological approach, while the other three students used quantitative methods. [1] All students utilized a sound methodological approach which lead to a passing score on exam question.

[2] Students that used a quantitative approach utilized both bi-variate and multivariate methods to test hypotheses related to their research questions. [1] Faculty with expertise in these methods scored the comprehensive exam question and approved of the methods/analyses used by students.

Example 3: Analysis Comparing Online and On-Campus Students

[1] Overall, our students demonstrated mixed levels of ability in identifying methods for assuring health program sustainability. [3] These results are similar to the results we reported last year. The program decided to monitor for trends in the data. [5] From these assessment results, it is clear that the online students are performing at a lower level than the main campus students on the HSC 555 final paper. [2] In these papers, on-campus students were able to identify multiple methods for assuring health program sustainability, while online students struggled to identify more than one method. Additionally, on-campus students were able to discuss how the multiple methods could interact in application to support their given health program. [4] Because this is the final course in the curriculum sequence, it is important for us to consider prior course preparation and skill building for the writing proficiency outcome.

A large majority of the main campus students meet with the professor to discuss their final paper. And while online office hours are scheduled for the online students, these have not been well attended. The department should discuss alternative methods for online students to interact with the professor in order to receive feedback about their papers while they are being developed.

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Action Plans

Action plans are the concrete steps the program will take to maintain or improve student learning. These are developed through a review and analysis of the assessment findings with the chair or other faculty in the program. Ideally, action plans support a collective responsibility from a group of faculty, from a course section, or from the program as a whole. The strength of assessment is not that it provides quick fixes for a problem, but that it promotes active, informed, and systematic improvement of all aspects of a program through discussion among faculty.

A well-written action plan should answer the following questions:

1. How will the program use these results to improve student learning?
2. What concrete steps can faculty within the program take to improve or sustain this outcome? Or, what changes are necessary to more accurately assess student learning? (eg. assessment plan, assignment design, etc.)
3. What is the timeframe?

Meets Standard Criteria:

Action plans are developed directly from, and are aligned with, the findings; actions are intended to improve program, teaching methods, or curriculum; actions may also modify learning outcomes or assessment strategies as necessary.

Example 1: Undergraduate

1. Use of results

[1] The department has purchased a license for the North Star exam preparation software system. North Star can be used to prepare for the PRAXIS Core and VCLA Assessments. [2] All IDS-TP students will be advised of the availability of the on-line North Star PRAXIS Core Prep package purchased by the university and offered to students for free. [3] This will occur during all academic advising sessions with a student.

2. Concrete steps

Example 2: Graduate

[1] As our findings indicate, students are able to effectively present a prepared oral presentation, yet struggle when required to respond to ad hoc verbal questions regarding their presentation in the time immediately following. [2] Our action plan is to review the capstone course syllabus to identify an additional opportunity for students to respond to verbal lines of questioning. [3] The review of the course syllabus will occur during the spring semester for implementation in fall of new academic year.
Example 3: Certificate

[3] In the next academic year [2] we will require an online meeting with online students and the instructor before the paper is due to discuss their paper.

Additionally, we plan to use these results for continuous improvement by holding a meeting with instructors in the certificate program to review the structure of writing assignments throughout the program [1] to better prepare all of our students for the final paper.

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Improvements Completed by the Program

The Improvements section is an opportunity for programs to tell their story as it relates to student learning and programmatic improvements. Improvements should be developed from previous action plans or assessment findings. This should be written in the past tense and reflect completed actions taken by the program.

A well-written improvements section should address the following areas:

1) A brief description of the data and/or discussions that prompted action for improvement.
2) A description of the action that was implemented.
3) A description of the intended or expected change in student learning (improvement).

Meets Standard Criteria:

Improvements are developed directly from, and are aligned with, previous action plans or findings; improvements describe previous actions taken to improve program, teaching methods, or curriculum; previous actions may also describe modifications to learning outcomes or assessment strategies; changes in student achievement may be stated OR intended changes in student achievement may be stated.

Exceeds Standard Criteria *Gold Start Learning Improvement:

Improvements are clearly developed directly from, and are clearly aligned with, previous action plans or findings; improvements richly describe and analyze previous actions taken or modifications made to improve program, teaching methods, or curriculum; previous actions may also describe modifications to learning outcomes or assessment strategies; clearly explains rationale and explanation of the modifications; results are re-assessed with strong evidence, from direct measures, that lead to notable improvement in student learning; would want to use as an example for other programs.

Example 1: Undergraduate

[1] In 2015-2016, students in CSD 351 were not meeting the target set by the program. [2] As a result, the program and its instructors decided to implement additional online resources to supplement class lectures. [3] With these course modifications, students improved their scores by 13% and their ability to integrate knowledge of scientific foundations of SPLA in 2016-2017. Specifically, students were able to successfully explain the physiological processes engaged during speech, language, and swallowing in healthy individuals.
Example 2: Undergraduate

[1] Over the past several years the program has seen a trend in students receiving low pass rates on the Praxis I. [2] After some analysis and review by the program, the decision was made to purchase the NorthStar PRAXIS Core Prep package that is accessible on-line for free by all students. All IDS-TP teacher candidates are advised to use this resource. [3] Since the addition of this resource and targeted advising, students’ Reading scores on PRAXIS Core continue to be stronger than their scores on the Writing subtest. The 87% pass rate for the PRAXIS I/Core Reading subtest exceeds the 67% pass rate last year. The 68% pass Rate on the PRAXISI/PRAXIS Core Writing subtest exceeds the 50% pass rate last year. A seven-year trend in scores reflects that these are the highest pass rates in 7 years. There was significant improvement in both Reading and Writing PRAXIS Core scores this year.

Example 3: Graduate

[1] The program noticed that students switching from the thesis option to the exam option were failing sections of the comprehensive exam. Upon review of the data, it was this specific group of students who were performing poorly on the exam. [2] In order to support these students, the program developed a course: HIST 676 Examination Preparation Transition, a one-credit course designed specifically for students needing extra review and development of program skills (eg. who took the thesis option and completed 6 thesis credits, but then shifted to the examination option). [3] We will know whether or not it has made a positive impact in our program and the students during the next assessment cycle.

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