

Essential Learning Outcomes for Undergraduate Programs at UW-Madison

What are the ELOs?

With the question, “What qualities and skills do you want in college graduates?” the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) were developed through extensive national surveys and interviews conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Responses from employers, faculty, staff, and alumni were organized into four broad categories:

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World,
- Intellectual and Practical Skills,
- Personal and Social Responsibility, and
- Integrative Learning.

UW-Madison has adopted these ELOs as a framework to guide the undergraduate experience. The categories are broad, encompassing a majority of the learning activities found within academic degree programs.

How do the ELOs relate to my academic degree program?

Brief descriptions of each ELO are listed below. If your academic degree program’s student learning goal is aligned with one or more of these ELOs, make the corresponding selections when completing the Learning Goal Reporting Tool. It is important to keep in mind that **every degree program learning goal may not have a corresponding ELO**. Only select an ELO where there is true alignment; in other words, do not force your degree program learning goals to fit these categories.

Essential Learning Outcome	Student learning is obtained through...	Relationship to degree program learning goals
Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World	Study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts	Most degree program learning goals are associated with these ELOs. The learning goal statements are indicative of the depth of understanding students are expected to attain in an academic area.
Intellectual and Practical Skills	Inquiry and analysis Critical and creative thinking Written and oral communication Quantitative literacy Information, media, and technology literacy Teamwork and problem solving	
Personal and Social Responsibility	Civic knowledge and engagement – local and global Intercultural knowledge and competence Ethical reasoning and action Foundations and skills for lifelong learning	Degree program learning goals may, but not always, address this ELO through some sort of active involvement or real-world challenge. Consider the impact on student learning resulting from co-curricular and other out-of-classroom experiences.
Integrative Learning	Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies	Many degree program learning goals included in this ELO category involve the application of knowledge and skills to new settings and complex problems. Examples may include the demonstration of knowledge indicative of capstone or cumulative experiences.

The Essential Learning Outcomes are intended to provide an overarching guide for developing and connecting program-level learning goals with the university’s broader efforts to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st Century.

If you have any questions, please contact regina.lowery@wisc.edu.

Essential Learning Outcomes for UW–Madison Students

These learning outcomes were adapted from those developed through extensive national surveys and interviews done by the Association of American Colleges & Universities with employers, faculty, staff, and alumni, asking the basic question, “What qualities and skills do you want in college graduates?”

Beginning in their first year, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges.

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information, media, and technology literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively across the curriculum in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative Learning

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

The Wisconsin Experience and The Essential Learning Outcomes



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We urge you to explore these opportunities at www.learning.wisc.edu
or contact the Division of Student Life at 608-263-5700, or
the Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning at 608-262-5246.

Division of Student Life • Office of the Provost for Teaching and Learning

The Wisconsin Experience at UW–Madison

UW–Madison graduates become extraordinary citizens, community members and national and global leaders. We have produced more Peace Corps and Teach for America volunteers than almost any other university in the country. More leaders of major corporations have graduated from UW–Madison than any other university in the country. We are among the top producers of faculty members who teach at research-intensive institutions around the world. Something about the UW–Madison experience prepares our students to become outstanding leaders who are engaged locally, nationally and globally.

That “something” is the Wisconsin Experience. Grounded in the 100-year old Wisconsin Idea and our progressive history, our historical mission has evolved to create an expectation for all of us—faculty, staff, and students—to apply in and out of classroom learning in ways that have significant and positive impacts on the world. What we do matters, and together we can solve any problem. It is this unique Wisconsin Experience that produces graduates who think beyond the conventional wisdom, who are creative problem-solvers who know how to integrate passion with empirical analysis, who know how to seek out, evaluate, and create new knowledge and technologies, who can adapt to new situations, and who are engaged citizens of the world.

The Wisconsin Experience comprises the following inquiry-based, high-impact practices:

- Substantial research experiences that generate knowledge and analytical skills
- Global and cultural competencies and engagement
- Leadership and activism opportunities
- Application of knowledge in the “real world”

The nature of these opportunities and how we offer them makes UW–Madison unique in higher education. The resulting Wisconsin Experience is characterized by intentional integration of in- and out-of-class learning, by creative and entrepreneurial engagement in real world problems, and through active student leadership.



Here are a few examples of these opportunities:

- Service-learning and community-based research
- Research apprenticeships on competitively funded projects
- Summer internships in for-profit and non-profit organizations
- First Wave and other multicultural arts initiatives
- Peer mentoring in the classroom
- The Undergraduate Research Scholars Program
- First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs)
- Entrepreneurship opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students
- Intercultural dialogues through small group learning communities
- Training for health professions in rural, central city, and other underserved areas
- Leadership certificates in schools, colleges and majors
- Activism and leadership through student organizations and campus-community partnerships
- Comprehensive honors and honors theses in the major
- Year-long and semester-long study and research abroad
- National and international internships
- Residential Learning Communities
- Research communities for graduate students
- Graduate and professional student development