Writing PLOs: Poor, Better, and Best Examples

XYZ College’s Bachelor of Psychology PLO

Poor:

Grades should know the historically important systems of psychology.

This is a poor example because:

- it does not provide information on which systems of psychology are historically important.
- “should know” is a weak action phrase for a learning outcome

Better:

Grades will identify the psychoanalytic, Gestalt, behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive approaches to psychology.

This is better because:

- it identifies what theories students will learn; however, it does not detail what students should know about each theory.
- “will identify” is a stronger action phrase; however, graduates should be able to do more than “identify” certain approaches

Best:

Grades will recognize, articulate, and compare the foundational assumptions, central ideas, and dominant criticisms of the psychoanalytic, Gestalt, behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive approaches to psychology.

This is the best statement because:

- It uses appropriate action words
- It provides clear and specific targets for students to reach
- It provides faculty with a standard against which they can gauge student knowledge and/or performance.

Example developed from the University of Connecticut’s “How to Write Objectives/Outcomes”