Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

The American Public University System (APUS) has adopted the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) framework across its associate, bachelors, and master’s degree programs. The DQP framework illustrates students’ expected knowledge and skill set upon earning a degree. Based on more than a decade of research across all levels of higher education, the framework defines expected learning outcomes that all graduates need regardless of academic specialization.

The DQP framework is aligned with APUS’s mission of providing a quality higher education while preparing students for service and leadership in a diverse, global society. To ensure that AMU and APU students are prepared for success, student learning outcomes are defined at three levels: institutional (outlined in this catalog); degree program (identified in the degree program descriptions on the AMU/APU websites); and course (identified in the syllabi for each course) levels.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

AMU and APU students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the following learning areas upon completion of any academic program in any discipline:

- **Applied learning** is used by students to demonstrate what they can do with what they know.
- **Intellectual skills** are used by students to think critically and analytically about what they learn, broadening their individual perspectives and experiences.
- **Specialized knowledge** is the knowledge students demonstrate about their individual fields of study.
- **Broad knowledge** transcends the typical boundaries of students in the first two years of higher education and encompasses all learning in broad areas through multiple degree levels.
- **Civic learning** is that which enables students to respond to social, environmental and economic challenges at local, national and global levels.
- **Digital Information Literacy** is concerned with responsibly, safely, ethically, effectively and efficiently accessing, evaluating, collaborating, organizing, and distributing information in the digital world. It includes using tools, technologies, techniques, and best practices, to develop responsible and safe consumers and communicators of information in the digital information world to support research and to solve real world problems.

Program Level Student Learning Outcomes

AMU and APU students are expected to achieve student learning outcomes at the degree program level upon graduation from a particular degree program. Student learning at the degree program level is assessed through end-of-program capstone experiences to ensure the student has achieved proficiency of the knowledge and skills expected of a professional in the respective discipline. Signature assessments, standardized tests, and rubrics are examples of measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of students achieving desired learning outcomes at the degree program level.

Course Level Student Learning Outcomes

AMU and APU students are expected to achieve course level student learning outcomes upon completion of a course. Course developed exams, simulations, case studies, discussion boards, collaborative research projects, and writing assignments are examples of measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of students achieving desired learning outcomes at the course level.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

APUS is committed to student learning assessment and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The learning outcomes assessment program at APUS:

- Provides students with useful information about their current skills, knowledge, and competencies.
- Enables the university to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic courses and programs in terms of achieving the desired learning outcomes for its students.
- Is used for continuous improvement at all levels of the institution.
- Ensures that students are prepared for success in work and citizenship in a diverse, global society.

APUS uses a variety of direct and indirect assessment measures to evaluate student learning and improve the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The assessment of student learning at APUS is guided by the student learning outcomes posted in the catalog, AMU/APU websites, and courses. Student learning outcomes assessment is conducted at the institutional, degree program, and course level, whereby each level is aligned and designed to complement each other; providing a comprehensive view of student learning and the effectiveness of academic programs.
Students are required to participate in learning outcomes assessment activities at APUS and will be given adequate notice of any course and/or non-course related assessment activities they are responsible for completing. APUS is committed to protecting the privacy of its students including ensuring the confidentiality of student work submitted for assessment as well as the feedback resulting from assessment activities. For more information, the APUS Learning Outcomes Assessment website (http://www.apus.edu/community-scholars/learning-outcomes-assessment) establishes the framework for the conduct of student assessment across the institution.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

At the Associate level, the student

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<td>Describes the scope and existing principal features of the field of study, citing core theories and practices, and offers a similar explication of a related field</td>
<td>Identifies, categorizes in writing and a case knowledge distinguisher which or among ideas, concepts, theories and practical approaches applied to problems (Analytic inquiry)</td>
<td>Describes in writing how knowledge or practice is advanced, tested and revised</td>
<td>Describes their own civic and cultural background, including using continual refinements and improvements that includes feedback from classmates and instructor</td>
<td>Develops an appropriate research question using continual refinements and improvements that includes feedback from classmates and instructor</td>
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| Illustrates the field’s current terminology and perspectives on key debates within the field and in society | Describes and examines perspectives on key debates within the field and in society | Identifies, categorizes, gathers and appropriates organized evidence on an assigned research topic addressing a course-related question or a question of practice in a work or community setting; offers and examines competing hypotheses in answering the question. | Describes historical information and using contemporary, simple positions, search strategies, and values and practices, and presents their tools for an academic project, paper or performance course (Use of information resources). | Accesses information using simple search strategies and a limited number of familiar search tools. | Selects and applies recognized and methods in symbolic interpreting operations and discipline-based problems. | Presents accurate calculations and explains their use either in the field of study or in interpreting social or economic trends (Quantitative fluency). | Communicates information from sources accurately. |}

| Generates substantively core concepts of the field while executing analytical, practical or creative tasks | Illustrates how cultural perspectives could affect interpretation of problems in the arts, politics or global relations. (Engaging diverse perspectives) | Describes the ways in which at least two disciplines define, address and justify the importance of a contemporary challenge or problem. | Takes an active role in the community (work, service, co-curricular activities) and research question and examines civic issues and currency encountered in the research and information insights gained. | Evaluates and selects sources using basic criteria such as relevance to the research question and currency of the information. | Discusses some of the ethical and legal issues revolving around the consumption and production of information in a digital environment. | Attempts to cite sources using a consistent citation style that is appropriate to the discipline. |}

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At the Bachelor's level, the student

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<td>Defines and explains the boundaries, divisions, and practices of the field</td>
<td>Frames a complex scientific, technological, economic, or aesthetic challenge or problem from the perspectives within their major field and the literature of (Analytic at least two inquiry) academic fields and proposes a “best approach” to the question or challenge using evidence from those fields</td>
<td>Differentiates and evaluates theories on a project, paper, performance or other contested approaches in the field, both historical and contemporary</td>
<td>Expects diverse perspectives and knowledge insights and skills gained from work, from community different or research kinds of activities evidence with reflecting knowledge scholarly acquired in and academic community disciplines; perspectives explains how elements were combined to shape meaning or findings; and shows the relationship to relevant scholarship</td>
<td>Develops an appropriately specific research question or thesis by engaging in independent background research</td>
<td>Produces, independently or collaboratively, a question on a topic that addresses more than one investigatory or creative or practical work that draws on specific theories, tools and methods from at least two academic fields</td>
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Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Demonstrates fluency in the use of tools, technologies and methods in the field of study.

Explains a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology from the perspective of at least two academic fields, explains how the methods of inquiry and research in those disciplines can be brought to bear, judges the likelihood that the combination of disciplinary perspectives and methods would contribute to the resolution of the challenge, and justifies the importance of the challenge in a social or global context.

Constructs a cultural, political or technological alternate vision of either the natural or human world through a written project, laboratory report, exhibit, performance or community service design; defines the distinct patterns in this alternate vision; and explains how these patterns differ from current realities (Engaging diverse perspectives).

Translates verbal problems into mathematical algorithms, constructs valid arguments using the accepted symbolic system of mathematical reasoning, and constructs accurate calculations, estimates, risk analyses or quantitative evaluations of public information through presentations, papers or projects.

Communicates, organizes, and synthesizes information from sources to achieve a specific purpose beyond summarizing those sources.

Evaluates, clarifies and frames a complex question or challenge using perspectives and scholarship from the student’s major field and at least one other academic field in a written report, concept paper, laboratory report, performance or community service design.

Completes a field-based assignment in the course of study that employs insights from others; evaluates a significant question in relation to concepts, methods or assumptions in at least one academic field; and explains the implications of learning outside the classroom.

Collaborates in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluates the process and, where applicable, weighs the result against the importance of the challenge.

Evaluates, selects and uses sources using multiple criteria, including relevance, currency, authority and purpose.

Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to achieve a specific purpose beyond summarizing those sources.
Constructs a project related to a familiar but complex problem in the field of study by assembling, arranging and reformulating ideas, concepts, designs or techniques.

Constructs sustained, coherent argument or presentation on technical issues or processes in more than one language and in more than one medium for general and specific audiences; and works through collaboration to address a social, personal or ethical dilemma (Communication fluency).

Quotes, paraphrases, and cites information correctly and consistently, with very few citation errors and misinterpretations/misuses of source material.

Constructs a summative project, paper or practice-based performance that draws on current research, scholarship and/or techniques in the field.

Clearly articulates several ethical and legal issues revolving around the consumption and production of information in a digital environment.
At the Master’s level, the student

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<td>Elucidates the major theories, research methods and approaches to inquiry, and/or schools of practice in the field; articulates relevant sources; and illustrates their relationship to allied fields</td>
<td>Articulates how the field has developed and employs in an essay or project ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of the field (Analytic inquiry)</td>
<td>Disaggregates a discrete project, paper, exhibit, or other public policy task reflecting the integration student’s principal ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of the field</td>
<td>Assesses and develops a position on a performance or other public policy question reflecting the integration student’s principal ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of the field</td>
<td>Effectively develops a focused and sophisticated research question or thesis that engages with questions and ideas that are important to scholars of field(s)</td>
<td>Documents the knowledge taking into account practicum, scholarly work, and community engagement in the discipline activities with knowledge and skills from at least two disciplines representing different segments of the curriculum (e.g., computer science and anthropology); documents the sources of the knowledge and skills reflected in the integration; articulates in writing how these elements influenced the resulting product; and assesses the significance of the work in light of major debates or developments in the primary field(s)</td>
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</table>
Assesses the contributions of major figures and organizations in the field; describes its major methodologies and practices; and implements at least two such methodologies and practices through projects, papers, exhibits or performances.

Designs and executes an applied, investigative or creative work that draws on the perspectives and methods of other fields and assesses the resulting gains and difficulties.

Provides adequate evidence through projects, papers, notebooks, or project computer files or catalogues of requiring expanding, application assessing of or refining advanced either a knowledge recognized to a information practical challenge; or an articulates information insights base gained from the field (Use of information assesses, resources) with appropriate citations, selected approaches or scholarly debates applicable to the problem; articulates a reasoned judgment on selected issues in the field; and assesses standards for professional performance and continuing development.

Creates, designs and implements a performance, paper or project that presents insights gained from the field and articulates a reasoned judgment on selected issues in the field.

Provides adequate evidence through papers, projects, notebooks, or project computer files or catalogues of expanding, assessing or refining either a recognized information resource or a knowledge base within the field.

Accesses information using effective, well-designed search strategies and search tools that are most appropriate for the specific topic, efficiently and creatively refining searches on the fly as needed.

Articulates major challenges and defends the significance of their specialized work in terms of challenges, trends and developments in a social or global context.

Addresses in a project, paper or performance a core issue in the field from the perspective of a different point in time or a different culture, political order or technological context, and articulates how the perspective contributes to results that depart from current norms, dominant cultural assumptions or technologies (Engaging diverse perspectives).

Evaluates and selects a comprehensive set of sources to engage with that are appropriate to the discipline and the scope of the research question, using multiple criteria to assess relevance, currency, authority, accuracy, purpose, audience and ideological perspective.
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<td>Initiates, assembles, arranges and reformulates ideas, concepts, designs and techniques in carrying out a project directed at a challenge in the field beyond conventional boundaries</td>
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<td>Clearly and effectively communicates, organizes, and synthesizes complex and often contradictory information from sources and/or independent experiments and other data collection strategies to advance knowledge in the discipline</td>
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<td>Not seeking a degree in a quantitative field employs and applies mathematical logical or statistical tools to problems within the field in a project, paper or performance while the student seeking a degree in a quantitative field articulates and undertakes multiple appropriate applications of quantitative methods, concepts and theories (Quantitative fluency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzes some of the more advanced ethical and legal issues revolving around the consumption and production of information in a digital environment, such as ongoing controversies about topics such as fair use and privacy in social networking environments</td>
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At the Doctoral level, the student

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<td>Makes judgments about the merit and efficacy of relevant theories, approaches, concepts, and relevant concepts to the discipline in a professional and academic setting</td>
<td>Articulates the development and current academic and professional practice of the discipline</td>
<td>Judges the work of peers and demonstrates lessons learned</td>
<td>Communicates in the style of the discipline in oral and written form</td>
<td>Integrates theories, approaches concepts, methods, and analysis, and contributes to the body of knowledge in the discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articulates the use of theories, approaches, and appropriate methodologies in both the real world and simulated real world examples</td>
<td>Applies the theories, concepts, and appropriate methods to both real world and simulated real world examples</td>
<td>Analyzes and gains an appreciation for the decision making, beliefs, and language, culture, and promulgation, psychology and defends choices made</td>
<td>Reflects upon and analyzes lessons learned from partaking in simulated real world, and real world exercises</td>
<td>Demonstrates advanced digital information literacy skills in research and knowledge promulgation, and defends choices made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges the appropriate use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the discipline</td>
<td>Judges the appropriate theories, concepts, and appropriate methods for the decision making, beliefs, and language, culture, and promulgation, psychology and defends choices made</td>
<td>Defends research, positions, and judgments made about issues and challenges in a professional and academic setting</td>
<td>Articulates the development and current academic and professional practice of the discipline</td>
<td>Abides by ethical and professional standards</td>
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