



How to Write an Effective Program Description

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Overview

The program description, together with the program learning outcomes, the course descriptions and course learning outcomes, constitute a learning contract with the learner.

What is the purpose of a program description?

- To provide a meaningful explanation of what learners will learn and experience in the program
- To give an indication of the depth and breadth of what is learned in the program
- To give prospective learners sufficient information to make informed choices about their education, and to make a clear link between learning in the program and work in the field or discipline
- To provide an indication of future employment possibilities and further education opportunities for graduates

Who is the intended audience?

- Prospective learners
- Enrolled learners
- Faculty
- Education Council

Other potential audiences may include articulation and accrediting bodies.

What should be included in a program description?

- WHAT learners will learn as articulated in the program learning outcomes
 - Key concepts, themes, principles, topics
 - Skills and abilities
 - Attitudes, values, and other attributes
- HOW learners will learn
 - Significant, unique, or applied learning opportunities that students will experience
- WHAT future career and academic pathways and opportunities exist for graduates
 - Transfer options
 - Licensing, requirements, or exams needed for practice, as applicable

What are the guidelines for writing a program description?

- Write from a learner-centred perspective by articulating what is learned and experienced, rather than what is taught. For example, focus on knowledge, skills, and abilities, rather than listing topics being covered.
- Ensure that the description broadly reflects and aligns with the focus and intent of the program learning outcomes.
- Consider starting the description with an impactful statement or question directly related to the discipline or program that will draw prospective learners in or arouse curiosity about the program.

- Career and academic pathways – where appropriate give broad examples of potential career and education pathways, rather than a specific listing
- Use clear, accessible, and dynamic language and vocabulary that will appeal to the audience and reflect the nature of the discipline, field, or vocation.
- Length: approximately 150-300 words, depending on the length and complexity of the program.

Who reviews and approves the program descriptions?

- The School Curriculum Committee (SCC) within the school
- The Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC), a subcommittee of Education Council, reviews curriculum and recommends it for approval by Education Council (Ed Co)
- Ed Co approves all program and course curriculum at the College
 - Only approved curricula may be used in program- and course-related documentation such as a course syllabus
 - Any changes to program and/or course curricula must be approved by Ed Co

For more information on the Education Approvals process, see [Approval Steps Explained Basics](#) on the [Education Approvals SharePoint](#) site.

Who can I consult if I need help with writing program descriptions?

- **Faculty Curriculum Leads (FCLs)** in your School, who can direct you to resources and provide support as you proceed through the Education Approvals process
- The **Curriculum Development & Program Renewal (CDPR)** team in CETL, who can be consulted on creating and revising all aspects of curriculum, including program and course descriptions and learning outcomes
- The **School Curriculum Committee (SCC)**, whose function is to review and assess the benefits of curriculum changes to ensure that the changes meet student needs and institutional standards and priorities

Following is a list of approved program descriptions from across the college. Each reflects different elements of an effective program description.

Annotated Examples - Approved Camosun College Program Descriptions

Certificate in Education and Career Planning

Program Description

Students in the Education and Career Planning (EDCP) program will experience a transformative, applied learning experience in which they develop the skills to set realistic goals and create personal plans for future education and careers in a diverse and changing world.

Begins with an impactful statement and provides a meaningful description of the learning experience

Articulates what students learn and experience, rather than what is taught.

The program welcomes adult learners at any stage of life who are engaged in a transition to explore career and educational opportunities. A strengths-based approach in a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment supports resilience, self-awareness, wellness, and personal leadership skills. To inform their future goals and plans, learners identify, research, and critically analyze information on occupations and labour markets. They also explore and familiarize themselves with post-secondary education programming, pathways, services, and resources.

Language reflects the approach and values of the program

Broadly reflects all program learning outcomes (PLOs)
e.g. This paragraph reflects PLOs 5 and 7

Supports learners to make informed choices

Learners develop communication and interpersonal skills in order to enhance their ability to interact effectively and respectfully with diverse individuals and groups. Learners conduct job searches and information interviews, participate in mock interviews, and develop career and educational networks. Coaching and hands-on learning activities in a variety of settings and contexts give learners the opportunity to practice and apply their skills while building self-confidence and independence.

Unique and applied learning

Graduates of the EDCP program are eligible for an elective credit towards the BC Adult Graduation Diploma. Flexible delivery options are available.

Provides an indication of further education opportunities

(203 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Education and Career Planning

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Apply a variety of communication skills in a variety of contexts related to education and career planning.
2. Create a research-informed and personally meaningful education and career plan.
3. Develop self-awareness and the personal leadership skills and strategies necessary to achieve goals.
4. Develop and maintain respectful relationships with diverse individuals and groups using a variety of skills and strategies.
5. Develop effective job search and interview skills and strategies using a variety of resources and media.
6. Explore and participate effectively in relevant career-path and work experiences/settings.
7. Develop skills and strategies to support financial planning, well-being, and health, and to access community resources and support systems.

Diploma in Dental Hygiene

Program Description

The Dental Hygiene Diploma program is designed to prepare individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values to provide safe and competent primary oral health care. The program prepares students to aspire to the highest levels of professionalism.

Clear and compelling program purpose that reflects the values of the discipline

The program emphasizes the importance of a wellness model of care and evidence informed practice as students learn to provide comprehensive and culturally sensitive dental hygiene care to individuals, families, and communities. Throughout the program, students develop the skills to communicate and collaborate effectively with clients and interdisciplinary teams.

Indicates breadth and depth of learning

Broadly reflects several PLOs

Professional responsibility to society in the areas of health promotion, education, healthy public policy, and advocacy is emphasized throughout the program. Students enjoy many opportunities to apply theory and knowledge including hands-on practice in class and the community, provision of dental hygiene care to the public in the Camosun College Dental Clinic, and participation in international field schools.

Significant and applied learning opportunities

The Camosun College Dental Hygiene Diploma program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada. Graduates of the program must successfully complete the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board Examination to be eligible for registration and licensure with the College of Dental Hygienists of British Columbia as a Registered Dental Hygienist.

Further licensing requirement

Graduates are employed in a variety of settings including clinical practice, community health care, and independent practice, and are eligible to apply for degree completion at a variety of post-secondary institutions.

Future career and academic opportunities

Graduates of the program are eligible to apply to the University of British Columbia to complete the 4th (final) year of the Bachelor of Dental Science (Dental Hygiene) Program, or to Thompson Rivers University to complete a Bachelor of Health Science. (273 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Dental Hygiene

At the completion of the program students will be able to:

1. Practice professionally as a dental hygienist.
2. Practice ethically, safely, and competently as a dental hygienist.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking and use evidence-informed decision-making to provide comprehensive dental hygiene care to individuals, families, and communities.
4. Communicate and collaborate competently with individuals, families, communities, and interdisciplinary teams.
5. Coordinate and contribute to the effective management of the practice environment to ensure quality care.
6. Educate individuals, families, and communities about oral health, including its relationship to overall health.
7. Apply the principles of health promotion and disease prevention to enhance the health of individuals, families, and communities.
8. Provide the dental hygiene process of care for individuals, families, and communities.
9. Advocate for the improvement of and access to oral and other health services for individuals, families, and communities.

Diploma in Indigenous Studies

Program Description

Students in the two-year Indigenous Studies (IST) diploma program develop the knowledge and skills that prepare them for their roles as leaders in their communities. They engage in cultural, academic, and applied learning experiences in applied, land-based, and classroom contexts.

Impactful opening statement

Student-centered perspective

Students learn to walk with dignity, taking care of and being responsible to one another, and develop their voice and identities. They have opportunities to strengthen their life skills through learning about self-control, strengthening their identity, self-awareness, self-worth, and relationship building. There are opportunities for reciprocity and generosity between students in varying phases of their learning, and students become mentors to one another.

Dynamic and compelling language and tone reflect values and approach of the program

The teachings that IST students receive about developing and honouring their relationship with land strengthens the connections between cultural knowledge and Indigenous environmental practices. Students develop a sense of individual and collective responsibility towards the land.

Several PLOs are broadly reflected throughout

Students develop strong academic writing skills, presentation skills, and oral tradition skills that enable them to communicate successfully with the world around them.

Students learn about connecting and giving back to community by taking on various contributory roles including project leadership. Students are positively influenced by Elders who model and instill values such as work ethic, timeliness, and a commitment to success in one's studies.

Significant and unique learning opportunities

Technology provides opportunities to share cultural and academic knowledge amongst students, faculty, community, and others in the college.

The program faculty collaborate with community to ensure that students learn what is important to prepare them for work in their communities or to continue with post-secondary education.

Students will continue with their education in areas such as anthropology, education, Indigenous studies, law, political science, social work, and other academic disciplines. Block transfer [available] for students to enter 3rd year at Vancouver Island University First Nations Studies, BA program.



(291 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Indigenous Studies

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Integrate knowledge of Indigenous collective values, and ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating to create vision for self, family, community, and Nation.
2. Demonstrate effective, healthy, and holistic leadership skills drawing on Indigenous knowledge and diverse cultural teachings.
3. Connect and engage with Indigenous community, Elders and other Knowledge Keepers, and individuals using approaches that reflect Indigenous knowledge, values and teachings.
4. Demonstrate understanding of the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples, Canadians and others around the world, and how Indigenous peoples are regenerating their identities and futures.
5. Demonstrate understanding of traditional, contemporary, and future relationships with and responsibilities to the natural world as a form of self-determination.
6. Critically reflect upon, analyze, and organize knowledge and information made available in the program.
7. Demonstrate capacity to navigate through multiple social and cultural systems.
8. Communicate clearly, skillfully, and creatively as writers, speakers, and public presenters.

Diploma in Mechanical Engineering Technology

Program Description

The Mechanical Engineering Technology Diploma Program provides learners with the knowledge, skills and abilities for employment as Mechanical Engineering (ME) technologists within a broad array of industries.

Clear purpose linked to work in the field

Learners graduate with a strong foundation in science as applied to engineering design, development, implementation and maintenance of components and systems, as well as the processes and operations related to manufacturing and other industries.

Learner-centered language

Learners engage in hands on, applied learning opportunities in the program's machine shop and engineering laboratories, and on computer-controlled manufacturing equipment that provides graduates with skills and abilities that exceed national accreditation standards.

Indicates depth and breadth of the learning

The program culminates in a capstone project where students work in teams to create, design, model, fabricate, assemble, test, and document a mechanical project that is showcased and publicly demonstrated. Past projects include underwater vehicles, manufacturing equipment, renewable energy products, transportation devices, and medical assistance products.

Significant and applied learning experiences and opportunities

Career/Academic Advancement Opportunities

Upon graduation, ME technologists may apply their skills to product design, testing and evaluation, research and development, manufacturing, and sales. Specialized fields of employment include materials testing, automation and packaging, instrumentation design and the implementation of CAD/CAM equipment in engineering departments.

Graduates are qualified to work as technologists domestically and internationally. Graduates wishing to continue their studies toward a degree in mechanical engineering may apply for entrance to Camosun College's Engineering Bridge Program or apply directly to other post- secondary institutions offering Engineering programs.

(227 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Mechanical Engineering Technology

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Apply the fundamentals of mechanical engineering to the design, analysis, manufacturing and testing of mechanical components, prototypes, processes, operations, and systems.
2. Prepare, analyze, evaluate, and modify mechanical engineering drawings and other related technical documents for the design of mechanical components, machines, processes and systems.
3. Analyze and solve complex mechanical engineering problems by applying math, physics and the principles of mechanical engineering.
4. Plan, implement, and evaluate quality control and quality assurance procedures to meet organizational requirements and standards.
5. Apply knowledge of, and monitor compliance with, current legislation, standards, regulations and guidelines.
6. Apply current practices of project management and business principles to applied science and mechanical engineering technology projects.
7. Communicate clearly, concisely, and correctly in spoken, written and visual forms that fulfill purposes and meet audience needs.
8. Work effectively within and lead a team towards accomplishment of productive goals while supporting the dynamics and processes of the group.

Diploma in Music Performance

Program Description

Music Performance is a two-year program of full-time study offered through partnership with the Victoria Conservatory of Music. The program is designed to provide a deep, practical training in music, instilling the skills vital for success in the 21st-century music workplace.

Clear purpose that speaks to a unique learning opportunity with the professional community

A common first year of study provides intensive instruction in individual and group performance, establishes the fundamentals of written and aural theory, and lays the foundation for professional use of music technologies. An open second year of study allows students to select options in composition or performance with a focus on classical or contemporary music.

Key learning and student choice

Music Performance is ideal for pre-professional or upgrading-professional musicians who desire a strong and current performance-based training program to support their potential career in the music industry. Entering students are assessed for readiness to thrive in our music-focussed post-secondary learning environment.

Information for potential learners to make an informed choice

Career/Academic Advancement Opportunities

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to work in a variety of professional settings for music, to apprentice through elite performance training programs, or to move on to further study at university to complete a B. Mus. degree in any number of music or music education disciplines.

(189 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Music Performance

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Perform a balanced selection of the professional solo and ensemble repertoire on a principal instrument or voice.
2. Infer from experience with music performance and music history appropriate stylistic performance practice on a principal instrument or voice.
3. Apply principles of oral and written music theory, musical improvisation, composition and analysis in the performance and interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar music.
4. Organize and manage a plan for personal technical and musical development toward a professional goal in the field of music.
5. Evaluate personal standards of music making against current professional standards in a variety of music fields.
6. Use appropriate tools, techniques, systems and processes to augment professional practice as a musician.
7. Communicate effectively using music technologies in a variety of contexts.

Diploma in Public Administration

Program Description

The Diploma in Public Administration provides students with a theoretical and applied framework for thinking about and understanding government, as well as a solid foundation in government structures, operations, and systems.

Indication of depth and breadth of learning

Applied learning opportunities expose students to different perspectives and government objectives, enabling them to consider issues in new and creative ways, and bring this understanding to their own practice.

Students are introduced to the professionalism of public administration, becoming reflective, ethically aware, and accountable practitioners. Developing skills in public administration and governance, including the ability to lead others and manage conflict, will ensure students are responsive to change and skilled at building relationships with diverse stakeholders and community groups. They further develop the skills to identify current and emerging issues and trends and how these impact and drive government decisions.

Broadly reflects the program learning outcomes

The critical importance of relationships within the context of public administration are explored, including Indigenous rights holders with direct respect to reconciliation.

Focus on values, skills, and abilities

Upon completion of the program, graduates may be employed in a variety of public administration settings.

Further career and academic opportunities

Graduates may transfer to a Bachelor of Public Administration program at a number of post-secondary institutions in BC or continue on to Camosun's Bachelor of Business Administration program.

(197 words)

Program Learning Outcomes - Public Administration

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the history of government and of the evolution of Indigenous, local, provincial and federal government structures in Canada.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the business of government, including its structures, bureaucracies, decision-making and accountability to taxpayers and citizens.
3. Examine inherent rights to self-government in Canada.
4. Collaborate and communicate effectively both internally and externally with government, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies, and stakeholders.
5. Establish and maintain positive and effective relationships with stakeholders, taxpayers, and citizens.
6. Use knowledge of concepts, principles and dynamics of management and leadership to support organizational goals, challenges, and opportunities
7. Demonstrate professional and public responsibility and make positive contributions to the field of public administration.
8. Demonstrate ethical and values informed decision-making strategies.
9. Practice as a professional adhering to the responsibilities, roles, and boundaries of the role of a public administrator.
10. Examine trends and issues affecting Canadian public administration and describe how these are managed from a public administration perspective.

Bachelor of Kinesiology

Program Description

The Bachelor of Kinesiology degree is a dynamic, 4-year applied degree program that prepares graduates with leading-edge theoretical and applied knowledge, and skills to work in the fields of exercise physiology, kinesiology, exercise therapy, fitness, high- performance sport, adapted physical activity, health, and community recreation.

Impactful statement indicating the breadth of the field

Students will experience the applied nature of the program and the opportunity to connect theory to hands-on practice through classroom and lab activities complemented with opportunities for workplace integrated learning in clinical, community, sport, and recreation settings.

Significant and applied learning opportunities

Hands-on, practical learning provides students with the background for human performance assessment, exercise prescription, program design, high-performance training, and community recreational instruction and programming.

Knowledge related to a range of populations - including high-performance athletes, children, youth, adolescent, older adults, Indigenous Peoples, individuals with diverse abilities, and individuals with chronic health conditions - all contribute to the ability of graduates to work collaboratively and across disciplines in a range of health, fitness, sport, and specialized environments.

Indication of depth and breadth of learning

Graduates of the KIN - Bachelor of Kinesiology are eligible to write the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP) - Clinical Exercise Physiologist (CEP) exam, as well as other fitness-related certifications. Graduates also have the opportunity to obtain certification with the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), and to apply for membership as Certified Kinesiologists through the British Columbia Association of Kinesiologists.

Further licensing requirements

A wide array of career opportunities exists for program graduates, including exercise physiologists, exercise therapists, personal trainers, strength and conditioning coaches, or kinesiologists in multi-disciplinary clinics or provincial health institutions, private fitness facilities, or municipal recreation.

Students also have career choices in the areas of adapted sport and physical activity, physical literacy, gerontology, corporate wellness, and high-performance sport. Graduates may pursue post-graduate education in occupational therapy and physiotherapy programs as well as variety of other post-graduate programs.

(297 words)



Program Learning Outcomes - Kinesiology

At the completion of the program students will be able to:

1. Apply and synthesize advanced knowledge of exercise sciences to fitness, health, sport, and clinical populations.
2. Apply and synthesize advanced knowledge of behavioural sciences to health, fitness, sport, and clinical populations.
3. Select, administer, and evaluate appropriate assessment techniques for health, fitness, sport, and clinical populations.
4. Design, implement, and evaluate appropriate exercise programs for individuals and groups in health, fitness, sport, and clinical settings.
5. Demonstrate responsible, accountable, and ethical behaviours as an exercise professional.
6. Use analytical thinking and methods to make informed decisions and solve problems as an exercise, sport, or health professional.
7. Lead teams, groups, and organizations to achieve organizational goals.
8. Communicate effectively with individuals, teams, groups, and organizations.
9. Apply business management concepts and principles in a range of professional settings.