

SCIENCE LEARNING OUTCOMES: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Gathering evidence of the learning outcomes of our graduates constitutes an essential element in the quality assurance and improvement of institutional programs; it has also become the focus of the national standards agenda for higher education. Although the validity of self-reported learning gains is often questioned, they provide an additional dimension to any analysis of learning outcomes.

In this presentation we will report on the findings of a survey administered to graduating science and biomedical sciences students in two research intensive institutions. The Science Student Skills Inventory (SSSI) instrument was used to gauge student perceptions about their learning gains at program level, with respect to both learning scientific content and knowledge in their field of study and development of skills essential to science (communication, writing, quantitative thinking, team work, ethical thinking, and research skills). The report will include (i) an analysis of students' perceptions of the types of class contact and assessment tasks where each of these skills were present, their overall assessment of their learning, and the importance of these skills to their future occupation; and (ii) a comparative analysis between the two degree types, students' backgrounds and future plans.

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