

Tips for Writing Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, or abilities students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of a course, group of courses, or program. Well written learning outcomes enhance the assessment process. Here are some tips to guide you.

Tip 1. Write learning outcomes that will do the following:

- Focus on student behavior rather than instructor behavior
- Be measurable
- Clearly describe the expectation of student learning
- Be linked to the program's educational objectives (mapped to goal set)

In order to focus on student behavior, do not simply describe the instructional objectives or what the course(s) will provide to the student, but what the student should be able to demonstrate after the course(s). It is not about the activities of the course, but student behavior change from those activities.

Tip 2. Draw inspiration from Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Keep in mind the six levels of cognitive skills (lowest to highest):

- Knowledge/remembering
- Comprehension/understanding
- Application/applying
- Analysis/analyzing
- Evaluation/evaluating
- Synthesis/creating

Tip 3. Focus on specific action verbs such as *compare, critique, describe, define* rather than vague verbs such as *understand, be exposed to*.

Vague verbs are difficult to measure, so translate them into specific action verbs by analyzing exactly what would demonstrate understanding. See: <http://prtl.uhcl.edu/institutional-effectiveness/planning-and-assessment/assessment/actionverblast-final.pdf>

Other online sources:

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: SLO Statement Resources
<http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/SLOsresources.html>

Writing Measurable Learning Outcomes

<http://www.gavilan.edu/research/spd/Writing-Measurable-Learning-Outcomes.pdf>

Student Learning Outcomes: To Advance Student Learning

<http://sa-assessment.uoregon.edu/Resources-and-Training/Writing-Student-Learning-Outcomes>

Writing Learning Objectives Step-by-Step

1. Select your **Action Verb**: Verb selection should vary by course or degree level, increasing in cognitive skills with level.
 - 1000 level: *Describe, Remember, Define, Recognize, Summarize, Compare*. If you want students to learn the theories relevant to your field, replace those verbs with a measurable behavior such as *describe*. You can observe/measure the ability of a student to describe something, but much more difficult with learn.
 - 2000 level: *Apply, Demonstrate, Question, Interpret*. If you want to expose students to research articles, what do you want that exposure to lead to?
 - 3000-4000 level: *Synthesize, Support, Investigate, Critique, Hypothesize*. If you want students to understand research, how should they demonstrate that understanding?
 - Master's level: *Integrate, Evaluate, Synthesize, Design*. If you want your students to know how to do research, what will demonstrate that knowledge?

2. Add required **Knowledge as Object of Learning Objective**: What behavior is the student expected to demonstrate after completion of the course or program?
 - 1000 level: Students will be able to describe the main theories relevant to your field.
 - 2000 level: Students will be able to interpret a research article from your field.
 - 3000-4000 level: Students will be able to form a hypothesis and support it with relevant research.
 - Master's level: Students will be able to evaluate and synthesize relevant research in order to design a study of their own.

3. **Confirm and link your Learning Objective**: Is this really what you want students to learn from this course, set of courses, or program? How does this learning objective connect to activities and assignments in the course(s) that will allow you to measure the objective? How does it map to UHCL or other relevant (e.g. accreditation, College) Learning Outcomes.