

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning and Teaching
Quick Guide



Learning Outcomes (LOs) are statements expressed in terms of the observable things students will be able to do, create or demonstrate on successful completion of the unit or course.

Learning outcomes are contrasted to learning objectives. The latter express the intentions of the teacher (what will be taught), while LOs are based on the desired capabilities of a student who has passed the unit or course. Learning outcomes are the basis for the constructive alignment (Biggs, 2014) of curriculum learning activities and assessment, through which students learn and demonstrate their achievement.

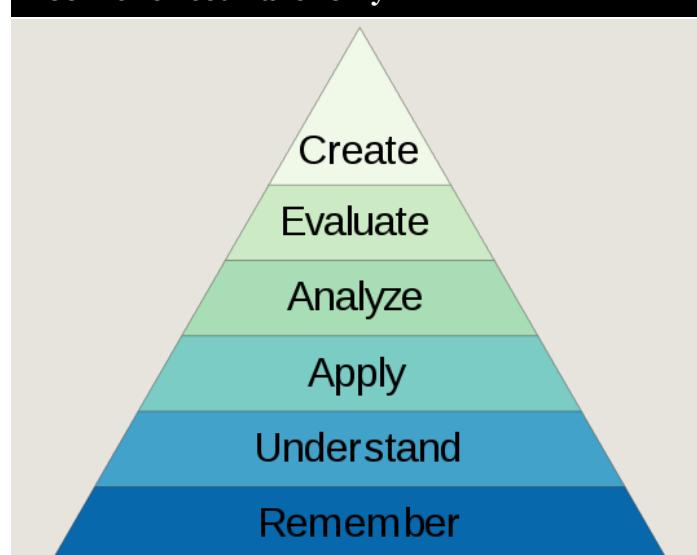
LEARNING OUTCOMES

Four to six Learning Outcomes are appropriate at a unit level. Learning outcomes can also be specified for each topic and lesson. The learning outcomes should:

1. Specify the level of knowledge required.
2. Describe how the desired skills are applied.
3. Provide a description of the observable outcome.
4. Be situated in a disciplinary or professional context.

Verbs from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy can frame the level and nature of a LO capability, with the four highest levels best aligned with the Higher Education AQF levels.

Bloom's revised Taxonomy



Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Image: Nicoguardo (Lic: C.C.A. 4. International).

WRITING LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

When writing:

- Use separate LOs for clearly distinct outcomes.
- Vary verbs: Discipline relevant synonyms or terms can be used. Note: "demonstrate" and "apply" are overused.
- Use active, concise voice: replace "in an effective manner" with "effectively".
- Avoid vague verbs that can't be observed or measured. E.g. appreciate, experience, believe, aware of, knowledge of...

General structures can provide guidance in constructing each learning outcome statement. Using structured statements helps students and other teachers clearly understand what is intended. Examples are shown in T1.

T1: From general structures to learning outcomes.

General structure	Learning outcome
{analyse/evaluate/explain...} (skills/knowledge/information) to	...apply recent and established practical and theoretical approaches to the study of Archaeology to address issues in an interdisciplinary context.
{analyse/evaluate/explain} <situation/system/data/process> in <context>	
{apply/demonstrate...} (skills/knowledge/information) to(by/through) {define(defining)/solve(solving)/create(creating)} [problem/artefact] in <context>	...demonstrate advanced knowledge and scholarly understanding of business psychology through addressing people-related problems and needs in the workplace.
{evaluate/analyse/create...} <information/system/situation> (to {create/accomplish} [artefact/action/outcome]) in <context>	...design and implement systems and processes for effective organisational change and governance.
{demonstrate/apply...} (skills/knowledge) through/by {behaving/acting/practising} (in accordance with <standard/s>) in <context>	...practise scientific and professional responsibilities including an adherence to required standards of workplace safety and ethics.
{communicate} (skills/knowledge/information) {using} <media> to <audience/s>	... communicate biological problems and solutions to scientists and the public, using written, oral and digital media.

Further examples are provided in the MQCMS Wiki guide.

Explore this topic further ...

Rytmeister, C. (2019) Writing Learning Outcomes, MQ CMS Wiki, <https://wiki.mq.edu.au/x/sICqEg>

Other Quick Guides: 'Constructive Alignment', 'Unit Activities', 'Unit Assessment' and more https://goto.mq/qg_lt

REFERENCES

Biggs, J. (2014) Constructive alignment in university teaching, HERDSA Review of Higher Education, 1, 5-22 <http://taw.fi/HRHE1-5-22>

Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York: Longman.

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