A Fresh Look at Learning Outcomes

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My favorite question: What are your learning outcomes?
Upon completion of this workshop, participants will be able to...

- differentiate goals and learning outcomes.
- give a brief definition of the term learning outcomes.
- name 3 reasons why we need strong learning outcomes in the context of higher education.
- identify 3 characteristics of a strong learning outcome.
- explain the five-component structure of a strong learning outcome.
- produce a list of 5 strong verbs included in Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- pinpoint 2 verbs that should be avoided when writing learning outcomes.
- differentiate a weak from a strong learning outcome, drawing directly on newly acquired knowledge about learning outcome components.
- re-write learning outcomes that do not meet the standards established in the workshop.
- produce criteria-fulfilling learning outcomes autonomously.
Let's get started

There are GOALS...

- Broad statements about general aims or purposes of education, such as: “problem-solving skills”
- Constitute a group of more narrow and specified statements → learning outcomes
...and then there are LEARNING OUTCOMES

- A LEARNING OUTCOME...

  ...is a precise, measurable statement identifying what the student/staff member will know and be able to demonstrate upon completion of a program.

  ...is an OUTCOME, not a process.

  ...must be aligned with mission statements, and institutional/official standards for goals/competencies.
Why do I need learning outcomes?

(Ain’t nobody got time for that!)

□ For YOU!

◊ You need to pick your destination before you can buy the plane ticket: The process of writing learning outcomes helps you organize your project not only in terms of what you want to get out of it, but also in terms of the project’s timeline, and the resources needed to complete the project.

◊ Think of your list of learning outcomes as an outline for your project.

◊ Learning outcomes will SAVE you time in the end.

□ For our students

◊ Our students deserve transparency and quality work, defined by superb preparation → strong learning outcomes.

◊ In some cases it makes sense to involve students in the process.

□ For the future

◊ Assessment based on strong learning outcomes yields results we can use to improve our work significantly.
Institutional Context (1/2)

- The Office of Student Life’s Strategic Goals
- MCC Mission Statement
- Student Life VP-approved structures:
  1) The Ohio State University Student Success Outcomes/Core Competencies (produced by the Taskforce on Student Success Outcomes in 2009)
  2) The Student Life Vision Statement
  3) The five Student Life Commitments to Student Success generated by the SL VP’s Office in 2011
  4) The 13 transferable skills generated by Career Connection a few years ago
Institutional Context (2/2)

Source: The Office of Student Life (2012)
This is a strong learning outcome.
This is not.
What makes a strong learning outcome?

1) Students understand the concept of gender identity development.

2) Students are able to name and explain 3 aspects of gender identity development.
Characteristics of a strong learning outcome

- **Specific**
  
  A learning outcome must be **distinctive and specific** to the program you are offering. Also, keep it simple.

- **Well-Structured**
  
  Structural consistency determines the strength of your outcome in terms of **measurability and clarity**.

- **Competency-/Action-Oriented**
  
  Language is key! We cannot measure someone’s understanding, but we can measure whether someone is able to demonstrate something, or not.
What’s in an outcome?

Upon completion of this class, students... are able to distinguish 3 aspects of gender identity development.
A Look at Language: Bloom’s Taxonomy Action Verbs (1/2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
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<td>Bloom’s Definition</td>
<td>Remember previously learned information.</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of the facts.</td>
<td>Apply knowledge to actual situations.</td>
<td>Break down objects or ideas into simpler parts and find evidence to support generalizations.</td>
<td>Compile component ideas into a new whole or propose alternative solutions.</td>
<td>Make and defend judgments based on internal evidence or external criteria.</td>
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| Verbs | • Arrange  
• Define  
• Describe  
• Duplicate  
• Identify  
• Label  
• List  
• Match  
• Memorize  
• Name  
• Order  
• Outline  
• Recognize  
• Relate  
• Recall | • Classify  
• Convert  
• Defend  
• Describe  
• Discuss  
• Distinguish  
• Estimate  
• Explain  
• Express  
• Extend  
• Generalized  
• Give example(s)  
• Identify  
• Indicate  
• Infer | • Apply  
• Change  
• Choose  
• Compute  
• Demonstrate  
• Discover  
• Dramatize  
• Employ  
• Illustrate  
• Interpret  | • Analyze  
• Appraise  
• Breakdown  
• Calculate  
• Categorize  
• Compare  
• Contrast  
• Criticize  
• Diagram  
• Differentiate  
| • Arrange  
• Assemble  
• Categorize  
• Collect  
• Combine  
• Comply  
• Compose  
• Compose  
• Create  
• Construct  
| • Appraise  
• Argue  
• Assess  
• Attach  
• Choose  
• Compare  
• Conclude  
• Contrast  
• Defend  
• Describe  
• Discriminate  
• Estimate  
• Evaluate  
| • Judge  
• Predict  
• Practice  
• Predict  
• Identify  
• Generate  
• Formulate  
• Explain  
• Devise  
• Devise
### A Look at Language: Bloom’s Taxonomy Action Verbs (2/2)

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- **Definitions**:
  - Order
  - Outline
  - Recognize
  - Relate
  - Recall
  - Repeat
  - Reproduce
  - Select
  - State

- **Knowledge**:
  - Generalized
  - Give example(s)
  - Identify
  - Indicate
  - Infer
  - Locate
  - Paraphrase
  - Predict
  - Recognize
  - Rewrite
  - Review
  - Select
  - Summarize
  - Translate

- **Comprehension**:
  - Manipulate
  - Modify
  - Operate
  - Practice
  - Predict
  - Prepare
  - Produce
  - Relate
  - Schedule
  - Show
  - Sketch
  - Solve
  - Use
  - Write

- **Application**:
  - Discriminate
  - Distinguish
  - Examine
  - Experiment
  - Identify
  - Illustrate
  - Infer
  - Model
  - Outline
  - Point out
  - Question
  - Relate
  - Select
  - Separate
  - Subdivide
  - Test

- **Analysis**:
  - Develop
  - Devise
  - Explain
  - Formulate
  - Generate
  - Plan
  - Prepare
  - Rearrange
  - Reconstruct
  - Relate
  - Reorganize
  - Revise
  - Rewrite
  - Set up
  - Summarize
  - Synthesize
  - Tell
  - Write

- **Synthesis**:
  - Discriminate
  - Estimate
  - Evaluate
  - Explain
  - Judge
  - Justify
  - Interpret
  - Relate
  - Predict
  - Rate
  - Select
  - Summarize
  - Support
  - Value
A look at language:

Verbs to **AVOID**

- (to) know
- (to) understand

The verbs (to) know and (to) understand **CANNOT** be used in a learning outcome statement. **EVER**
Let’s try it! Re-writing a weak learning outcome

Your prompt:

“Students might understand social justice.”
Write your own!

- Get together with a partner and write a strong learning outcome for one of your own programs, or for a program that is currently offered by your partner/a fellow staff member.
- You have **3 minutes** to complete this task.

GO !!
Learning outcomes are simple, specific, and measurable statements of skills that students will be able to perform upon completion of a program.

Learning outcomes need to be aligned with official standards and goals.

Think about what you want the learning outcomes to be before you start the project planning process.

A list of learning outcomes serves as an outline and a road map for your project.

Strong learning outcomes benefit everybody.

Learning outcomes must be specific and distinctive, well-structured, and competency-oriented; language is key!

(to) know and (to) understand are NEVER used in a learning outcome statement.
QUESTIONS?
References

- The Office of Student Life. (n.d.). Student Life’s Strategic Goals. The Office of Student Life at The Ohio State University. Retrieved September 12, 2013, from: http://studentlife.osu.edu/about/