

A Faculty & Staff Guide to

Creating Learning Outcomes



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

This publication has been designed to encourage faculty and staff to create and use measurable learning outcomes in and outside of the classroom. While there are many different methods for creating outcomes, in this guide we encourage utilizing the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy on page 4.

Demonstrating student learning has become increasingly important for University faculty and administrators. As our campus approaches the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) re-accreditation process, we encourage you to spend time examining the learning outcomes associated with the courses, programs, and initiatives you facilitate. This reflection will not only support re-accreditation but will encourage student success and learning over the years to come.

We invite you to use this guide to develop learning outcomes for your work with students both in and out of the classroom.

What are Learning Outcomes?

Learning outcomes, as opposed to mission statements and goals, are specific, measurable objectives that describe what an individual will learn and can do as a result of a course or program. Bresciani (2004) states, "[As a result of learning outcomes] we cannot only speak with confidence about 'what we do' but we can also discuss 'how well we do it.'"

Characteristics of Learning Outcomes

- Expresses what the student will be able to know or do
- Focuses on the product, rather than the process
- Must be measurable (i.e. must be identifiable or observable)
- Outcomes are more detailed and specific, while goals are broad and general
- Includes action verbs (think of a resume)

Why use Learning Outcomes?

- Learning outcomes have become increasingly important in the areas of assessment, accreditation, and accountability within higher education.
- Defining learning outcomes will make it easier to check for understanding and learning achieved by our students both in class and out of class. When we are questioned about what our students are learning, we will be able to give definitive answers.
- Students perform at a higher level and can become more self-guided when we articulate our expectations through learning outcomes.



When writing learning outcomes, determine which level the learning activity corresponds to and write the outcomes to fit that level; consult the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy on the next page.

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy Explained

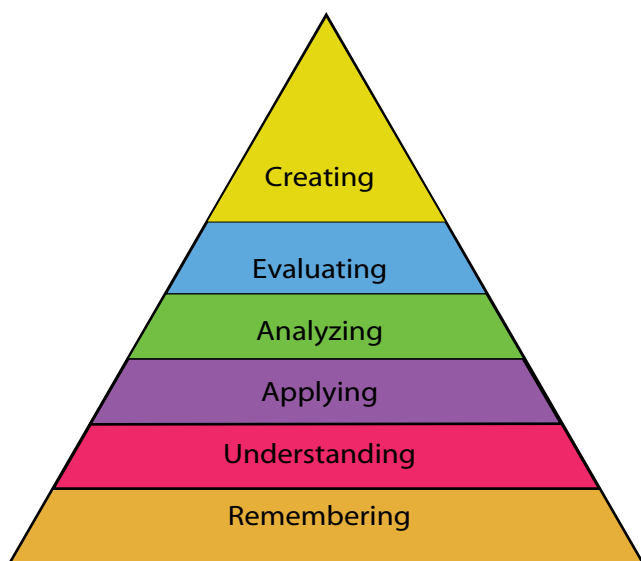
The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives was created by Benjamin Bloom in the 1950s as a means of expressing qualitatively different kinds of thinking. Bloom's Taxonomy has since been adapted for classroom use as a planning tool and continues to be one of the most universally applied models across all levels of schooling and in all areas of study.

During the 1990s, Lorin Anderson (a former student of Benjamin Bloom) led a team of cognitive psychologists in revising the taxonomy to examine its relevance as we enter the 21st century. (M. Pohl 2000)

The levels of learning start with remembering as the foundation and ascend to the level of creating. Depending on the subject being covered you may need to create additional learning outcomes for specific activities.



Revised Bloom's Taxonomy



Levels of Knowledge

Action Verb

Remembering: Can the student recall or remember the information?	Key Words: define, duplicate, list, memorize, recall, repeat, reproduce, state
Understanding: Can the student explain ideas or concepts?	Key Words: classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate, paraphrase
Applying: Can the student use the information in a new way?	Key Words: choose, dramatize, demonstrate, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write
Analyzing: Can the student distinguish between the different parts?	Key Words: appraise, compare, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test
Evaluating: Can the student justify a stand or decision?	Key Words: appraise, argue, judge, defend, select, support, value, evaluate
Creating: Can the student create a new product or point of view?	Key Words: assemble, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, write

http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm

Examples of Learning Outcomes

Below are examples of learning outcomes applying Revised Bloom's Taxonomy to the Carolinian Creed.

- **Remembering:** The student will be able to list the five tenets of the Carolinian Creed.
- **Understanding:** The student will be able to describe the importance of the Carolinian Creed.
- **Applying:** The student will be able to demonstrate the importance of having a creed in a collegiate setting.
- **Analyzing:** The student will be able to compare the Carolinian Creed to University policies and procedures and interpret the similarities and differences of the two.
- **Evaluating:** The student will be able to defend the importance of what it means to be a Carolinian.
- **Creating:** The student will be able to construct a creed for a student organization.



What is Assessment?

According to *Assessing Student Learning and Development* (Bresciani 2004), assessment is an ongoing process systematically answering the following questions:

- What are we trying to do and why?
- What is my program supposed to accomplish?
- How well are we doing it?
- How do we know?
- How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
- Do the improvements we make work?

Assessing Learning Outcomes

- Remember that assessment does not always take the form of tests or papers. Other types of assessment include focus groups, interviews, electronic portfolios, and surveys. These methods are capable of pinpointing specific areas that tests or papers may only vaguely indicate as problems or strengths.
- Remember to use the common language of your department in assessment. If you deviate from this language, others participating in your assessment could easily become confused, and the process will become cumbersome.
- Assessing the learning in your classroom will allow you to gauge how well your students are mastering the subject matter.

References and Resources for Learning Outcomes:

- Anderson, Et Al. (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Complete ed.)*. New York: Longman.
- Bresciani, M.J., Zelna, C.L., and Anderson, J. (2004). *Assessing Student Learning and Development*. NASPA Publications.
- Driscoll, A. (2007). *Developing Outcomes-Based Assessment for Learner-Centered Education: A Faculty Introduction*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Keeling, R. (Ed.). (2004). *Learning Reconsidered: a campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Washington, D.C., National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA).
- Keeling, R. (Ed.). (2006). *Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a campus-wide focus on the student experience*. ACPA, ACUHO-I, ACUI, NACA, NACADA, NASPA, NIRSA.
- Keeling, R., Wall, A., Underhile, R., Dungy, G. (2008). *Assessment Reconsidered: Institutional effectiveness for student success*. ICSSIA, NASPA, Keeling & Associates LLC.
- Marzano, R.J. (2007). *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Overbaugh, R., Schultz, L. (2008). *Bloom's Taxonomy Pyramid and Chart*. Retrieved April 14, 2008, from Old Dominion University
Web site: http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm
- Pohl, M. (2000). *Bloom's (1956) Revised Taxonomy*. Retrieved April 14, 2008, from the QSITE Higher Order Thinking Skills Online Course
Web site: http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm

Office of Student Engagement
1309 Blossom Street McBryde C
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
www.sc.edu/studentengagement

The University of South Carolina is an equal opportunity institution.