# Writing Learning Outcomes

**November 2019**

## Teaching and Learning Services

## *Writing the Statement*

A learning outcome is a statement that indicates what knowledge, skills, or attitudes students should acquire by the end of an activity, unit, course, or program. Good learning outcomes are clear, realistic, measurable, and observable. Writing good learning outcomes is not always easy and can be more complex in certain contexts (e.g., in programs that are accredited). For more support with writing learning outcomes, email teaching@macewan.ca to make an appointment.

**Step 1: Start with When and Who**

Start with a statement about when you expect your learner to demonstrate the desired outcome. One of the most commonly used statements is:

- By the end of the course/unit/activity, students will be able to:

**Step 2: Add an Appropriate Action Verb**

Next, add an action verb. The verb should indicate what you expect students to do as precisely as possible. Many people find it useful to consider action verbs in the context of Bloom's Taxonomy. For examples of action verbs, see the reverse side of this page. Note also the verbs to avoid in the box to the right.

**Step 3: Finish with What (and How or Why if appropriate)**

After the action verb, indicate what students are expected to do. In some contexts, you may want to add other constraints such as how often (x out of y times) or a time deadline.

- Poor/vague outcome: By the end of the course, students will understand the impact of WWII on the economy.
- Better outcome: By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze the impact of specific WWII events on current global economic policies.

**Tip: Each outcome should reflect ONE knowledge, skill, or attitude. Don't use more than one action verb and avoid using the word "and" when describing what you expect students to do.**

## Verbs to Avoid

When you're writing learning outcomes, avoid using verbs that are difficult to observe, difficult to measure, or that are highly subjective or relative. These verbs include:

- Understand
- Know
- Learn
- Think critically
- Improve
- Increase
- Believe
- Grasp
- Grow
- Appreciate
- Approach
- Become

Even terms like "demonstrate" or "discuss" can be problematic in some contexts because they can be interpreted in different ways.

Use specific, active language to make sure that your expectations for students are as clear and realistic as possible.

**MacEwan UNIVERSITY**

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES

# Writing Student Learning Outcomes
*Sample Verbs Mapped to Bloom's Taxonomy*

## Evaluation
Make and defend judgments based on internal evidence or external criteria.

appraise argue assess attach choose compare conclude contrast defend describe discriminate estimate evaluate explain judge justify interpret relate predict rate select summarize support value

## Synthesis
Compile component ideas into a new whole or propose alternative solutions.

arrange assemble categorize collect combine comply compose construct create design develop devise explain formulate generate plan prepare rearrange reconstruct relate reorganize revise rewrite set up summarize synthesize tell write

## Analysis
Break down objects or ideas into simpler parts and find evidence to support generalizations.

analyze appraise breakdown calculate categorize compare contrast criticize diagram differentiate discriminate distinguish examine experiment identify illustrate infer model outline point out question relate select separate subdivide test

## Application
Apply knowledge to actual situations.

apply change choose compute demonstrate discover dramatize employ illustrate interpret manipulate modify operate practice predict prepare produce relate schedule show sketch solve use write

## Comprehension
Demonstrate an understanding of the facts.

classify convert defend describe discuss distinguish estimate explain express extend generalized give example(s) identify indicate infer locate paraphrase predict recognize rewrite review select summarize translate

## Knowledge
Remember previously learned information.

arrange define describe duplicate identify label list match memorize name order outline recognize relate recall repeat reproduce select state