

# Learning Outcomes Quick Guide and Checklist

## Definition

### Learning Outcomes

⇒ are clear statements of learning achievements for students, stating what it is the student should be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning.

In general, learning outcomes must be capable of being assessed and easily understood by the student.

### Format

Performance orientated:

⇒ On successful completion of this programme/module the student will be able to:

- Outcome 1;
  - Outcome 2;
  - ...
  - Outcome 6.
- } 4–8

Outcome => action verb + phrase  
(analyse) + (the active ingredients of ...)

### Programme level

⇒ What should a graduate of this programme be able to do?

Bear in mind the general know-how of the discipline, generic and transferable skills.

### Module level

⇒ What is the essential learning for this module?

Bear in mind that these learning outcomes need to be capable of assessment

How will students demonstrate their learning?

### Programme Level Resources:

The **Tuning project** has identified generic competences and subject specific competencies for 9 subject areas: Business, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Education, European Studies, History, Mathematics, Nursing and Physics, available from <http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>

The **UK subject benchmark statements** (available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>) can be a useful reference when writing programme level learning outcomes—they provide general guidance for those writing or reviewing programme learning outcomes.

## Guidelines

Learning outcomes should:

- ⇒ Be general enough to **describe essential learning**
- ⇒ Be specific enough to be **measurable**
- ⇒ Clearly **focus** on the **learner**
- ⇒ Be **easy to understand** (from the student's perspective)
- ⇒ Be clearly linked (**aligned**) to teaching and learning activities
- ⇒ Be **aligned** to assessment
- ⇒ Be **assessed** at least once during a programme

### Aligning Learning Outcomes

- ⇒ **Define** intended learning outcomes
- ⇒ **Choose** teaching and learning activities likely to facilitate the achievement of these outcomes
- ⇒ **Engage** students in these activities
- ⇒ **Identify** appropriate assessment techniques to allow students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes
  - Formative: Give feedback to enable students to improve their learning
- ⇒ **Evaluate** how well the cycle has worked
- ⇒ **Review** and **refine** learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and/or assessment as appropriate

### Module Level Resources:

To aid the design of learning outcomes at module level, it can be useful to consult learning taxonomies, such as those proposed by Bloom (1956), Biggs & Collis (1982), or Fink (2003).

These taxonomies attempt to describe learning in terms of stages of development and can be useful when determining what we expect of our students. Are we asking enough or too much of our them?

Resources such as the task– construction wheel on the back of this information sheet, have become useful aids for writing learning outcomes, devising tasks and activities to facilitate learning, and determining suitable assessment methods.

**Taxonomies:**

Biggs, J. B. and K. F. Collis (1982). *Evaluating the Quality of Learning - the SOLO Taxonomy*. New York, Academic Press.  
 Bloom, B. S., M. D. Engelhart, et al., Eds. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. New York, David McKay Company, Inc.  
 Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco, JosseyBass.

**Checklist:**

✓	My learning outcomes are
	Active state what students will be able to <b>do</b>
	Attractive students will <b>WANT</b> to achieve them
	Comprehensible students will know what it means
	Appropriate to the level of learning required for this course
	Attainable most students will meet it with due effort
	Assessable their achievement can be assessed/measured
	Visible in course booklet and VLE
	Aligned to teaching learning and assessment activities

**Resource:**

The construction wheel below developed at St. Edward’s University, is based on Bloom’s Taxonomy of learning objectives.

Within the central wheel are listed levels of learning. Verbs that may be useful for writing learning outcomes are in the middle wheel. The outer wheel suggests activities that can be engaged in to help promote or foster such levels of learning.

