

Guidelines for writing learning outcomes

- Begin each learning outcome with an action verb, followed by the object of the verb followed by a phrase that gives the context. Use only one verb per learning outcome.
- Avoid vague terms like know, understand, learn, be familiar with, be exposed to, be acquainted with, and be aware of. These terms are associated with teaching objectives rather than learning outcomes.
- Avoid complicated sentences. If necessary, use more than one sentence to ensure clarity.
- Ensure that the learning outcomes of the module relate to the overall outcomes of the programme.
- The learning outcomes must be observable and measurable. Ensure that the learning outcomes are capable of being assessed.
- When writing learning outcomes, bear in mind the timescale within which the outcomes are to be achieved. There is always the danger that one can be over-ambitious when writing learning outcomes. Ask yourself if it is realistic to achieve the learning outcomes within the time and resources available.
- As you work on writing the learning outcomes, bear in mind how these outcomes will be assessed, i.e. how will you know if the student has achieved these learning outcomes? If the learning outcomes are very broad, they may be difficult to assess effectively. If the learning outcomes are very narrow, the list of learning outcomes may be too long and detailed.
- Before finalising the learning outcomes, ask your colleagues and possibly former students if the learning outcomes make sense to them.
- When writing learning outcomes try to avoid overloading the list with learning outcomes which are from the knowledge and comprehension level in the cognitive domain. Try to challenge the students to use what they have learned by including some learning outcomes drawn from the higher categories e.g. application, analysis, evaluation and creation.