Write learning outcomes

When designing new programmes
- First establish the programme aims, followed by the programme outcomes
- Research International and National benchmarks
- Be creative

If (re)designing a module
- Take account of the programme learning outcomes
- Make use of the appropriate active verbs
- Be creative but make outcomes measurable and achievable

Outcomes and students
- Assist student-centred learning
- Give clear direction to students
- Follow the LOLA principle (see overleaf)
How to... write learning outcomes

When designing new programmes
Starting from international/national benchmarks and having written the programme aims, write a set of key learning outcomes for the programme using the categories provided (knowledge, intellectual, practical skills, key skills). Be creative in your construction of the learning outcomes. Keep in mind that they are for a general audience and should define the skills that will be learnt and assessed within the programme. Use appropriate active verbs that demonstrate the richness of the learning experience. Blooms Taxonomy can be a useful tool to guide you in your use of a wide and appropriate set of verbs. Programme learning outcomes are mapped to modules to show where and at what level these learning outcomes are met. Use of a module map of programme learning outcomes can be very visually informative, revealing the density of the programme learning outcomes across a programme.

Tip: Use learning outcomes to define the skills to be learnt and assessed.

If (re)designing a module
Start with the programme learning outcomes that are mapped to the module. These programme learning outcomes need to be blended into the module learning outcomes. It is very important when designing module Learning Outcomes to align them with the Learning and the Assessment (LOLA). It is this alignment that assures that the learning outcomes are achievable and measurable. At module level it is also important to take into account the workload of a module. In the UK the range of workload hours (lectures, seminars, classes, labs, exams, private study etc) in an undergraduate academic year is around 1200. This equates to 10 hours per UK credit. A 30 credit module therefore should consist of about 300 student workload hours. Again at module level be creative in writing your learning outcomes, use a rich variety of active verbs, and avoid using non-specific verbs such as 'understand'.

Tip: Pay close attention to the language you use to describe the outcomes. Make the verbs active and specific.

Outcomes and students
Student-centred learning has always been a strong point of UK Higher Education. Many modules have a high private study to lecture/seminar/class ratio. A learning outcome approach gives clear guidance to students regarding the skills they are acquiring in a particular module, and in particular guides their private study. A good alignment of the Learning Outcomes with the Learning and the Assessment (LOLA) will enable a wide ability range of students to engage with the learning and meet the learning outcomes through the assessment. Feedback to students, aligned to the learning outcomes, is also a crucial aspect of learning outcome use.

Contact Learning and Development ('ldev') to explore more of the University's resources on learning outcomes. This guide was prepared by Dr Anthony Vickers ('vicka').

Tip: Align the learning outcomes with the module assessment as well as the actual learning. Where possible, reference the outcomes in your feedback.

Look out for more postcards in the series, e-mail Learning and Development ('ldev') or visit the website ('/ldev/resources').