

## **The Anatomy of Writing Learning Outcomes within Higher Education.**

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*Published in:*  
The National Teaching Repository

*Publication date:*  
2023

*This document version is the:*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Farquharson, C., & Sandford, S. (2023). The Anatomy of Writing Learning Outcomes within Higher Education. *The National Teaching Repository*.  
[https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/dataset/The\\_Anatomy\\_of\\_Writing\\_Learning\\_Outcomes\\_within\\_Higher\\_Education\\_pdf/24450316](https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/dataset/The_Anatomy_of_Writing_Learning_Outcomes_within_Higher_Education_pdf/24450316)

# THE ANATOMY BEHIND WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality assurance and subject benchmark statements promote an outcome based approach to the development of programmes, modules and/or units within higher education. Therefore intended learning outcomes are statements to predict what learners will achieve as a result of a programme and/or module of study. It is important to take a holistic approach, as these will not only be viewed by students but also a wider range of industry professionals; external examiners, employers, professional bodies and wider educational agencies.



## “THE HEART BEAT”

### What do you want students to achieve?

Consider how the Intended Learning Outcomes for the module can be demonstrated and measured.

### What methods will assist in achievement?

Consider resources available to achieve the curriculum; teaching, learning material.

### What assessment tasks will assist students achieving?

The assessment criteria aligns to the intended learning outcomes to judge achievement



## “THE STRUCTURE”

Start with: *By the end of the course/module/unit/programme learners should be able to*

### ACTION VERB

Describe the behaviour which demonstrates the student's learning

### OBJECT

(noun phrase)  
Describe what the behaviour relates to

### CONTEXT

Provide clear information about the context

*For example:*

*By the end of the module learners should be able to (context) explain (action verb for level) the structure and function of the heart (Object)*

The content detail can be within the syllabus outline/indicative content that is encompassed by the intended learning outcome



## “THE FUNCTION”

Intended Learning Outcomes should;

- Be written for students to understand what they should expect to be able to do.
- Be SMART; Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Assessable, Realistic, Timed.
- Use language that students will understand, avoid vague or over ambitious outcomes,
- Be written in future tense
- Be no more than 400 characters for each outcome
- Be limited; 4-6 per module. However this may be dependent on credit weighting and module level.



## “OTHER SYSTEM INTERACTION”

- Write with reference to education level or achievement
- Show general progression of learning outcomes between levels of study. For example:
  - L4 Describe the components of the cardiac cycle
  - L5 Analyse the components of the cardiac cycle for different exercise intensities
- Show learning achieved and reference to assessment component/element
- Ensure all learning outcomes of modules reflect the overall programme, relevant curriculum and assessment criteria.

### References and Further Resources:

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# ACTION VERBS

In part, one of the challenges is specifying the **ACTION VERB** for the intended learning outcome to reflect the higher education level or achievement.

Therefore the following resource utilises Bloom's Taxonomy to list some examples at the relative level and is derived from further resources. This is no means exhaustive but aims to facilitate the process when developing intended learning outcomes.

Level 4

## Remember



### Retain and Recall knowledge and information

Define	Extract	Respond to
Describe	Recognise	Disclose
Identify	Measure	Indicate
Be aware of	Underline	Order
Outline	Relate	Memorise
State	Clarify	Reproduce

## Understand

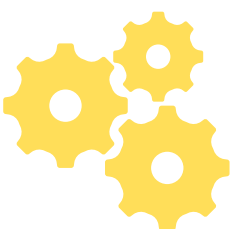


### Comprehension, grasp the meaning of something

Classify	Solve	Outline
Describe	Demonstrate	Refer
Observe	Produce	Illustrate
Recognise	Disclose	Locate
Discuss	Indicate	Report
Explain	Account	Express

Level 5

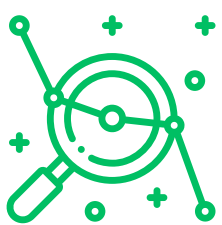
## Apply



### Use existing knowledge in next contexts

Apply	Operate	Demonstrate
Illustrate	Choose	Employ
Interpret	Practice	Write
Solve	Compute	Produce
Discover	Calculate	Relate
Prepare	Predict	Construct

## Analyse



### Explore relationships, causes and connections

Analyse	Calculate	Examine
Plan	Distinguish	Differentiate
Question	Categorise	Compare
Test	Debate	Contrast
Appraise	Question	Justify
Recognise	Relate	Illustrate

## Evaluate

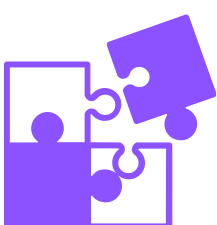


### Make judgements based on sound analysis

Judge	Compare	Determine
Appraise	Contrast	Choose
Assess	Criticise	Extrapolate
Conclude	Justify	Discriminate
Estimate	Evaluate	Defend
Recommend	Advocate	Measure

Level 6/7/8

## Create



### Use existing information to make something new

Formulate	Develop	Select
Plan	Assemble	Defend
Redefine	Produce	Examine
Initiate	Create	Advocate
Construct	Propose	Combine
Organise	Implement	Compile