We encourage you to use a framework when writing learning outcomes. Bloom and colleagues (1956) created three learning taxonomies (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) as a way to understand how learning happens. For example, cognitive complexity can be understood as six levels or processes which lead to greater cognitive complexity. The six processes were reframed in 2001 (Anderson, 2001), but the concept of ordering cognitive complexity remains the foundation of the framework.

Bloom’s taxonomy can be particularly useful for developing critical thinking on a topic. The concept of a pyramid is intended to show how cognitive processes build on prior knowledge. Higher order functioning can only occur if there is a foundation. It is recommended that course learning outcomes include more than one of Bloom’s orders, depending on the nature of the course.

References


How does taking your course contribute to students’ learning?

Constructing learning outcomes articulates for students how your course contributes to their development. It’s explicitly stating what successful students can expect to gain as a result of taking your course.

Ask yourself, “At the end of my course, what do I want students to know, do, and value?”

Know…content knowledge
Do…skills
Value…ways of thinking like a professional in your discipline

Answer your question with “At the end of this course, students will [be able to]…”

Questions? Contact the OTL.