

Writing and Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

College of Professional Studies

FACULTY SERIES

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Learning Outcomes for this Workshop

Workshop attendees should be able to do the following:

- Describe the difference between an Educational Objective and a Student Learning Outcome.
- Write a Student Learning Outcome that is appropriate for a course in their discipline.
- Develop an assessment that captures the level of achievement attained for a Student Learning Outcome.

**What is the difference
between Educational
Objectives and Student
Learning Outcomes?**

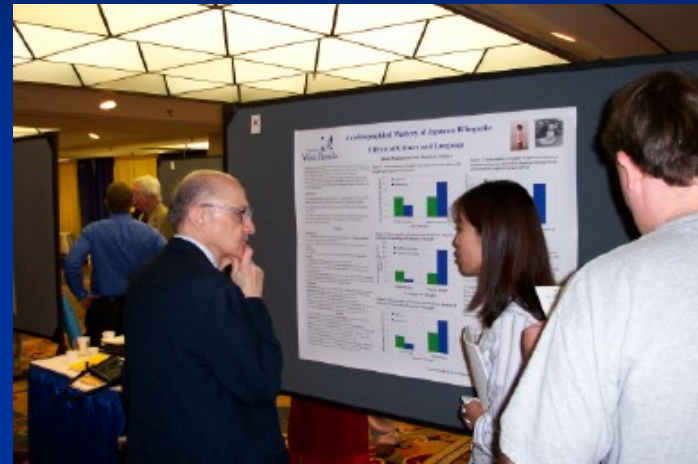
Educational Objectives

- Focus on *Instructor* behavior
- The instructor will cover [present, discuss, introduce, etc.] . . .
- The course will cover [include] . . .
- Students will be exposed to . . .



Student Learning Outcomes

- Focus on *Student Behavior*
- Describe student performance skills acquired as a result of this course
- The student will describe theories of . . .
- The student will present a research project . . .



Types of Student Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge
- Skills/Proficiencies/Abilities
- Dispositions

Academic Learning Compacts

- Three ALCs are mandated by the Board of Governors for every program offered by State Universities in Florida
 - Content
 - Critical Thinking
 - Communication
- Two additional Academic Learning Compacts were adopted by the University of West Florida
 - Project Management
 - Integrity / Values

How are Academic Learning Compacts and Student Learning Outcomes related?

- Each course within a discipline should contribute to the achievement of Academic Learning Compacts by including one or more SLOs that are related to one or more program ALCs
- *Note:*
 - Courses may include some SLOs that are not explicitly related to program ALCs
 - Courses need not include SLOs for every program ALC

Relation between SLOs and ALCs

Program Academic Learning Compacts

- Content
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Integrity / Values
- Project Management

Student Learning Outcomes for a Course in the Program

- Identify and describe major theories in the discipline
- Evaluate competing hypotheses and select the one that is best supported by existing data
- Write clearly using the editorial style endorsed by the discipline
- Comply with professional standards of ethics associated with the discipline
- Manage time and resources to carry a long-term project in the discipline to completion

Why should I care about Student Learning Outcomes?

- Structuring a course with SLOs improves the quality of the course
 - We clearly articulate our goals and expectations for student learning and performance to students
 - Student work is clearly identified as a mechanism for acquiring skill/content and demonstrating successful achievement
- Students appreciate the organization and clear communication associated with SLOs, which is reflected in more positive course evaluations

Why will my use of SLOs improve the quality of my course?

- Well-written SLOs provide a clearer communication of our expectations to students
- Well-written SLOs help us design well-organized courses and select activities that promote learning
- SLOs provide the basis for precise, reliable, and valid assessments of the effectiveness of our curriculum and instructional strategies
- Decisions about changes to the curriculum or changes in instructional strategies can be made on the basis of empirical data rather than mere opinion

Institutional Needs for Student Learning Outcomes

- SLOs will provide the foundation for reliable and valid assessment data that can be used to improve the curriculum and instruction
- SLO-based assessments will allow us to clearly report our student achievements to our stakeholders (students, employers, the Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, regional accreditation agencies (SACS), discipline-specific accreditation agencies)

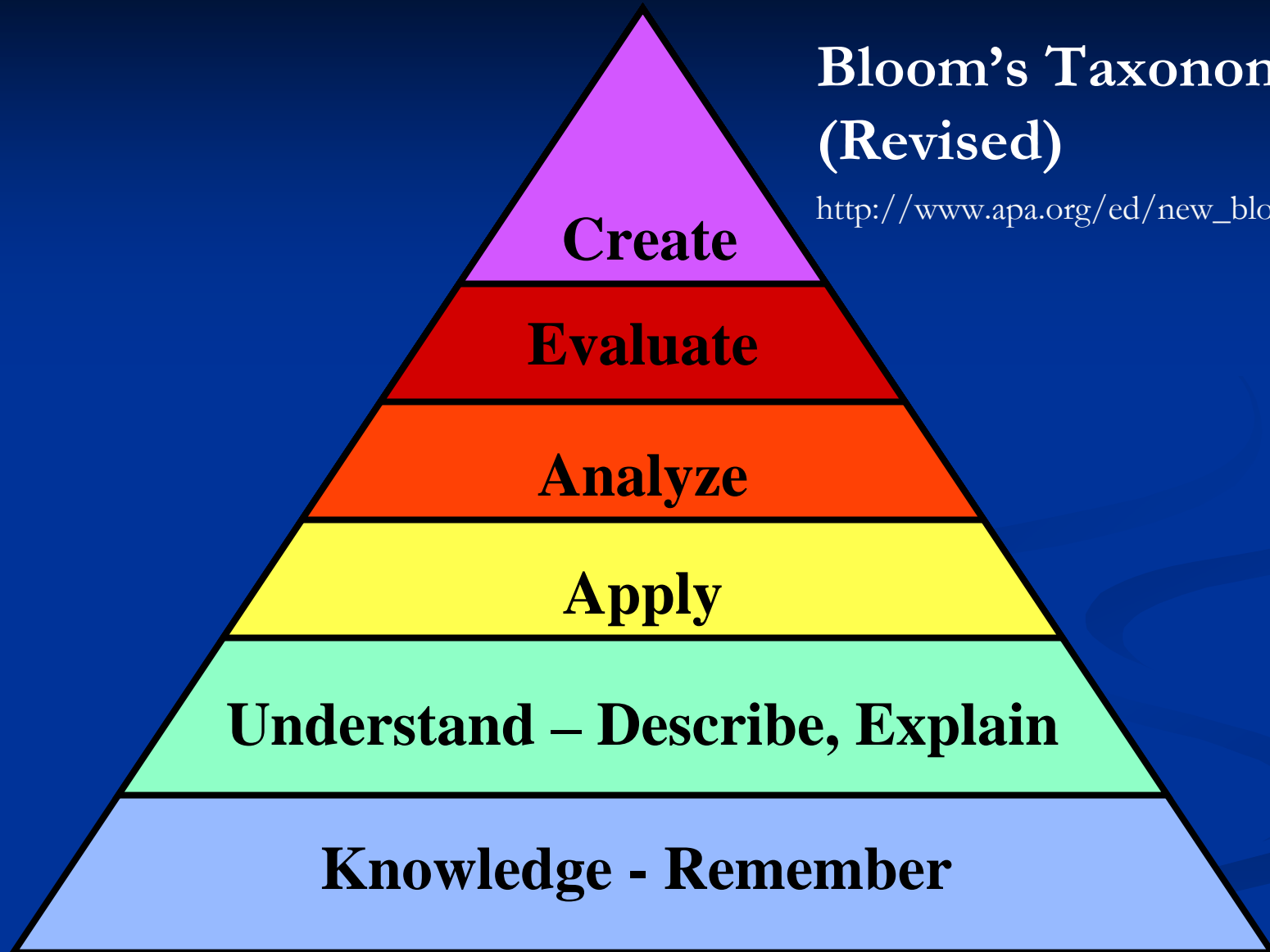
How do I write a good
Student Learning Outcome
for my course?

Characteristics of Good Student Learning Outcomes

- SLOs are stated in objective, measurable terms that enable us to determine if the outcome described has been achieved by the student.
 - Write SLOs using **action** words rather than object words
- Different SLOs should be written to represent the differing levels of skill expected at different points in the educational process
 - Bloom (1956) developed a taxonomy to describe 6 levels of knowledge

Bloom's Taxonomy (Revised)

http://www.apa.org/ed/new_blooms.html



Based on an APA adaptation of Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. (Eds.) (2001)

Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy

Action Words for Bloom's Taxonomy				
Knowledge	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate
define	explain	solve	analyze	reframe
identify	describe	apply	compare	criticize
describe	interpret	illustrate	classify	evaluate
label	paraphrase	modify	contrast	order
list	summarize	use	distinguish	appraise
name	classify	calculate	infer	judge
state	compare	change	separate	support
match	differentiate	choose	explain	compare
recognize	discuss	demonstrate	select	decide
select	distinguish	discover	categorize	discriminate
examine	extend	experiment	connect	recommend
locate	predict	relate	differentiate	summarize
memorize	associate	show	discriminate	assess
quote	contrast	sketch	divide	choose
recall	convert	complete	order	convince
reproduce	demonstrate	construct	point out	defend

Visit the CUTL web site for a more complete list: <http://uwf.edu/cutl/>

Common Problems with SLOs

- The SLO is not measurable as written
 - Student *understanding* or *appreciation* can not be measured.
 - Student *behavior* and the *quality of the products* they produce can be measured
 - Avoid SLOs that are too broad to be measured
 - Multiple narrowly-defined measures can be used as convergent evidence for more abstract goals
- Too many or too few SLOs are written for a course
 - Seek a balance between the number of SLOs and the breadth of the SLOs
 - Avoid lengthy lists of extremely narrow SLOs

Write an SLO for a course in your discipline

- Identify the level of the course:
 - Introductory
 - Upper Division Major Course
 - Graduate Course
- Describe the goals associated with the course
- Write an SLO for the course
- Identify what contribution this SLO makes to Academic Learning Compacts for the program

Evaluating Student Learning Outcomes

- Is the SLO measurable?
- Is the SLO written too broadly or too narrowly?
- Is the performance, skill, or learning described in the SLO related to the goals for the course?
- Is the SLO related to an Academic Learning Compact in the program? (optional)
- Does the SLO represent the level of learning expected of students enrolled in this course?

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

- Activities, examinations, assignments, and other graded work can be used to serve differing assessment needs
 - Assessment of SLOs as an evaluation of student achievement for assignment of course grades
 - Assessment of SLOs as an evaluation of instructional strategies in the course
 - Assessment of Academic Learning Compacts to evaluate program curriculum

Embedded Assessments

- **Graded student work that serves a double purpose**
 - Work is a course requirement that determines part of the course grade
 - Work is also evaluated with a rubric for use in assessment of departmental goals
- **Ensures that students are motivated to produce their best efforts**
- **Ensures a representative sample of students (all majors will take this course and complete this work at some time)**

Using Rubrics to Create Valid Assessments

- How does a rubric differ from a grading key?
- How do rubrics make the process of grading student work more efficient and more reliable?
- Creating the components of a rubric
 - Identify elements of the student work
 - Determine the criteria for high quality work and lesser quality work
 - Determine how much weight should be given to each element when computing an overall grade
- Training you Teaching Assistant to use the rubric consistently
- Assessment of ALCs may depend on a subset of rubric elements (creating a useful disconnect between assignment of student grades and use of assessments for curriculum development)

Creating an assessment for your course SLO

- Identify an assignment, activity, quiz, exam, etc. that is meaningfully connected to the SLO
- Create a rubric to evaluate student performance or achievement on the assignment

Evaluating your assessment

- Is the activity meaningfully related to the SLO?
Do students use the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) described by this SLO when engaged in this task?
- Do any or all of the components of the rubric measure one or more of these KSAs?
- Can the rubric be applied consistently to the varieties of student performance that you are likely to observe?

**Using Curriculum Audits and
Assessments to Evaluate
Likely Success of Curriculum
in Achieving Student
Learning Outcomes**

Relating ALCs to Course SLOs

Intro Course SLOs

- SLOs related to Content ALC
- SLOs related to Ethics/Integrity ALC
- Other SLOs

Course 2 SLOs

- SLOs related to Content ALC
- SLOs related to Communication ALC
- SLOs related to Project Management ALC
- Other SLOs

Curriculum Audit for a Program

	Academic Learning Compacts				
	Content	Critical Thinking	Communication	Ethics / Integrity	Project Management
Intro Course	X			X	
Course 1	X	X		X	
Course 2	X		X		X
Course 3	X	X	X		
Capstone Course	X	X	X	X	X

- Identify courses where ALCs are likely to be achieved
- Identify gaps in the curriculum where an ALC might not be addressed as well as hoped
- Identify courses that might be suitable for an embedded assessment