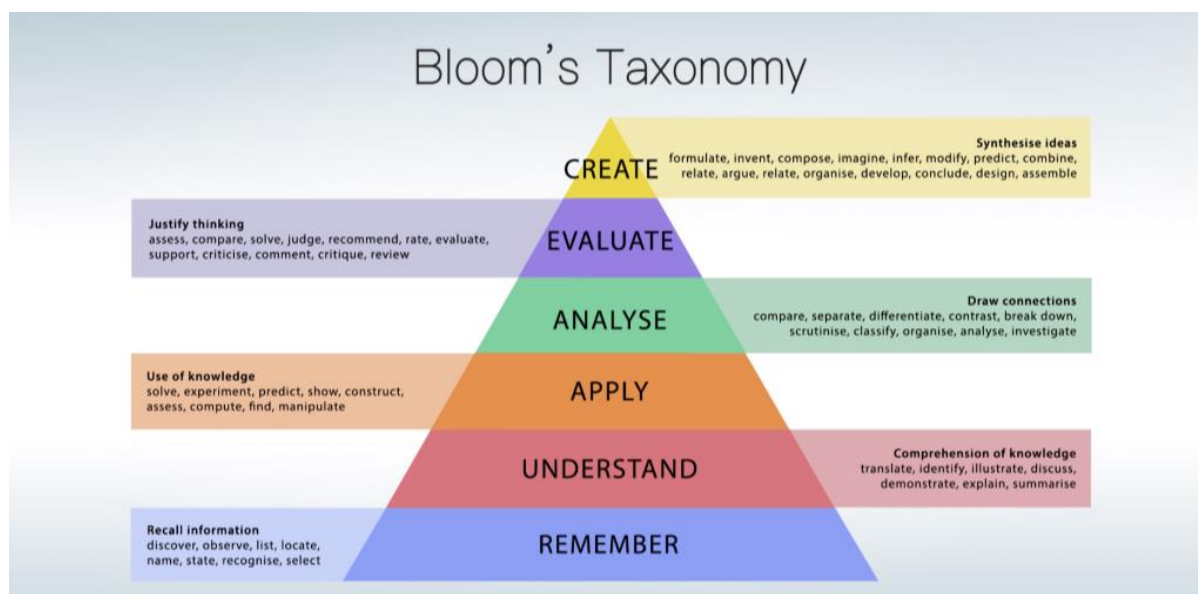# Writing Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes (LOs) provide a way to clearly convey to learners what they are expected to achieve by the time they have completed your course.

When writing learning outcomes, it is useful to think from the perspective of a learner coming across the landing page of your course and easily being able to relate to and understand what skills and/or knowledge they will develop from taking your course.

There is a classic piece of research from the 1950s (revised in 2001), called Bloom's Taxonomy, which classifies educational learning outcomes. You might have come across different versions of this, and it's not an absolute science, but a helpful framework for approaching learning design.

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You can see that as we move up the pyramid, the level moves from more basic skills, such as listing and naming, to more complicated ideas such as comparing and evaluating.

Learning outcomes tend to be expressed as active, behavioural verbs so that learners understand clearly what is expected of them. This table contains example active verbs you might consider when writing your own learning outcomes:

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Choose	Classify	Apply	Analyse	Agree	Adapt
Define	Compare	Build	Assume	Appraise	Build
Find	Contrast	Construct	Categorise	Assess	Change
How	Demonstrate	Develop	Classify	Award	Combine
Label	Explain	Identify	Compare	Compare	Compile
List	Describe		Conclusion		

You can find more information on these action verbs on the following site: Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs.

Have a look at these examples from a range of existing short online courses. You will notice that each learning outcome is easy to understand, clearly related to the course theme, and gives the learner information about the knowledge and skills they will develop.

Making Blended Education Work

- **Describe** and **critically discuss** the conceptualisation of blended education.
- **Apply** key principles of blended learning for programme/course design.
- **Evaluate** the quality of blended education.

The Sharia and Islamic Law: An Introduction

- **Reflect** on the nature of modern law, and **explore** the distinctions between secular and religious law.
- **Assess** the impact of colonialism in the Muslim World.
- **Explore** some of the controversies surrounding the Sharia and Islamic law in a collegial manner in an academic environment.

Short online courses usually require between three and five learning outcomes. Why not spend some time considering your own subject area and course ideas, and write your own learning outcomes using Bloom's Taxonomy.

These are fundamental in the learning design process, as they are a continuous point of reference as you develop content. Dedicating time to writing good learning outcomes and referring to them during the course design process will ensure that the activities and materials you plan out will fulfil the objective of your course.

Assessing your learners

Online assessment can take different forms. Remember to refer to your learning outcomes when designing assessable content. You should also consider whether your assessments are formative, where the focus is on learner progress, or summative, designed to check understanding of course content.

Examples

Formative

Weekly MCQ quiz with detailed feedback

Formative MCQs allow learners to test their knowledge in an informal way, and gain assurance that they are understanding the course materials as expected. Feedback is a key part of this process, and the more detailed, focused feedback you provide, the more helpful it will be to learner development.

Summative

Peer assessed blog entry

Assessments such as short peer assessed written pieces allow learners to consolidate what they have learned through the course by producing their own piece of writing. You might, for example, ask learners to go into more depth on a particular topic covered in the course by carrying out their own research or reflecting on their own experiences.

You may also find the following resource useful as an introduction on how to write learning outcomes - some aspects are not relevant to short courses, but it gives a general overview: Introduction to learning outcomes.