A Guide to Learning Outcomes

1. What is a learning outcome?
   - A statement in specific and measurable terms of what a student will know or be able to do as the result of having successfully completed a program of study.
     - Questions to consider when developing outcomes: What is most important for students to learn in this program? What should graduates of this program be able to do?

2. What are the characteristics of a good learning outcome statement?
   - It is clear and specific.
   - It uses concrete action verbs.
     - Learning outcomes express what students will be able to do, the level of knowledge or ability expected, and the context in which students can be expected to demonstrate their abilities.
   - It is measurable.
     - When writing program learning outcomes, anticipate how it will be determined whether or not students have achieved the objectives.

3. What are the purposes of learning outcomes?
   - Learning outcomes inform students of what knowledge and skills they will gain through the course of a program of study.
   - They indicate what knowledge, skills and abilities students will have mastered (and the level of mastery) at the end of their course of study.
   - They communicate expected standards of performance.
   - They provide a structure for evaluating student learning.
Types of Learning and Levels of Learning Outcomes

Bloom’s Taxonomy provides one approach to thinking about learning outcomes and levels of learning.

**Level 1) Knowledge:** Requires students to remember or recall information, but not necessarily to have gained an understanding of the material. Student behaviors associated with this level of thinking include recognizing, describing, defining, identifying and labeling.

**Level 2) Comprehension:** Indicates that students are able to understand or construct meaning from material. Behaviors associated with comprehension include explaining, discussing, and interpreting information.

**Level 3) Application:** Refers to the ability to apply material, concepts, and ideas in new and concrete situations; such as, problem solving. Student behaviors associated with the third level of Bloom’s Taxonomy include: applying, practicing, exhibiting, and performing.

**Level 4) Analysis:** Involves student’s ability to critically think about information in order to reduce it into its components so that ideas and relationships can be better understood. Student behaviors associated with analysis include: examining, comparing, differentiating, and distinguishing.

**Level 5) Synthesis:** The ability to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. Student behaviors associated with this level of higher order thinking include: designing, composing, constructing, and organizing.

**Level 6) Evaluation:** The ability to judge and even critique the value of material based on evidence or other criteria. Behaviors associated with evaluation include: assessing, evaluating, critiquing, and judging.