Writing Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome
A Student Learning Outcome (SLO) is a statement that specifies what students will know, be able to do or value as a result of learning and completing a curriculum. SLOs are key in an assessment plan measuring the expected skills, attitudes, competencies, practices, habits of mind, products and more. It governs which measures are chosen, how to evaluate those measures and how to improve using the results.

Student Learning Outcomes….
- should be aligned with the institutional mission and goals and departmental learning outcomes.
- are specific and concise statements using clear language.
- require actionable and measurable terminology.

The structure of a SLO is made up of three elements. Those elements are the opening phrase, the action phrase and the learning statement.

Three Elements of Student Learning Outcomes Structure

Element 1→ Opening Phrase - Who is learning? Who is the audience?

Element 1 Example:

1. "Students will…"
2. "Upon the completion of this program, students will…."
3. "Physical Therapy graduates will be able to……"
4. "Students should be able to"

Important Note: Program Assessments are focused on what the students will learn, therefore each SLO should reference students.

Element 2 → Action Word/Phrase - What is to be learned (knowledge, skill, attitude)?

- Specify what you want the student to demonstrate in knowledge, abilities or skills.
- Use action verbs that are measurable. Bloom's Taxonomy is a great resource for choosing action verbs. (Example below)
- The statement should reflect what the student will prove to you through measures.
- Words to avoid: students will believe, hear, realize, comprehend, know, see, listen, memorize, think, perceive, understand, experience, or feel, will become acquainted with, aware of, capable of, cognizant of, conscious of, familiar with, interested in.

Element 2 Example:

1. "Students will classify…"
2. "Upon the completion of this program, students will differentiate…."
3. "Physical Therapy graduates will be able to develop……"
4. "Students should be able to describe…."

Element 3 → Learning Statement – What will the students be able to do?

- Under what condition is the learning to be demonstrated (environment, support, etc.)?
- What level of learning is to be achieved (criteria, standard)?
- What are the specific skills, knowledge or abilities you want to measure?
- Examples of Learning that can be measured.
  - Knowledge of specific facts
  - Value of different perspectives
  - Exemplify specific procedures

Element 3 Example:

1. "Students will classify body systems and its function and explain how the systems are associated."
2. "Students will classify body systems and its function and explain how the systems are associated."
3. "Upon the completion of this program, students will differentiate between classroom management techniques based upon classroom makeup and student learning goals."
4. "Physical Therapy graduates will be able to develop comprehensive therapy plans for different injury cases."
5. "Students should be able to describe accounting principles and techniques."

Important Note: It is important that two measures can be used to evaluate the program's Student Learning Outcome. Alabama State University requires two direct measures for each Instructional Program Assessment outcome.
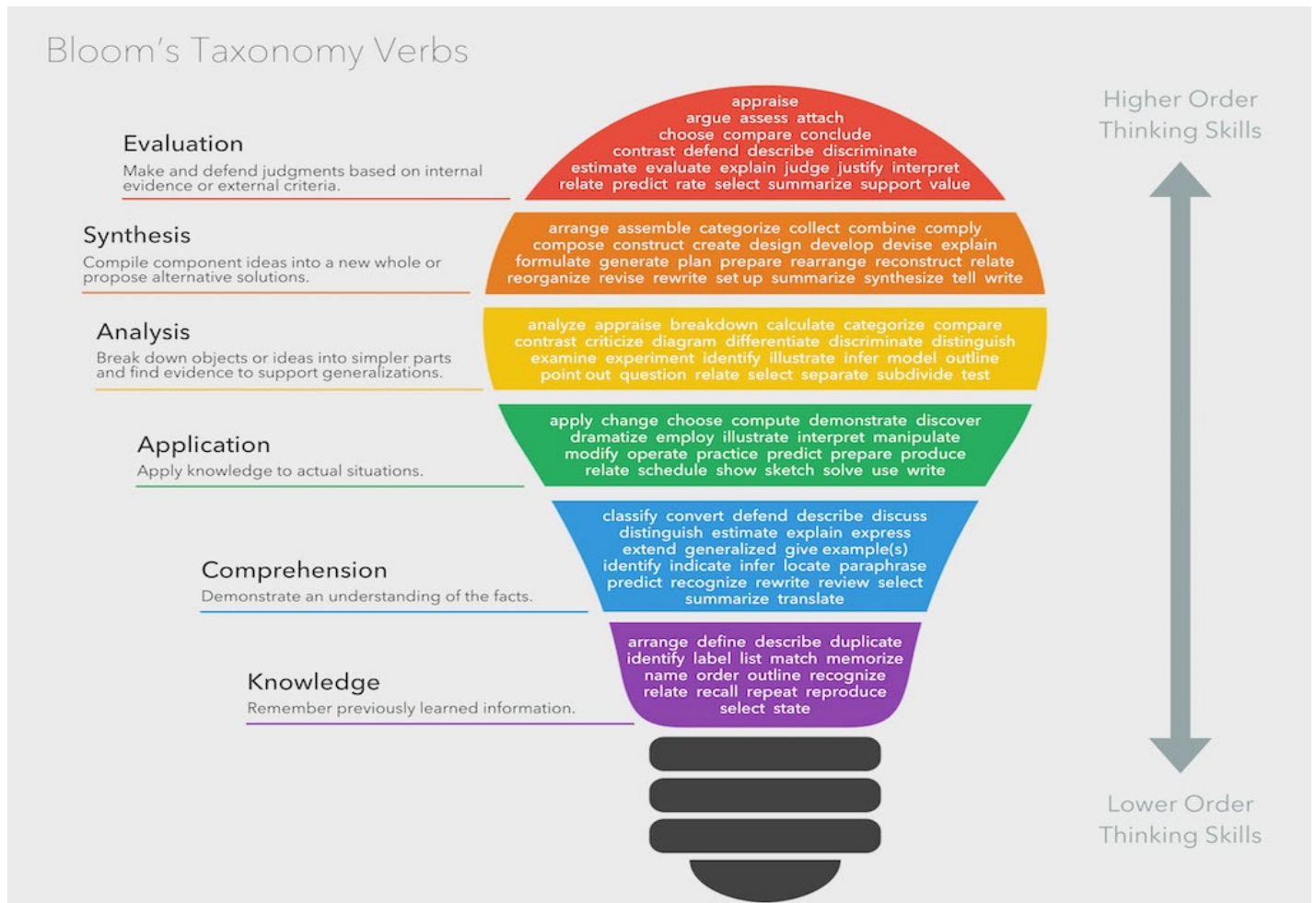
Best Practices

- Be very specific with the expectations. Vague statements are difficult to measure.
- Program assessments should be viewed view from a holistic viewpoint or "the big picture". What are the most important elements in a program?
- Each department will use external stakeholders, accreditation requirements, department goals, career expectations and more to determine what outcomes are most important to evaluate the program
- SLOs are not what you will offer the student, what process the student will go through or the student's satisfaction with the program.

The following outcomes are examples of what may be chosen to assess:

- Knowledge outcomes:
  - major or discipline content
  - modes of inquiry
- General education outcomes:
  - oral and written communications
  - critical thinking and problem solving
  - library and computer use
  - quantitative and scientific literacy
- Skills outcomes:
  - those required for effective practice in the discipline or in future employment
  - ability to work with others
  - listening skills
  - teamwork or leadership
- Attitudes and values
  - personal
  - social
  - ethical
  - related to diversity
- Behavioral outcomes
  (most of these are outcomes that are important to your program but do not give direct evidence of student learning):
  - current students
    - persistence and choice of major
    - course selection and completion
  - former students
    - employment information
    - graduate school or other further education
    - professional activities
    - community contributions
    - evaluation of satisfaction with the program's preparation

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a resource for writing student learning outcomes. It provides a bank of actionable terminology that simplifies word choices. There are 6 levels of learning: create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand and remember. The lowest level of Bloom's Taxonomy represents the most basic level of learning.

https://www.fractuslearning.com/2016/01/25/blooms-taxonomy-verbs-free-chart/