

# THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING SLOs

When planning a course and writing a syllabus, the instructor should ask:

**“What do I want students to be able to do by the end of the course?”**

This approach, called **“backwards design”** (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), helps us think about what we want to be the result of the course in terms of student learning. You may use action verbs that make the learning outcomes as SMART and objective as possible. These verbs can be generated from the SLO domains proposed by Benjamin Bloom and a team of researchers (1956), who described student learning in broad categories called “domains:” cognitive (thinking), affective (valuing), and psychomotor (doing).

Table 1 shows some of the action verbs that may be applied in each of these domains.

LEVELS	ACTIVE VERBS
Remembering	define, identify, label, list, name, recall, state
Understanding	describe, discuss, explain, locate, paraphrase
Applying	apply, carry out, demonstrate, illustrate, use
Analyzing	analyze, categorize, compare, contrast, outline
Evaluating	assess, evaluate, interpret, justify, support
Creating	combine, construct, design, develop, propose

## TIPS FOR DEVELOPING LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1 Think through what you want to happen for students.
- 2 Ask yourself, how will I know what they have learned? What is the assessment?
- 3 As you write an outcome, focus on student-learning overall (course-based rather than units or individual lessons).
- 4 Write the outcome with a focus on one domain of learning.
- 5 Avoid the use of “weasel verbs,” which are vague verbs, such as “know” or “understand,” which are not easily measurable
- 6 Statements for the course can be worded using the following template:

*By the completion of the course, students should be able to **\*describe the difference between learning goals and learning outcomes\****

*\*Fill in the section between the asterisks with your own learning outcome by using a verb from the table above and combining it with a desired outcome for your course*

## REFERENCES

Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals: handbook I: cognitive domain (No. 373.19 C734t). New York, US: D. McKay.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). What is backward design. *Understanding by design*, 1, 7-19.