Bloom’s Taxonomy

The Basics: Bloom’s Taxonomy & Learning Objectives

A taxonomy is a classification system. In education, the most commonly used taxonomy is the original work of Benjamin Bloom (1956) or Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). We use taxonomies to classify three domains of learning: psychomotor, affective, and cognitive (Bloom, 1956). We use performance indicators as evidence to determine if students have met the learning goals that we set for them. These goals are typically called learning objectives.

Learning Objectives:

Remember that all course planning is done “backward.” It starts with developing learning objectives. At the course level, learning objectives specify the behavior or activity to be performed by the student. They should be measurable, realistic, and achievable.

Examples:

Poorly written objective:
Students will learn about current topics in primary care. (not specific or measurable)

Improved:
Students will be able to:
- Discuss current research in the identification and treatment of fibromyalgia.
- Describe three methods of treatment of sexually transmitted infections in adolescents
- Compare and contrast the differences in treatment for rosacea and urticaria

Learning Outcomes:

The difference between objectives and outcomes is confusing sometimes. At Creighton, outcome statements are broad and exist at the program and institutional level. Outcomes state “what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce because of what and how they have learned at the institution or in a program” (Maki, 2010, p. 89). They represent a finished product.

All instructional units and courses should have measurable learning objectives that can be “mapped” to program and institutional outcomes. Each academic area has an assessment plan in place, with designated individuals responsible for reporting assessment data at the institutional level.

For more information on Creighton’s Assessment policies and how to plan and conduct assessment activities, visit the Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment:
http://www.creighton.edu/aea/assessmentofstudentlearning/index.php

More information can also be found on the “Assessment of Student Learning” section on the Virtual Center’s “Teaching and Learning” tab.

How do objectives, outcomes and performance indicators fit together?

If your learning objective is for students to master a motor skill, such as a clinical technique or a technical art skill, you will design a performance indicator for the psychomotor domain. For example, you could require the student to demonstrate a skill or perform in a simulation.

If you wish to measure learning in the affective domain, your performance
indicators should seek to measure the development of interests, attitudes, and values (Bloom, as cited in McDonald, 2007). Examples include essay exams, reflective journal entries, or creative writing assignments.

Most commonly, you will measure learning in the cognitive domain. This domain measures the development of knowledge and intellectual abilities (Bloom, as cited in McDonald, 2007). Common performance indicators for this domain include multiple choice exams, true false exams, fill in the blank etc.

The levels of Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) are:

LINKS:
Several sources are available on both the original and revised taxonomies:
http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/pedagogical/blooms-taxonomy/
Comparison of original and revised taxonomies with verbs for writing learning objectives:
http://ww2.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/Bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm
Using the taxonomies to write learning objectives:
http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/RevisedBlooms1.html

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