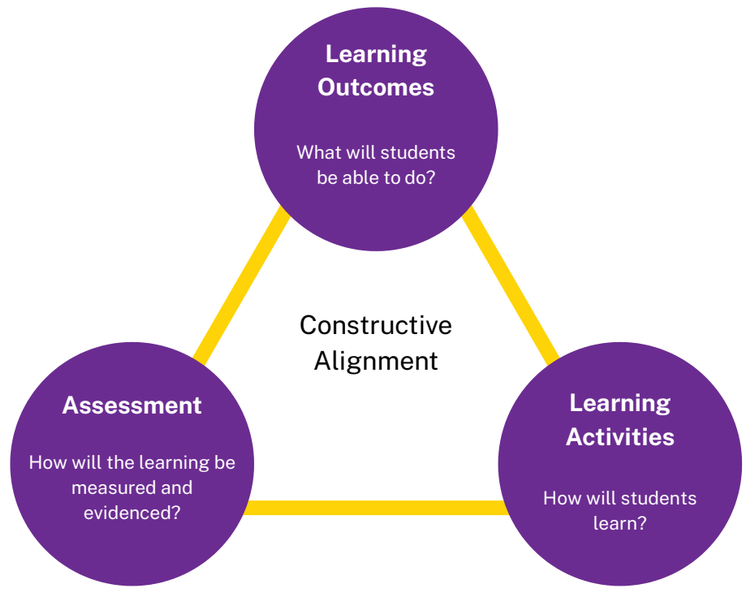
# Writing Learning Outcomes

## HUMANITIES LEARNING DESIGN TEAM




## WHAT IS AN INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOME (ILO)?

Learning outcomes are statements of what students will learn during a period of study e.g. a programme or a unit. They are therefore student focussed and are used in conjunction with assessment to evidence what a student is able to do. This could be in a range of areas including knowledge and skills.

ILOs are also used as a starting point for designing teaching and learning activities. Together with assessment these elements ensure we are purposefully designing learning experiences that are constructively aligned, which promotes deep learning and enhances the student experience. Clearly defined and aligned ILOs can also help teaching staff with marking and feedback.

## COMPONENTS OF A LEARNING OUTCOME

At UoM our ILOs commonly start with “students should be able to”.

The ILO should also contain an **action verb**. This should be active and specific. Expressions such as “demonstrate knowledge of” or “show appreciation of” are somewhat vague and difficult to measure/evidence so are best avoided. If you want students to "understand" something, think more closely about what you want them to be able to do or produce as a result of their "understanding". On the next page there are some examples of action verbs to help you.

ILOs also need some **context**. This gives the ILO meaning within the specific unit or programme, helps students relate outcomes to their learning and assessment, and can help with the marking process.

For example an ILO such as “students should be able to summarise key policy” could be met in a number of ways that you hadn’t anticipated. Try to include the specifics of what it is you want students to demonstrate e.g. “students will be able to summarise key UK sustainability policies emerging since 2010".

**Avoid inclusion of assessment method** e.g. “students will write an essay on sustainability approaches”. ILOs should relate to student learning, with the assessment method being their way of evidencing achievement.

## HOW DO ILOS HELP STUDENTS?

- Guide students in their learning and explain what is expected of them.
- Support assessment literacy.
- Provide clear information on what the unit/programme will offer them.
- Support articulation of skills and knowledge for future study and/or employment.

## WRITING TIPS

- When writing ILOs it is helpful to think in terms of “what will students learn?” rather than “what will I teach?”. This ensures they are student focussed
- Think about how you would assess the achievement of the ILO. Can you also assess it through a resit?
- Faculty policy and frameworks allow a maximum of 8 ILOs per unit, and 10 per programme.
- Refer to both the programme learning outcomes and the QAA benchmarks for your subject to ensure your ILOs are appropriate.
- Avoid modifiers such as “improve” as this suggests a baseline assessment will take place.

## CHECKLIST

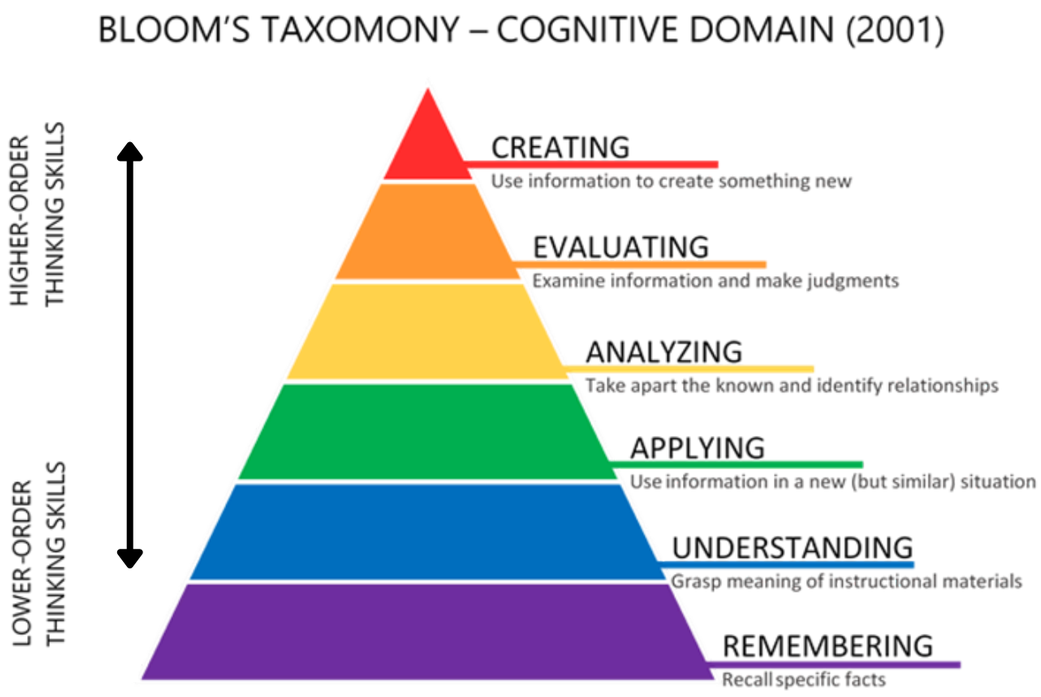
### IS THE ILO.....

- ☐ Clear, making use of plain English?
- ☐ Measurable ie can you assess achievement of it?
- ☐ Student Focussed?

### HAVE YOU AVOIDED...

- ☐ Confusing the task with the outcome?
- ☐ Ambiguous verbs such as understand, appreciate, know?
- ☐ Modifiers such as improve, develop, enhance?

# BLOOM'S TAXONOMY




Familiar to many of us, Bloom's Taxonomy can be very helpful when thinking about what students are doing when they learn.

Building from lower order skills to higher order thinking skills we can see how learning takes place in different ways, at different stages and for different purposes.

More recently educators have mapped digital tools and activities to Blooms categories. There are many visual representations including one from Arizona State University. See https://teachonline.asu.edu/2016/05/integrating-technology-blooms-taxonomy/ https://citt.ufl.edu/resources/the-learning-process/designing-the-learning-experience/blooms-taxonomy/

# USEFUL ACTION VERBS

| | |
|---|---|
| Action Verbs for Creating | Plan, imagine, begin, design, invent, initiate, state, create, pattern, elaborate, develop, devise, generate, engender, make, produce. |
| Action Verbs for Evaluation | Judge, appraise, evaluate, assess, discriminate, conclude, compare, contrast, criticise, justify, defend, rate, determine, choose, value, question, rationalise. |
| Action Verbs for Analysis | Recognise, distinguish between, evaluate, analyse, break down, differentiate, identify, illustrate how, infer, outline, point out, relate, select, separate, divide, compare, contrast, justify, resolve, examine, conclude, criticise, question, diagnose, categorise, elucidate. |
| Action Verbs for Application | Apply, solve, demonstrate, change, compute, manipulate, use, employ, modify, operate, predict, produce, relate, show, select, choose, assess, operate, illustrate, verify, explicate, prove. |
| Action Verbs for Understanding | Interpret, translate, estimate, justify, clarify, defend, distinguish, explain, generalise, exemplify, infer, predict, rewrite, summarise, discuss, perform, report, present, indicate, find, represent, formulate, contrast, classify, express, compare, recognise. |
| Action Verbs for Remembering | Define, describe, identify, label, list, name, outline, reproduce, recall, select, state, present, extract, organise, recount, write, measure, relate, match, record. |

# FURTHER SUPPORT

You can find out more about writing ILOs on our Curriculum Design pages on the Humanities Teaching Academy site.

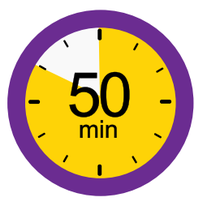
Some of our related materials and services include:




Online Microlearning: Defining and Writing Aims and ILOs




Online Microlearning: Aligning ILOs to Activity and Assessment




Book a Consultation with a Learning Designer

More unit development guidance topics can be found at What's next for your unit or programme?

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