

Language Standards for Course Outlines

In 1956 Benjamin Bloom edited the now classic Taxonomy of Instructional Objectives. He maintained that not only was the identification of program or course objectives inherently valuable for clarifying the purpose of the educational offering, but that well constructed objectives guided selection and organization of learning experiences. This, of course, is a key consideration to promoting not only the achievement of the objectives, but assistance in selecting and constructing evaluation. They really are more than objectives, they are educational outcomes or *standards* against which we can evaluate achievement. The Taxonomy identified three areas in which learning takes place and which can be addressed by objectives or standards - the cognitive, affective, and **psychomotor** domains.

The Cognitive Domain We are most accustomed to dealing with the *cognitive* domain, which deals with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual ability. Six major classes are usually identified: (a) knowledge, (b) comprehension, (c) application, (d) analysis, (e) synthesis, and (f) evaluation. Each of these classes becomes progressively more complex and in theory builds upon the previous level. In other words, not only is synthesis a more complex operation than knowledge, but the ability to synthesize depends upon the foundation of knowledge possessed by the learner.

The following list of verbs is arranged by the classes above. The verbs are measurable and observable behaviors expected of the learner. While it is certainly admirable to "gain an understanding," it is not possible to observe or measure understanding itself. What does the learner have to do to indicate that he or she "understands?" Use of an action verb enables both the teacher and learner to know what comprises successful learning. It is preferable to use only one verb in each standard although there are instances when two are needed for clarity or texture.

Knowledge: (Standards that ask the learner to recognize and recall facts and specifics)

define	delineate	specify
outline	memorize	repeat
record	list	state
recall	name	relate

Comprehension: (Standards that ask the learner to summarize or paraphrase given information)

restate	discuss	describe
summarize	recognize	explain
express	identify	locate
report	review	tell

Application: (Standards that ask the learner to use information in a situation different from the original learning context)

translate	interpret	apply
employ	use	demonstrate (a skill)
dramatize	practice	illustrate
operate	solve	schedule
show	sketch	

Analysis: (Standards that ask the learner to separate the whole into its parts, to better understand the organization of the whole and the relationships between the parts)

distinguish	analyze	differentiate
appraise	examine	criticize
critique	classify	calculate
experiment	test	compare
contrast	diagram	inspect
debate	inventory	question
relate	solve	examine

Synthesis: (Standards that ask the learner to combine elements learned into a new entity)

compose	plan	propose
design	formulate	arrange
assemble	collect	predict
create	design	setup
organize	manage	prepare
construct		

Evaluation: (Standards that ask the learner to make decisions, judge, or select based on criteria and rationale)

judge	appraise	evaluate
rate	compare	measure
revise	score	select
choose	assess	estimate

The Affective Domain Objectives or standards which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection fall within the affective domain. They are sometimes classed simply as *attitudes*. These standards require internalization, not just acquiring a body of knowledge. In the history of curriculum construction and the study of objectives, a marked decrease, almost a cessation, has occurred in the attention given the affective domain. This almost assuredly is not due to a belief that this is an unimportant area, but is due instead to the difficulty encountered in stating observable behaviors for measurement of these standards.

The key to observing desired outcomes in the affective domain lies with a *choice of personal action* that the learner is expected to exhibit. Often, learner self-assessment measures are used to evaluate these standards or outcomes. Since choices are often inextricably linked to a situation, frequently the situation under which the behavior is expected must be stated. For example, a nursing student would demonstrate an enjoyment *of being or becoming* a nurse if spare time during the day is spent with a patient rather than at the nurses' station. A student would demonstrate an increased appreciation or interest gained from a survey art appreciation course by the numbers and varieties of museums or exhibits attended voluntarily.

The achievement of an affective standard is often not a met/not met situation, but rather achievement somewhere on a continuum since it is a process of learner internalization and change. Bloom and his colleagues felt that there were levels of complexity within the affective domain as there were within the cognitive domain. A learner would first become aware of a phenomenon and be *able* to perceive it, then be *willing* to focus on it, followed by *a positive response* and eventually a *seeking out* behavior. These levels are identified as (a) receiving, (b) responding, (c) valuing, (d) organization, and (e) characterization by a value.

The Psychomotor Domain This domain largely involves motor skills, one of the most obvious kinds of human capabilities. A verb *very* frequently associated with this domain is *execute*. The emphasis is on the *performance* of certain specified skills. Frequently these outcomes are criterion-referenced and the learner is held against a specified standard. An example for a student learning word processing would be a set words-per-minute expectation.

The standards (objectives or outcomes) are pivotal in the construction of a good course outline. They operationalize the purpose of the course and provide a basis for evaluation. However, even more importantly they identify clearly for the learner what he or she is expected to do or learn to be successful.