

Writing Learning Outcomes

All programmes and modules should have clearly written aims and learning outcomes (LOs). These communicate the programme and module objectives, and ensure alignment between the different programme elements, such as the assessment strategy and your learning and teaching approach.

Programme & Module Aims

Aims state the broad purpose and goals of the programme and module. They are your intentions as a programme team about what you wish your students to have learnt by the end of the programme.

Programme & Module Learning Outcomes

Programme and module LOs are written from the perspective of your student. They are statements that tell students (and others) what **they need to do to demonstrate** their learning by the end of the programme.

Be aware of and understand your discipline professional body requirements, and [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#). These define what is expected of discipline graduates.

The importance of learning outcomes

LOs are not stand-alone statements, using the concept of '**constructive alignment**' (Biggs, 1999)¹ they should be integrated into your curriculum design and teaching activities. Remember, students are assessed on their ability to demonstrate they have achieved the learning outcomes. It is important they are written clearly, in language students understand.

Writing aims, ask yourself...

What is the purpose of this programme / module?

What is the programme / module trying to achieve?

Writing learning outcomes, start with...

On successful completion of this programme students should be able to ...

Constructive alignment asks the teacher to think about:

Intention of Learning Outcomes: What should the students know & be able to do by the end of the programme and module?

Assessment: How is the assessment strategy designed to support students and teachers in knowing that they have achieved the outcomes?

Teaching activity: What teaching approaches will be used to encourage students to work towards the achievement of these outcomes?

¹ Biggs, J. and Tang, K. (1999). Teaching for quality learning at University. 4th ed. Maidenhead: OUP

Principles of Learning Outcomes

- Write LOs collaboratively as a programme team.
- LOs are statements of the knowledge, skills and graduate attributes that your students are expected to obtain by the end of a programme /module.
- Start with the programme LOs, these need to state clearly what the student should have achieved by the end of the programme.
- Align module LOs with the programme LOs.
- All programme LOs should be assessed at some point during the programme, providing opportunities for students to demonstrate they have achieved the LOs.

Words to **avoid**, which are vague, too broad, & difficult to observe or measure:

‘become familiar with’

‘understand’

‘appreciate’

Ask yourself... how would you measure if someone has become ‘familiar with’ something and at the level you require?

Writing learning outcomes

Think about study level; your expectations and thus the wording of LOs should reflect the level of study. Programme LOs should reflect your expectations of student ability at the end of the programme. Module LOs need to reflect the level of study, UG level 4, 5 or 6, & PG level 7. The higher the level, the higher the cognitive demands of the student, and therefore you should reflect this in the wording of the LO.

Subject specific and general; LOs are split between demonstrating general/transferable skills, for example, communication and interpersonal skills, and those which are subject specific and demonstrate discipline knowledge.

Consider the number of LOs; identify the most important elements you want the students to learn, and try to keep the number of LOs to an achievable number. As a rule of thumb, you should have no more than 8 LOs. Remember modules will have their own subject specific knowledge LOs. The programme LOs reflect a longer period of study and have a greater focus on graduate attributes.

Know the programme; Programme LOs take a broad view, be sure the team is clear about what these are. Then ensure your module LOs align and are mapped to your programme LOs.

Language is important; use short statements with an **active verb**, avoid abbreviations, jargon and acronyms. Future proof yourself, for example don’t mention specific software.

LOs examples at different levels of study:

Module LOs illustrates the different use of language: *Students should be able to...*

UG Level 4: ... use a computer-based learning resource **competently**.

UG Level 5: ... use some computer-based learning resources **proficiently**.

UG Level 6: ... use a range of computer-based resources **effectively**

PG Level 7: ...use an extensive range of computer-based learning resources **effectively** and **independently**.