



Defining Learner-Centered, Meaningful, and Measurable Outcomes and Objectives (Part 2)

Narrator [00:00:06] Let's work through a few examples for creating learner-centered, meaningful, and measurable outcomes and objectives, beginning with this example from a psychology course. "This course will help students develop a basic familiarity with the major psychological disorders." One observation is that this outcome is not written from a student's point of view. It focuses on what the course will do, not what the students will do. We can adjust the first few words of the outcome to "Students will be able to." This puts the emphasis on what students will do rather than what the instructor or the course will do.

Narrator [00:00:43] We also want our outcomes and objectives to be meaningful. Students in an Intro to Psychology course will likely need to be able to define major psychological disorders in subsequent psychology courses and perhaps in their future careers. With that in mind, this outcome is meaningful.

Narrator [00:01:02] Next, consider the phrase "develop a basic familiarity with." How will we measure students' attainment of basic familiarity? To ensure we will be able to measure this outcome, we need to adjust the statement to include an action-oriented or measurable verb, such as "define." We can measure a student's ability to define the major psychological disorders using an assessment or assignment, which means this outcome is measurable. The revised course outcome in this example would be "Students will be able to define the major psychological disorders."

Narrator [00:01:37] Let's try another. "Students will be able to understand key literary terms." This course outcome is written from the student's point of view since it begins with "students will be able to." However, "understand" is a nebulous term that reflects an internal process we are not able to measure. Therefore, we need to replace the term "understand" with an action verb that represents what students are going to be able to do to show that they understand key literary terms. This adjustment can be accomplished by using a resource such as the list of action verbs aligned to Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy is a hierarchical classification of the different levels of thinking from simple to complex. The term "understand" falls within the second level of Bloom's taxonomy, and according to this list, we could replace understand with action verbs such as "classify," "describe," or "report," among others. If students understand key literary terms, they should be able to describe them. So our revised course outcome could be "Students will be able to describe key literary terms."

Narrator [00:02:47] Another common challenge with course outcomes is that they sometimes contain more than one action verb. For example, "Students will be able to analyze and critique literary works." Having two action verbs can make a course outcome more difficult to assess. One strategy to address this challenge is to focus on the higher-level verb, which often requires that students also master the action represented by the verb at the lower cognitive level. Returning to Bloom's Taxonomy, we see that "critique" requires higher-level thinking than "analyze," so we can focus our measurement on "critique," knowing that students will need to analyze the literary works before they can effectively critique them. Our outcome now becomes "Students will be able to critique literary works."

Narrator [00:03:34] Please refer to these examples as you create or revise your own course outcomes and learning objectives to be sure they are student-centered, meaningful, and measurable. This intentional approach ensures that you will have outcomes and objectives that are ready to be shared with students.