Writing effective learning outcomes

When writing learning outcomes you should first identify the aims for your course/programme – the core knowledge, skills and values you want the students to develop. Using the model of Bloom's taxonomy shown below you can map the knowledge, skills and values to the cognitive domains. The verbs shown to the right-hand side of this model can be used as a guide to help you translate your aims into learning outcomes.

It will also help you structure your learning outcomes if you write them in the form of bullet points following the stem sentence 'By the end of the course/programme the students will be able to:'

Example (taken from M-Level course in Behavioural Science):

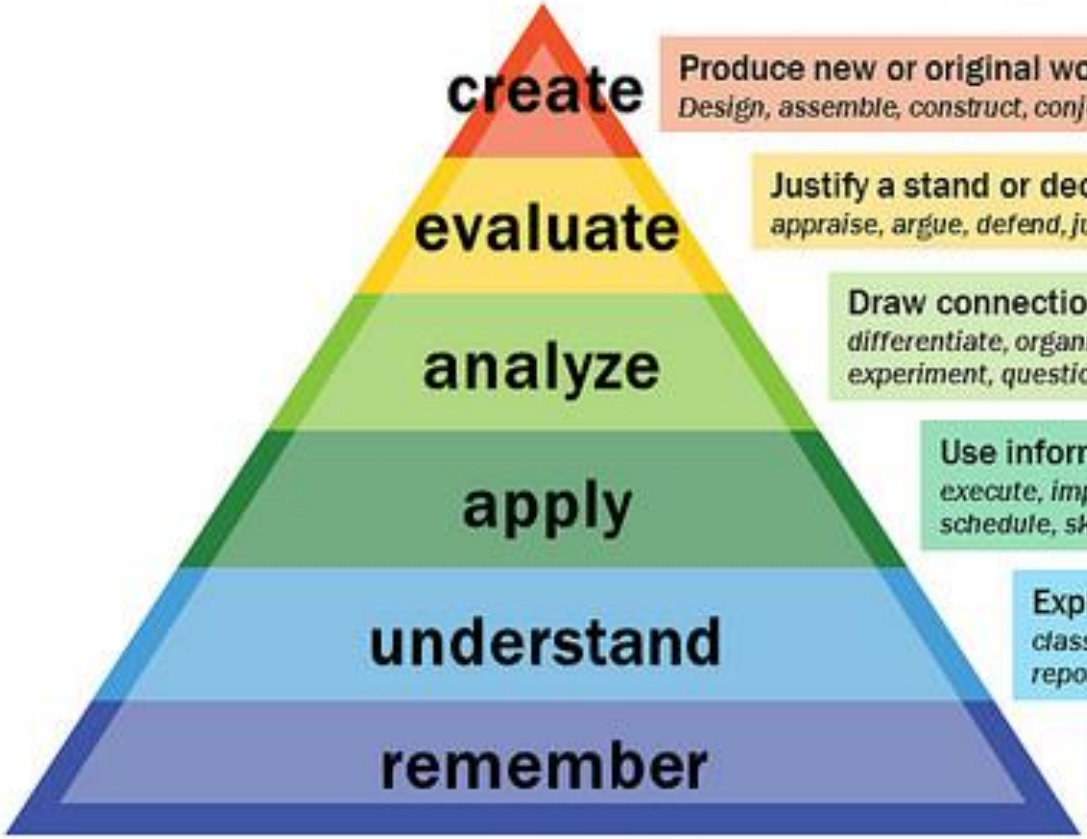
By the end of the course the students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the methodological tools across experimental psychology and economics that are essential for designing advanced behavioural science research.
- Apply these tools in their own research, which should propel them to produce top-quality research for their dissertations.
- Analyse experimental data that probed causal mechanisms behind behavioural change.
- Evaluate the quality of advanced research publications in behavioural science.
- Create their own experiments that involve behavioural priming, implicit cognition, preferences, attitudes, strategic games, etc. and/or probe mechanisms behind causal effects in behavioural research.

To be effective learning outcomes should be:

- Active – they describe what students can do.
- Attractive – students want to achieve them.
- Comprehensible – students know what they mean.
- Appropriate – to the student's current goals and career plans.
- Attainable – most students will mostly meet them, with due effort.
- Assessable – we can see if they have been achieved.
- Visible – in the course guides, on the relevant Moodle sites and reiterated during lectures/seminars.

Bloom's Taxonomy



Produce new or original work
Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

Use information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state