

BUILDING YOUR COURSE: HOW DO I GET STARTED?

STAGE 1- START WITH THE END IN MIND

Start by your hands on a course outline template. You can contact your school manager, course coordinator, area coordinator or relevant programme director to have a course outline template specific to your school. Although there may be slight variations in what is required for different schools, all course outlines typically start with a description of the course, and its intended learning outcomes.

At this stage, you define:

- The course description
- The course learning objectives, i.e. what students should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the course

CTE recommendation: Writing measurable learning objectives

A clear and measurable learning objective has four distinct performance elements: Audience, Behavior, Condition and Degree (ABCD) (Smaldino, Lowther & Russell, 2007). This is a good starting point on coming up with measurable learning objectives.

Figure 1. ABCD model for writing learning objectives





Performance Element	Description
<u>A</u> udience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is the <u>A</u>udience?• What is their prior knowledge?
<u>B</u> ehaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the desired change in <u>B</u>ehaviour?
<u>C</u> ondition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the <u>C</u>onditions under which the objectives must be completed?
<u>D</u> egree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the <u>D</u>egree or standard that the learner must meet to reach acceptable performance?

Figure 2. Example of a learning objective written using the ABCD model

After this segment, <u>participants</u> will be able to:
• <u>write</u> <u>clear</u> learning objectives <u>using the ABCD method</u>
<u>A</u> udience <u>B</u> ehaviour <u>C</u> ondition <u>D</u> egree

Biggs and Tang (2011) recommend having **no more than five or six intended learning objectives, for a semester-long course**. A set of five or six well-crafted course learning objectives communicates a holistic overview of the course. Any more than five or six course learning objectives will make it difficult for the instructor to align his/her teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks to each (p. 119).

The Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) provides a useful resource on the action verbs for writing learning objective in specific and measurable language. Once you have the learning objectives articulated, you will find it easier to **align** your [assessment methods \(Table 2\)](#) and instructional strategies ([Table 3](#)).

Thinking Level <i>(from lower-order to higher-order)</i>	Description Action Verbs
Remember	Recognising or recalling knowledge, facts or concepts. Verbs: define, describe, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recognise, reproduce, select, state, locate
Understand	Constructing meaning from instructional messages. Verbs: illustrate, defend, compare, distinguish, estimate, explain, classify, generalise, interpret, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarise, translate
Apply	Using ideas and concepts to solve problems. Verbs: implement, organise, dramatise, solve, construct, demonstrate, discover, manipulate, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, choose
Analyse	Breaking something down into components, seeing relationships and an overall structure. Verbs: analyse, break down, compare, select, contrast, deconstruct, discriminate, distinguish, identify, outline
Evaluate	Making judgments based on criteria and standards. Verbs: rank, assess, monitor, check, test, judge
Create	Reorganise diverse elements to form a new pattern or structure. Verbs: generate, plan, compose, develop, create, invent, organise, construct, produce, compile, design, devise

Table 1. Thinking Levels of the Bloom's' Revised Taxonomy¹

¹ Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D.R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing, Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Put into practice: Completing your course outline document

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course description is a written account of what your course is about. Describe the goal and scope of the course. You may focus on:

- *The relevant knowledge and skills that the course content seeks to cover*
- *Profile of students this course may be of interest to*
- *How your course develops students academically and professionally*
- *How your course and its goal relates to other course offerings, the overall programme in the discipline and SMU's graduate learning outcomes (GLOs)*. Contact CTE to learn more about aligning your course learning objectives to GLOs.*

**The graduate learning outcomes refer to the university-wide highest learning goals that are important for all undergraduates.*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*Learning objectives are specific statements about the key knowledge and skills that students will acquire after completing your course. They should be observable and measurable such that students are able to demonstrate and that you can assess. Craft learning objectives using the list of action verbs from the Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (**Table 1**) and present them as follows:*

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. *<Action verb><description of knowledge/skill>.*
2. *<Action verb><description of knowledge/skill>.*
3. *...*

References:

1. Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D.R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing, Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
2. Biggs, J., Tang, C., & Society for Research into Higher Education. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University : What the Student Does*, Philadelphia, Pa. : McGraw-Hill/Society for Research into Higher Education ; Maidenhead, Berkshire, England ; New York : Open University Press. (Available for loan from SMU Libraries)
3. Smaldino, S. , Lowther, D. and Russell, J. (2007). *Instructional Media and Technologies for Learning*, 9th Edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc.