

Proving that Students Learn: Conceptualizing, Writing, and Assessing Learning Objectives

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Introduction to Learning Objectives

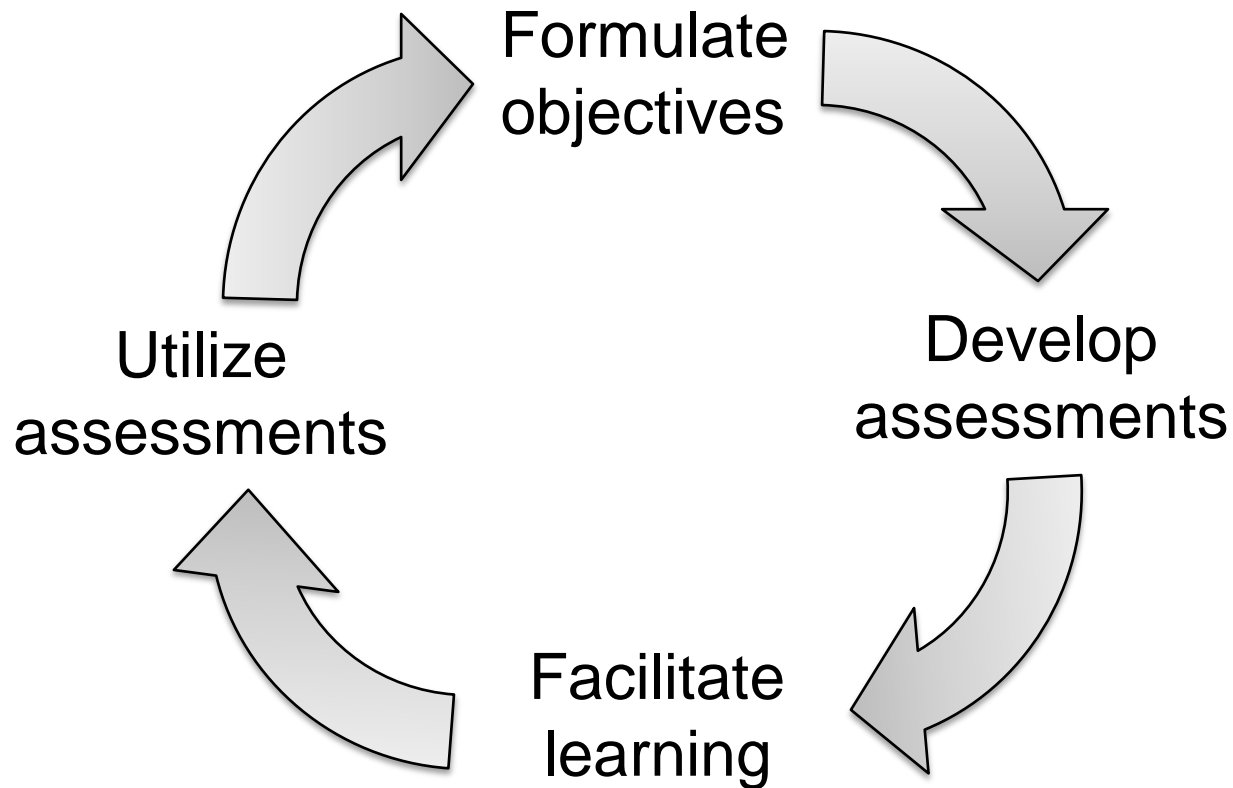
- Definitions
 - *Learning objectives* are precise statements of observable outcomes expected from a learning experience.
- Example
 - Participants in the learning objective presentation will be able to write 2 assessable learning objectives.

Introduction to Learning Objectives

- Definitions
 - *Assessment* is the collection of data to demonstrate effectiveness.

Introduction to Learning Objectives

- The assessment process



Adapted from Huba & Freed , 2000

Introduction to Learning Objectives

- Why use this process?
 - Assure quality
 - Plan learning experiences
 - Clear communication of expectations
 - Accreditation
 - Survival

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 1 – Define the learning content.
- Sources
 - Mission and goals statements
 - Department curriculum goals
 - Intellectual content you believe is important to a course
 - What should students be able to do?

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 2 – Translate content to objectives in A, B, C format.
 - Audience – Who will be learning?
 - Behavior – What will they learn?
 - Condition – Where/When will they learn?

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 2 – Translate content to objectives in A, B, C format.
- Example

Audience

Participants in the learning objective presentation will be able to write 2 assessable learning objectives.

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 2 – Translate content to objectives in A, B, C format.
- Example

Behavior

Participants in the learning objective presentation will be able to write 2 assessable learning objectives.

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Bloom's taxonomy outlines behaviors in order of cognitive complexity.
 - Knowledge: define, outline, label
 - Comprehension: identify, discuss, review
 - Application: apply, relate, solve
 - Analysis: differentiate, contrast, test
 - Synthesis: summarize, generate, create
 - Evaluation: argue, judge, justify

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 2 – Translate content to objectives in A, B, C format.
- Example

Condition

Participants in the learning objective presentation will be able to write 2 assessable learning objectives.

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 3 – Evaluate the quality of the learning objective.
 - Learning objectives should be focused on outcomes not methods of instruction.
 - Example
 - Instruction focus – “Students will write 2 papers.”
 - Outcome focused - “Students will apply, integrate, compare, judge, create...”

Formulating Learning Objectives

- Step 3 – Evaluate the quality of the learning objective.
 - Learning objectives should be specific enough to be measured.
 - Example
 - Too vague - “use computers”
 - Measureable - “search PsycINFO using restrictors, conduct a t test in SPSS, format an APA style paper in Word, evaluate the quality of internet sources”

Developing Assessments

- Step 1 – Determine the purpose of the assessment.
- Examples
 - Solve a specific problem
 - Evaluate a specific lesson, course, requirement, or major
 - Show standards are being met

Developing Assessments

- Step 2 – Determine the assessment method.
 - Direct methods measure actual performance of behaviors.
 - Examples – writing samples, performances, case studies, projects, tests, standardized measures, portfolio, observations, minute papers

Developing Assessments

- Step 2 – Determine the assessment method.
 - Indirect methods measures students' beliefs about their learning.
 - Examples - surveys, interviews, focus groups, peer evaluation

Developing Assessments

- Step 3 – Determine how data will be collected.
 - Who will be studied?
 - Examples – all students, random sample, your class, seniors, graduates
 - How will data be obtained?
 - Examples – in class, outside class, online survey, mail survey, telephone survey, in-person interviews, pre-post, post only, pre-post control

References

- Cope, M. (2007, June). *Assessment through learning outcomes: A how-to guide*. Workshop presented at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators International Assessment and Retention Conference.
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- Schuh, J. H. & Upcraft, M. L. (2001). *Assessment practice in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.