Developing Learning Outcomes for Your Course: a quick start guide
Adapted from Teresa Dawson and Joe Parsons, Learning & Teaching Centre, 2013

A. Four Key Questions to Meaningful Learning Outcomes

1. What would you like your students to be able to do by the end of your course that they could not do at the beginning?

2. Think of an "ideal" student completing your course. What do you want them to “look like”? What skills, attributes, expertise, characteristics, etc do you want them to have acquired?

3. How and under what specific conditions could you most effectively ask them to demonstrate these attributes? (What would most effectively convince you that they had learned what you hoped?)

4. How do your answers to 1-3 above, support the learning outcomes (and the assessment of same) for your program as a whole (as determined by accreditation bodies or your own department curricular program learning outcomes discussions)?

B. Try it out exercise...

1. Describe one essential learning outcome for your course:

2. What levels of learning are relevant to that outcome? Identify relevant action verbs and restate your outcome(s) in these terms. Tip: Use short clear, jargon-free statements and only put one testable outcome per statement.
   • **Evaluation**: Judge, Appraise, Evaluate, Rate, Rank, Compare, Value, Revise, Score, Select, Choose, Assess, Estimate, Measure, Review, etc.
   • **Synthesis**: Compose, Plan, Propose, Design, Formulate, Arrange, Assemble, Collect, Construct, Create, Set Up, Organize, Manage, Prepare, Make, etc.
   • **Analysis**: Distinguish, Analyze, Differentiate, Calculate, Compare, Contrast, Diagram, Inspect, Inventory, Relate, Examine, Categorize, Parse, Sort, etc.
   • **Application**: Interpret, Apply, Employ, Use, Demonstrate, Dramatize, Practice, Illustrate, Operate, Solve, Sketch, Produce, Modify, etc.
   • **Comprehension**: Translate, Restate, Discuss, Describe, Recognize, Explain, Express, Report, Predict, etc.
   • **Knowledge**: Define, List, Recall, Name, Identify, Label, State, Locate, Draw, Select, etc.
3. What learning activity best teaches students your learning outcome?
   Write out exactly what you would have students do and why. (Why this is the best method and the best example for having them achieve this goal?). Activities might include: in-class group work, mini-lectures, field trips, a movie clip, presentations, an art piece, research on-line, problem solving, and many more (see wheel above).

4. How much time in the course does this activity need to take?
   TIP: your top ranked outcomes should be the ones you spend the most time on. If this is your top ranked goal (outcome) and the most important thing for your students to learn, it should take disproportionately more time in your course and be core to the activities you design.

5. How will you check your students have learned this outcome?
   TIPS: i) Test in the way you teach. If your method of teaching this involves presenting a problem for solution then that is how you should test it. ii) Allocate as much time, proportionally, to testing the concept as you do to teaching it.