Student Support Services Assessment
(About-Tips-Techniques-Guidelines-Examples)

What are Operational Outcomes

- Outcomes are directly tied to the mission (purpose) and key functionalities of the unit.
- An intended or expected outcome helps determine what is measured.
- Outcome statements have two mandatory elements:
    - Intended beneficiary: (customers, students, institution, community)
    - Gain or benefit: (impact)
- Outcomes should be measurable and actionable
    - Be able to monitor change in beneficiaries
    - Have some degree of controllable influence on the outcomes

Outcome statement with beneficiary as the subject:

- Customers have…
- Administrators are able to…
- Clients understand…
- Customers employ…
- Students are aware of…
- The institution gains…

Operational Outcome versus a Goal Statement

- An expected outcome is not a goal statement, nor is it an objective
- A goal describes the outcome (product or service) the unit is planning to achieve through organized activities.
- An expected outcome describes benefit or change that the department hopes to effect for the customer or university as a result of that outcome (i.e., the impact on the customer)

Examples Outcome versus Goal

Goal Statement: To provide accurate and timely reports to university administrators.
Outcome Statement:

- UAH applicants will receive notification of receipt of application within 2 business days.
- University administrators have the institutional data they need to make decisions effectively.

Developing Effectiveness Indicators (Measures)

In particular: a characteristic, dimension, or element that you will be measuring to monitor change.
Example: Outcome Statement: *University administrators have the financial information they need to make decisions effectively.*

- Timeliness of reports to supervisor
- Accuracy of monthly reports
- Timeliness of requests for ad hoc reports
- Accuracy of information in ad hoc report
- Proactive reports produced on topical issues for the institution

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Set Targets

Targets are values set for the indicator that you expect to reach.

Examples:

- 100% of monthly reports are submitted by the 5th of the month
- Fewer than 5% of reports are returned for corrections
- 100% of ad hoc reports are submitted by the requested deadline
- At least two proactive reports are generated by term

Collect Data on Measures

- Make sure you can obtain the data easily.
- Data should be representative of the year.
- Snapshots of data are acceptable.
- Potential sources of data:
    - Unit records
    - Quality standards
    - Web site hits
    - Audit reports
    - Informal/formal interviews
    - Focus groups
    - Year to year comparisons
    - Benchmarking other institutions
    - Surveys
    - Systematic observation.

Analyzing Outcomes

What do the results mean for your unit?

Questions to consider:

- Why did you or did you not reach your target?
- What strengths do the results reflect about your unit?
- How can you strengthen this area?
- What strategies were successful or not successful?
- What will you employ to improve your outcome?
- Where is additional attention needed to correct a problem or issue?

Applying and Using the Results

Assessing outcomes is to provide meaningful information to help improve an institution/department. The most important part of the assessment cycle is determining how the results will be used for improvement and articulated through an Action Plan. Any item identified for improvement will need an action to correct or improve performance.

Strategies may include:

- Operational or programmatic: modifying what you do or how you do it
- Organizational: modifying the organizational structure of assignments
- Strategic: modifying your mission, responsibilities, or outcomes
- Assessment-related: modifying indicators or targets or method of data collection

Helpful Tips

Avoid compound outcomes and/or also called double barreling.

Use simple, specific action verbs to describe what the students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of your program.

- Action verbs result in overt behavior that can be observed and measured.
  - Analyze, apply, compare, create, estimate, demonstrate, illustrate (see Bloom's Taxonomy page 10)
- Avoid verbs that are unclear and call for behavior that cannot be observed or measured.
 - Appreciate, understand, learn, know, become familiar with

Bloom's Taxonomy

To assist units in the development of expected outcomes, Bloom's taxonomy can be used as a referral. Bloom's taxonomy is a classification of different objectives that educators set for students (learning outcomes). Bloom's original taxonomy in 1956 consisted of six major categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The categories after Knowledge were presented as "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice. Sub-categories stretched along the continuum from simple to complex and concrete to abstract.

In 2001, psychologists, curriculum theorists, and instructional researchers, and assessment experts revised the taxonomy into action words that describe the cognitive processes by which students think about and apply the knowledge. The revised 2001 taxonomy is replicated below:

Figure 1 Bloom's Taxonomy Revised 2001
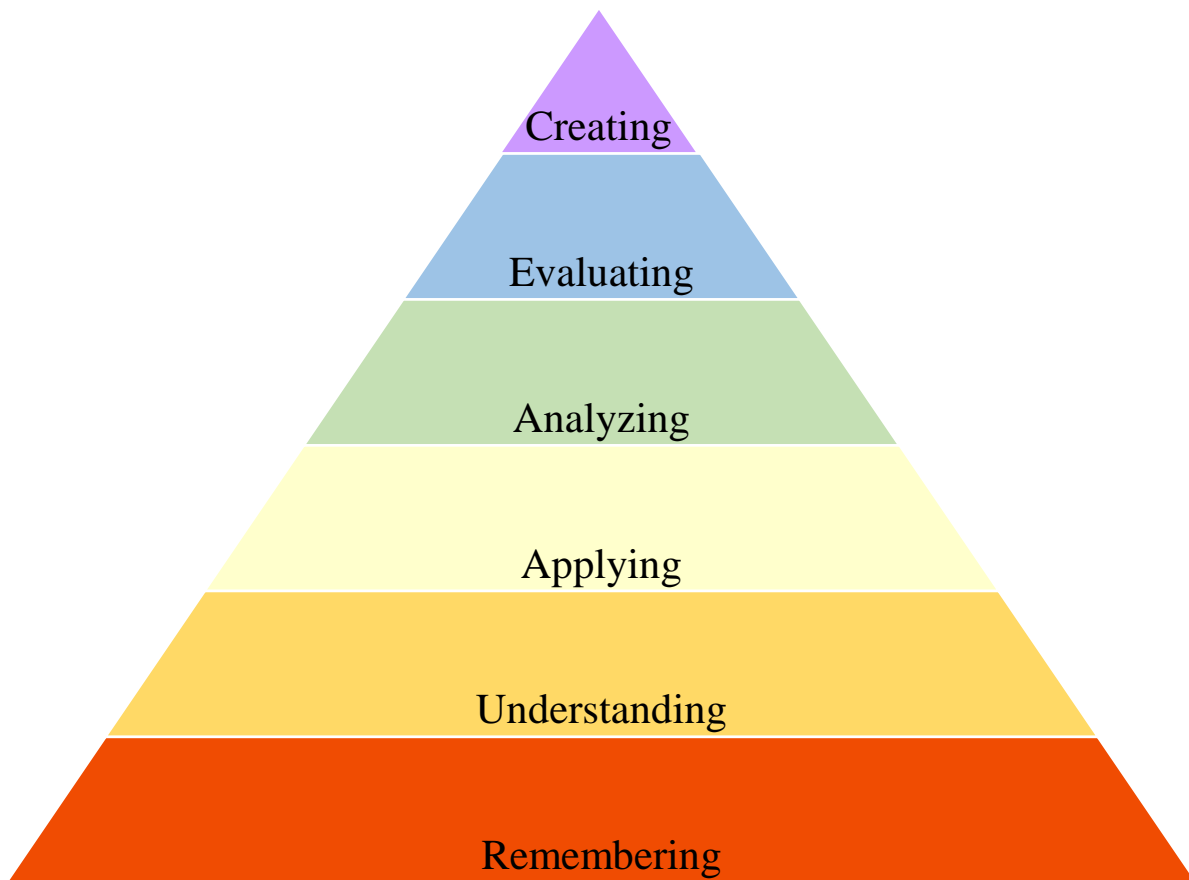
2 Information replicated from: http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/#2001

Blooms Taxonomy Action Verbs

Based on the revised taxonomy of 2001, provided are the action words associated with each category.

- Remember
  - Recognizing
  - Recalling
- Understand
  - Interpreting
  - Exemplifying
  - Classifying
  - Summarizing
  - Inferring
  - Comparing
  - Explaining
- Apply
  - Executing
  - Implementing
- Analyze
  - Differentiating
  - Organizing
  - Attributing
- Evaluate
  - Checking
  - Critiquing
- Create
  - Generating
  - Planning
  - Producing

See also: http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/#2001

"Best Practice" Examples