

Assessments that Align with Learning Objectives

Overview

Bloom (1965) defined that there are three domains (categories) of educational activities or learning.

- Cognitive: Mental skills (knowledge)
- Affective: Emotions or feelings (attitude)
- Psychomotor: Manual or physical skills (Skills)

These three learning categories refer to “ the goals of the learning process,” which means, at the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to perform some of these learning domains. In this article, we will primarily discuss the cognitive domain.

There are six major levels of learning under the cognitive domain. Starting from the simplest performance to the most complex: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. A series of action verbs are developed to help describe desired behaviors that are required at different levels of learning levels (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

The Importance of Aligning Assessments with Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are the desired learning outcomes instructors set for students. The Assessments are supposed to evaluate whether or not students have achieved. In order to avoid the ineffective evaluation process, it’s critical for instructors to match the assessments with the learning objectives.

For example, one of your objectives is: At the conclusion of this course students will be able to write business letters in the correct formats. However, the assessment is a multiple choice exam. As a result, students may feel frustrated because the assessment (a multiple choice exam) does not assess their abilities of writing business letters. The instructor will not be able to know if students achieved the objective.

Align Your Assessments with the Learning Objectives

Some appropriate assessments are listed as follows:

Remembering

Examples of learning objectives:

- Recite a poem
- List the main events of the story

Appropriate assessments:

Quiz, self-awareness exercises, or an activity using a student response system “clickers”

Understanding

Examples of learning objectives:

- Describe the concepts in students’ own words
- Write a summary report of an event

Appropriate assessments:

Quiz, self-awareness exercises, concept mapping, or Clickers activity

Applying

Examples of learning objectives:

- Construct a model to demonstrate how it will work
- Use manual to calculate an employee’s vacation time

Appropriate assessments:

Case studies, role-playing, concept mapping, student presentation, or individual projects

Analyzing

Examples of learning objectives:

- Analyze a business plan from multiple perspectives
- Solve a problem

Appropriate assessments:

Case studies, role-playing, concept mapping, student presentation, or individual projects

Evaluating

Examples of learning objectives:

- Troubleshoot an equipment problem
- Write a critical review about an article

Appropriate assessments:

Case studies, journals, diaries, critical reviews, or self/group reflective writings

Creating

Examples of learning objectives:

- Create a business plan
- Write an operation or process manual

Appropriate assessments:

Student presentation, essays, business plans, or website designs

References:

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives: Complete edition*. New York: Longman.

Bloom, B. S. (1965). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.