

FRAMEWORK FOR DEFINING LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. DEFINITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

According to Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

“Learning outcomes” means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

These terms have been defined as follows in the same Recommendation:

- “**knowledge**” means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study;
- “**skills**” means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive or practical;
- “**competence**” means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

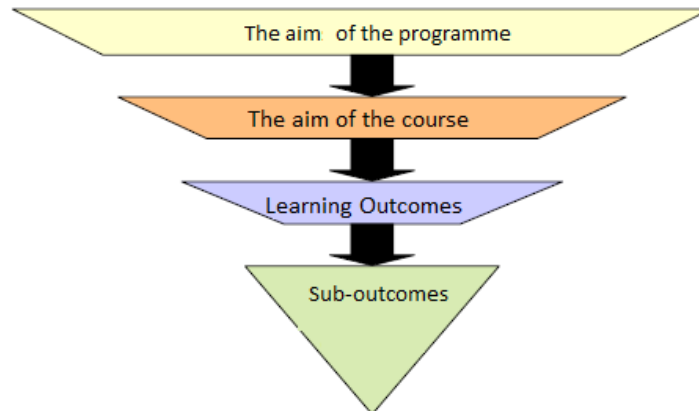
Learning outcomes can be described as a whole within a framework which can be subdivided into individual elements of knowledge, skills and competence. A detailed description of learning outcomes in the form of a matrix has the advantage that it enables a better comparison with the programme and is more clearly structured with regards to the subsequent assessment of learning outcomes. It has the disadvantage that it can possibly lead to overlaps and redundancies when describing several units of learning outcome.

The definition of learning outcomes varies between institutions, education and training sectors and countries – **not yet a common language**.

- The structuring of learning outcomes descriptions **vary**.
- **No common** format for describing learning outcomes exists, reducing comparability.
- The level of **detail** varies dramatically, reducing transparency and comparability.

2. POINTS TO CONSIDER IN DEFINING LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Learning Outcomes of a course / unit should be compatible with the aims and qualifications of the programme. This definition can simply be summarized as in the below diagram:



Learning outcomes should also be formulated in such a way as to be understandable and thus "manageable" for all those involved.

The following points should be taken into consideration when formulating learning outcomes:

- Learning outcomes refer to vocational qualifications (in the sense of assessable vocational competences), not to the individual's specific development of vocational competence.
- The learning outcomes which are to be described are based on the learning achievements of an average learner.
- Learning outcomes are described from the perspective of the learner (not from the perspective of the instructor).
- Learning outcomes do not describe the learning target or the learning path, but the result following the completion of a learning process.
- Learning outcomes should be verifiable and assessable.
- Learning outcomes should be described in as concrete terms as possible so that it can be determined within the framework of an evaluation process whether the learner has achieved the learning outcomes.
- The learning outcomes should, however, be formulated in such a way as to also enable the learners to judge whether the results have actually been achieved.
- The nature of the learning process and the learning method itself are not relevant for the description of learning outcomes.

As a general principle, there should neither be too many nor too few learning outcomes.

3. TIPS FOR DEFINING LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following basic principles can make defining the learning outcomes easier:

- **Use of active, clearly understandable verbs**

Verbs should describe measurable or observable actions, e.g. "explain", "represent", "apply", "analyse", "develop", etc. It may be convenient to use a classification of pre-determined list of words in this phase i.e. list of verbs based on Bloom's Taxonomy. (*Bloom 1975, Anderson, Krathwohl 2001*)

- **Specification and contextualization of the active verb**

It should be described what the knowledge and ability refer to in concrete terms, or what type of activity is involved. The learning outcomes formulation should consist of a verb and the related object as well as an additional (part of a) sentence describing the context.

- **Avoiding vague, open formulations**

Learning outcomes should be described briefly and precisely, complicated sentences should be avoided, learning outcomes should not be formulated in too general or in too concrete terms; clear (simple and unambiguous) terminology should be used as far as possible. Not: He/She knows the regional products and is able to prepare simple meals.

- **Orientation towards minimum demands for achieving learning outcomes**

Learning outcomes should comprehensibly describe the minimum demands for achieving/validating a unit of learning outcome, i.e. all learning outcomes which are necessary for fulfilling the tasks in the sense of a complete vocational activity should be listed.

- **Qualifications/competence level is described comprehensibly.** Formulations, particularly verbs and adjectives should reflect the level of qualification/competence (EQF or sectoral framework) of a unit of learning outcome. The learning outcomes description should comprehensibly depict whether the vocational competences can for example be applied under supervision, autonomously or responsibly and competently.

4. METHODOLOGY USED IN EURSPACE PROJECT TO DEFINE LEARNING OUTCOMES.

Bearing in mind that the general aim of the Project *EURspace* is to facilitate the mobility of I-VET learners across Europe and contribute towards the development of vocational education and training without **borders**, as well as **transparency** in the recognition and certification of the learning outcomes acquired abroad, the *EURspace* products will consequently extend the **national** scale to the **European** scale.

The implementation of the **Pilot Project** intended to standardize the recognition, validation and certification of units of learning outcome, among European countries, focusing on the technical components of Hotel and Restaurant Management Courses.

Once the Pilot Project is implemented by other countries or institutions, there expected to be multiple number of partners – probably from different countries with various Learning Outcomes for specific units. Therefore, Learning Outcomes need to be defined based on the Recommendation of the European Parliament – and yet removing the differences between the participants.

In this concept, the **Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008** has been the basis when defining the Learning Outcomes and the individual elements (*knowledge, skills and competence*) in the Project *EURspace*. In that:

Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008

Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, meaning statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

Knowledge means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

Within the context of the Project *EURspace*

Learning Outcomes are intended as key realizations / key tasks achieved, in which the learner evidences a set of acquired knowledge, skills and competence.

Knowledge is described in terms of what the learner knows and understands.

Skills means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).



Skills are described in terms of what the learner is able to do.

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.



Competence is described in terms of what the learner is ready to do.

➤ **Sample table for a specific unit and the learning outcome with its elements**

TRAINING FIELD: COOKERY				
UNIT OF LEARNING OUTCOME	KEY TECHNICAL OUTCOME	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
INTERNATIONAL SOUPS	Prepare international soups	<p>The learner knows and understands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different international cookery culture; - Soup cultures of different cultures; - Characteristics of international soups; - International soup varieties of different cultures; - Garnishing, preparing and serving international soups as their originals. 	<p>The learner is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cook international soups; - Prepare garnish; - Get products ready for service. 	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepares equipment and ingredients for the international soups; - Cooks international soups as per the characteristics and type; - Prepares garnish as per the characteristics and type of the international soups; - Prepares international soups for service; - Follows Health & Safety and hygiene procedures.

5. TEMPLATE FOR DEFINING LEARNING OUTCOMES

TRAINING FIELD: COOKERY				
UNIT OF LEARNING OUTCOME	KEY TECHNICAL OUTCOME	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
		The learner knows and understands:	The learner is able to:	The learner:

6. CHECKLIST

Upon the completion of the definition of Learning Outcomes, it would be useful to go through the below checklist so as to confirm the coherence of the Learning Outcomes. In order for a Learning Outcome to be properly defined, all the answers should be Yes.

Learning Outcomes	Yes / No
➤ Are concurrent with the general aims of the course / programme.	
➤ Reflects the knowledge, skills and competences required for the specific field.	
➤ Sub-outcomes are determined for when necessary.	
➤ Focus not on the process but on the outcomes and results.	
➤ Prepared in the favour of the learner.	
➤ Stated clear and comprehensible (without terms such as know, understand, learn).	
➤ Observable and verifiable.	
➤ Only one verb is used to describe for each Learning Outcome.	

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ANNEX I – TECHNICAL SHEET

1- This framework aims to provide:

- a. a definition of Learning Outcomes;
- b. a definition of Knowledge, Skills and Competence;
- c. tips for defining Learning Outcomes;
- d. a description of the methodology used in the Project *Eurspace* to define Learning Outcomes;
- e. a template for defining Learning Outcomes.

2- This framework is intended to be used in determining the following via the template:

- a. The training field;
- b. Units;
- c. Learning Outcomes;
- d. What the learner knows and understands (knowledge);
- e. What the learner is able to do (skills);
- f. What the learner is ready to do (competence).

3- This framework is intended for the use of schools, public bodies and other private enterprises who participate in mobility projects.

4- This framework is intended to be applied to the mobility students from participant institutions in order to determine the learning outcomes that they are expected to attain.

5- Phase and Stage of the Pedagogical Circuit in which the Framework should be used:

Phase 1: Before Mobility

Stage 1: Identifying the expected Learning Outcomes