

What do the verbs mean?

QCF Units have to be developed within a template of Learning Outcomes (LOs - broad statements about what a learner will be able to do) and Assessment Criteria (ACs - specific statements about what a learner can do to demonstrate that they have achieved the Learning Outcome).

Each LO must have at least one Assessment Criterion, but usually there are three or four. The LOs are not expected to be written as observable behaviours (so can use verbs like 'know' and 'understand') but ACs must be, which makes Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives¹ a useful source document and also a guide to using different verbs at different QCF/SCQF levels. The table shows the links between Bloom's Taxonomy and the current QCF/SCQF level indicators and is used as a guide (not a rule) by ILM's Unit developers. (*Words that are underlined may appear at more than one level and care must be taken to apply these in relation to the level of the unit*)

Bloom level	Appropriate verb	QCF/SCQF Level					
		2/5	3/6	4/7	5/8+9	6/10	7/11
Knowledge:	arrange, define, <u>describe</u> , duplicate, find, <u>identify</u> , label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, <u>show</u> , state	30%	20%	10%	5%	5%	5%
Comprehension:	<u>classify</u> , <u>compare</u> , <u>describe</u> , discuss, <u>distinguish</u> , <u>estimate</u> , explain, express, <u>identify</u> , indicate, <u>interpret</u> , locate, outline, <u>predict</u> , recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate,	40%	30%	20%	10%	5%	5%
Application:	apply, choose, <u>classify</u> , complete, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, <u>examine</u> , illustrate, <u>implement</u> , interpret, operate, practice, <u>produce</u> , <u>respond</u> , schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.	30%	40%	30%	30%	20%	10%
Analysis:	analyse, appraise, calculate, categorize, <u>compare</u> , contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, <u>distinguish</u> , <u>examine</u> , experiment, <u>explain</u> , <u>identify</u> , <u>investigate</u> , question, <u>separate</u> , test.		10%	30%	25%	30%	30%
Synthesis:	arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, <u>devise</u> , <u>establish</u> , formulate, manage, modify, organize, plan, <u>predict</u> , prepare, propose, set up, write.			10%	20%	25%	30%
Evaluation:	appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, <u>compare</u> , <u>debate</u> , <u>decide</u> , defend, <u>estimate</u> , <u>evaluate</u> , <u>investigate</u> , judge, <u>justify</u> , predict, <u>prioritise</u> , rate, <u>recommend</u> , <u>review</u> , <u>report on</u> , core, select, support, value.				10%	15%	20%

Source: Bloom, B.S. et al (1956)

¹ Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals; Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* New York, Longmans, Green, 1956.

What do the verbs mean? A guide to the meaning of verbs in ILM's QCF Units

However, Bloom does not explicitly define what each of these verbs means in practice. Therefore, to guide developers and users of ILM's units, the following definitions are offered as a guide to meaning. They are presented in a table that starts with the verb, adds a very short question that suggests the purpose of using this verb, and then has a definition which suggest what the outcome would, be in terms of what a learner would be expected to do in relation to an AC using this verb.

List <i>What exists?</i>	Presentation of specific, required information in a structured format. Essentially a recall of learnt information; although this may be quite complex information, listing does not imply significant cognitive skills.
Identify <i>What are they?</i>	Involves some selection of subject matter from a larger set or context. Requires ability to recognise - the level of cognitive skill required depends on the context and the degree of variation in the set from which the identified elements are being drawn.
Describe <i>What does it look like?</i>	An account of the principal features of the topic. Involves some element of selection of the more important features. Again context and possible variation is significant, as is the degree of detail required in the description.
Explain <i>How does it work?</i>	Involves some description of a topic with an account of the practices associated with the topic. It may also imply some reasons for those practices, depending on context. Again, the level of cognitive skill involved will depend on the complexity of the subject matter.
Compare <i>How does this relate to that?</i>	Used with two or more examples, requires a description of their relative features, effectiveness or outcomes. Context and variation determines the level of cognition involved.
Contrast <i>How good is this compared to that?</i>	Used with two or more examples, makes some assessment of their relative features, effectiveness or outcomes. By definition, this is more demanding than to <u>compare</u> , and the factors which determine the level of comparison also need to be considered, but this is likely to be a higher level activity.
Examine <i>What can you find out about it?</i>	Examine is about exploring a topic in some detail (identifying positive and negative features of the topic) without necessarily drawing conclusions and making judgements. An examination could be used to inform decision making; in itself it will probably not be conclusive. The degree of detail and the context in which the examination takes place will determine level.
Analyse <i>What makes this work the way it does?</i>	To <u>examine</u> something in detail to discover the meaning or essential features and draw conclusions. To break something down into components or essential features, to identify possible causation and/or draw conclusions Analysis is not solely confined to data, but will often involve some manipulation of data to identify patterns, etc. The more complex the topic being analysed, the higher the level, but analysis will rarely be a low level activity.
Critically analyse <i>What makes this work the way it does, and why?</i>	Implies careful, exact, in-depth or detailed <u>analysis</u> . Tends to focus more on the components and to comment on their significance, causal relationships or impact on the whole. Requires informed judgement with reference to some conceptual theory, idea, practice or experience so will always be a fairly high level of cognitive skill.

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Evaluate <i>How well does each part of this work, and what needs to be done to make it work better?</i>	An evaluation is an examination of complex issues, requiring higher level cognitive skills, that is more focussed (narrower area, but in more detail) than a <u>review</u>. An evaluation is normally detailed and normally provides a solution or conclusion and/or recommendation (perhaps for further exploration). An evaluation could include a comparative element and have some conclusions or recommendations. An evaluation tends to focus on the whole as well as the sum of its parts.
Review <i>Overall, how well does this work, and what may need to be done about it?</i>	Making a judgement about a topic which relies upon a combination of evidence and some kind of theoretical model, construct or practice. A review normally has breadth, includes a comparative element, and tends to focus more on the whole. A review will normally lead onto detailed further exploration and/or recommendations for further actions
Critically evaluate or review <i>How significant are the strengths and weaknesses of the performance being judged?</i>	The addition of 'Critically' in front of the verb should be used to emphasise both the higher level cognitive skills required and also that the learner is expected to make a judgement not just about the topic under consideration, but also the implications that the judgement that is reached has for the organisation or society, etc.
Justify <i>Why do it?</i>	Present an argument for a particular action or choice. Will usually imply some form of assessment or analysis, and be linked with one or other action
Assess <i>Is this to the required standard?</i>	Examining a topic and making a judgement, based on standard criteria. An assessment will judge each element individually. An assessment does not consider any causal factors, but focuses primarily on impact or outcomes
Appraise <i>Does this seem to work to the required standard?</i>	Less detailed but broader and more comprehensive than an assessment Looking at the whole and making judgements about qualitative aspects. Appraisal in its broader sense requires a judgement about the subject, identifying its strengths and weaknesses and/or how well something or someone performs in a particular context, or how well they are likely to do the job. Appraisal may be more subjective than an evaluation, although it will refer to appropriate criteria.
Research <i>What can you find out about it?</i>	Identifying and collecting data or information about a subject and presenting it in a codified or structured form. Research does not imply any analysis of the data collected, although that may be implied by the context. Research does not imply any judgement about the data collected, but may well be combined with related verbs (analyse, evaluate) to ensure that these actions take place.