

Guidance to terminology

The following definitions are not drawn from a dictionary but are working definitions. They tend to start from lower order verbs, but the level will also be determined by a number of other factors as well. Feel free to suggest amendments

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 for compare also apply.
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 fairly high level of cognitive skill.
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. An evaluation tends to focus on the whole as the sum of its parts.

<p>Review <i>Overall, how well does this work, and what may need to be done about it?</i></p>	<p>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 and could include a comparative element, and tends to focus more on the whole. A review may well lead onto detailed further exploration and/or recommendations for further actions</p>
<p>Critically review <i>Overall, how well does this work compared to some best practice, conceptual and/or theoretical framework, and what may need to be done about it?</i></p>	<p>This involves making a detailed judgement about a topic with a very clear comparison of complex evidence and a choice of relevant theoretical model(s), construct(s) or practice(s). As with a <i>review</i>, this normally has breadth, and tends to focus more on the whole but must include a comparative element. A critical review should have conclusions about the need for detailed further exploration and/or recommendations for further actions</p>
<p>Justify <i>Why do it?</i></p>	<p>Present an argument for a particular action or choice. Will usually imply some form of assessment or analysis, and may be linked with one or more actions.</p>
<p>Assess <i>Is this to the required standard?</i></p>	<p>Examining a topic and making a judgement, based on standard criteria. An assessment will judge each element individually. An assessment does not usually consider any causal factors, but focuses primarily on impact or outcomes</p>
<p>Appraise <i>Does this seem to work to the required standard?</i></p>	<p>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 is more subjective than an evaluation, although it will refer to appropriate criteria.</p>
<p>Research <i>What can you find out about it?</i></p>	<p>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 (<i>analyse, evaluate</i>) to ensure that these actions take place.</p>