Assessing Learning Outcomes through Aligned Assignments

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Findings from NILOA’s Survey of Provosts 2017

62% currently facilitating faculty work on the design of assignments
Assessment for Student Success is based on authentic measures of student learning

Classroom-based assessment

Rubrics

National Student Surveys
Learning Outcomes are Increasingly Aligned

At 50% of campuses: all programs have PLOs and align those PLOs with ILOs
Assignments as Assessments

Faculty are working to create a curriculum that intentionally builds in integrated learning opportunities over time for students to apply and practice as well as transfer their knowledge and skills through assignments, in and out of courses.
Assignments as a way in

Assignment

Scaffolding Learning

Learning Outcomes

Evaluative Criteria
How assignments connect

- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
Program View
The Learning Systems Paradigm
Consensus-based

Through faculty-led conversations, reflections, and explorations with employers, alumni, students, and others, a shared understanding and consensus is reached on learning outcomes. This shared understanding serves as the foundation for revising outcomes for enhanced clarity and designing educational experiences.
Using the agreed upon learning outcomes, faculty and staff align educational experiences throughout the institution for intentional integration, coherence, and fostering of multiple pathways. Alignment involves curriculum mapping, scaffolding, assignment design, mapping of career pathways, and co-curricular engagement.
Alignment

How do you ensure alignment between our assignments and a given learning outcome for a learning experience?

How do we create assignments and activities that will elicit student demonstration of a specific learning outcome?

How do we know that we have mapped our assignment to rubric criteria?
Fitness of Method or Approach

Part of alignment is fitness of method or approach – if asking students to *explain* something, multiple choice test might not be the best approach, but if asking students to *identify* – it might be very appropriate...
Alignment and fitness of method occur in relation to the verbs identified in the learning outcome statement

In your own assignment – what are you asking students to actually *do* or *demonstrate*?
Learner-Centered

The educational system reorganizes educational experiences around all students and their learning. Taking a student view includes consideration of issues of equity, learning-focused transfer, alternative delivery models, flexibility in offerings, integration of prior-learning assessment, ensuring stackable credentials, and building multiple pathways.
Involving students

Assessment is not something we do to students it is something we do with students.
Timing and Placement of Assignments

Do we consider student movement through curriculum in terms of the placement of signature assignments? Do we also consider transfer points and convergence between general education and the major?
Communication

Communication and collaboration with students and other audiences through transparent discussions around the outcomes and educational system works to make the implicit explicit. Communication involves exploration and integration with advising, alternative transcripts, admissions, and employers.
Are students even aware?

Student focus groups reveal that most students are not even aware they are being assessed. But upon learning about assessment...wish they had been told about it earlier.
Transparency in Assignments

Transparency in Teaching and Learning: [https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning](https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning)

**Purpose**

Skills you’ll practice by doing this assignment

Content knowledge you’ll gain from doing this assignment

How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

**Task**

What to do

How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

**Criteria**

(Are you on the right track? How to know you’re doing what’s expected?)

**Annotated examples of successful work**

(What’s good about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)
Rubrics

Do we share our rubrics or criteria with students and actively engage them in the review process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Criteria</th>
<th>Student Evaluation</th>
<th>Faculty Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubric Content</td>
<td>Stipulate why gave score did</td>
<td>Faculty stipulate why gave score did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stipulate what they need to do to advance</td>
<td>Targeted feedback to improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possibilities

Ideas on assignment modification

◦ Shifting audience (in writing assignment)
◦ Modify genre (blog, pamphlet, drama, graphic novel, poster, oral presentation, debate)
◦ Practice throughout courses
Transference of Knowledge and Skills

We know that students have the hardest time with transferring knowledge - realizing something they learned before can be applied in another context.

We have to teach them to reflect and have them apply over time.
The Process Today
The NILOA Initiative

An **online library** of high-quality peer-endorsed assignments linked to specific learning outcomes.

Designed by faculty, part of the intellectual work they already do, course embedded.

Building on campus efforts already underway

Reflecting a conception of assessment as integral to teaching and learning vs “exoskeleton” (Ewell 2013).
Feedback

76% of participants said “it helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students’ eyes.

59%: I’m more aware of aligning my assignments with desired institutional outcomes.

38%: helped to lead or facilitate an event about assignment design on their campus
What Are We Up To Here?

A chance to refine an assignment you’re working on

To contribute to the work of others and meet like-minded colleagues in other areas

Receive training and resources to conduct charrettes on your own campus
What’s a “charrette”?

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to an intense creative effort in a limited time period.
Aussi . . .

(a) In the tradition of the “atelier,” architecture students progress through the curriculum in the company of their mentors and peers. This approach offers an interesting model for an integrated education.

(b) The tradition rests on the assumption that much of your learning will come from one another.
Small Group Process

25 minute segments per person/assignment

- Present assignment briefly—which outcomes, what course, which students, how does it work....
- Discussion with group (focus on questions on feedback form)
- Save 5 minutes for written feedback
- Breath
- Start again...
- Debrief at end

Assignment-Design Charrette Process:
In groups of 5, each person/team will have an opportunity to share their assignment and receive suggestions and feedback from the group. In order for everyone to have an opportunity to give and receive feedback, we will use a timed carousel process. There will be five rounds. You will be a “presenter” for one round and a “participant” for the other four rounds.

Each round is 25 minutes.

Introduce assignment (5 min):
Presenters will introduce the assignment and provide background information such as: in what course the assignment is used, at what point in the course, pertinent information about the students in the course (majors vs. non-majors), what they find most challenging about the assignment, how it builds on earlier work and/or prepares students for more advanced work in later courses (or success beyond graduation), your experience with the assignment to date, how you hope to strengthen it, and what kinds of feedback and suggestions you would like from others.

Listeners: jot down thoughts and questions but please do not interrupt the presenter, let them have their full five minutes.

Discussion (15 min):
Listeners will respond to what they have heard, taking turns asking questions, sharing thoughts, feedback, etc. The purpose of the discussion is to help your colleague strengthen their assignment so please be constructive and collegial. Also, please mind the time and allow each participant the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Discussion should address the four questions on the feedback sheet.

Presenters: listen carefully and respond to the inquiries. Think about alignment, but also think creatively about possible solutions.

Feedback (5 min):
Everyone: Based on the discussion, use the feedback form to give the presenter written feedback and suggestions. The presenter can use this time to write down notes about the assignment, based on what they just heard, along with outlining next steps for revision or additional feedback.
Assignment-Design Charrette Feedback Sheet:

Assignment

Comments From

1. What learning outcomes do you think students will be able to demonstrate with this assignment? How does it need to be modified to better align with the outcomes of interest?

2. What are the main strengths of this assignment for assessing the identified outcomes?

3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?

4. How does the assignment align with the evaluative criteria? Are there mixed signals sent to students?

5. Other suggestions and possibilities – especially in response to the author’s questions about improving the assignment?
Assignment One
Assignment Two
Assignment Three
Thank You!
Reflect

How did it go?
What did you like about it?
What worked well?
What needs to be different?
How are you going to continue these conversations?
What resources do you need?
Resources: Toolkit

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/assignmenttoolkit.html
Entry point if needed
Internships, Integrative Learning and the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)

Alan W. Grose
Foreword by Pat Hutchings

Occasional Paper #30
www.learningoutcomesassessment.org

Aligning Educational Outcomes and Practices

Pat Hutchings

Occasional Paper #26
www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
UNPACKING RELATIONSHIPS

INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Natasha A. Jankowski
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Connections

Scaffolding Learning
Assignment
Learning Outcomes
Evaluative Criteria

Employers
Co-curricular

Implications for transcripts, career development, and pathways
# DQP Assignment Library

Search for an assignment by a keyword using the search box or by clicking on any specific tag.

## Search By:
- Title

## Academic Disciplines and Assignment Characteristics

- Arts and humanities
- Community engagement
- Exam
- Health Sciences
- Library assignment
- Online course
- Presentation
- Research methods
- Spreadsheet
- Business
- Education
- General education
- History and social sciences
- Life sciences
- Physical sciences
- Program assessment
- Self-assessment
- VALUE rubrics
- Capstone
- Engineering
- Group project
- Introductory course
- Mathematics and computer science
- Portfolio
- Reflection
- Sequenced/scaffolded assignments
- Writing assignment

## DQP Proficiencies

- Analytic inquiry
- Broad and Integrative Knowledge
- Communicative fluency
- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative fluency
- Applied and Collaborative Learning
- Civic and Global Learning
- Engaging diverse perspectives
- Intellectual Skills
- Specialized Knowledge
What next?

How can we stay in touch and build a community of practice around this work?

Submit to the online library

Sign up to be a online library peer reviewer

Publish on assignment design
Questions and discussion

Email: niloa@education.illinois.edu

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
www.assignmentlibrary.org
www.degreeprofile.org