

Assessing well-structured ILOs

Course: Introduction to Educational Technologies for Online, Distance and Flexible Learning

Level: Postgraduate Diploma

On successful completion of this course you will be able to:

C1: Contrast the learner experience in <u>different modes of learning</u> .
C2: Compare the effectiveness of different learning technologies in meeting a <u>defined cohort of learners' needs</u> .
A1: Justify the selection of different learning technologies <u>according to context</u> .
A2: Debate the appropriateness of a given model of delivery <u>within your own context</u> .
M1: Review the contemporary debate in professional education <u>regarding online, distance and self-directed learning</u> .
M2: Identify the trends and developments in learning models of delivery <u>impacting on professional education</u> .
P1: Demonstrate effective educational use of technology <u>in a professional educational context</u> .
P2: Organise relevant scholarship of learning and teaching and incorporate them appropriately <u>into your written reflections</u> .
I1: Canvas the opinions of potential students <u>for your intended courseware design</u> .
I2: Distinguish different socio-cultural conventions <u>with respect to emerging technologies</u> .

There may be restrictions on the number of intended learning outcomes included in any given course.

These may be limitations placed by the quality assurance agency or the validation panel itself. More likely it is purely the result of institutional convention. In the past there may have been instances of very poorly structured outcomes that were simply not assessable. Given that they would have been very difficult to assess, panels often try and limit the actual number, knowing from experience they are likely to be fighting against the language in either the outcome or the assessment, possibly both. I do not believe that a strict limit should be imposed. Providing that outcomes have been written intelligently, to cover the full range of skills and abilities reflected in the five domains it is possible to assess multiple outcomes within a single assessment.

Because outcomes have been unstructured in the past, the convention has developed to assess outcomes individually, and so if you only have three assessment points in your course, you would only need three outcomes. However, most course designers recognise that having outcomes that reflect the skills are required, and this leads to people writing poorly structured outcomes that either use compound verbs or multiple verbs within them. If you look at the outcomes above, all of these are included in a single 20 credit postgraduate course, (20 credits equivalent to 200 hours of national student learning).

Assessing on Multiple Verbs

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On successful completion of this course you will be able to:

C1: **Contrast** the learner experience in different modes of learning

A2: **Debate** the appropriateness of a given model of delivery within your own context

M1: **Review** the contemporary debate in professional education regarding online, distance and self-directed learning.

P2: **Organise** relevant scholarship of learning and teaching and incorporate them appropriately into your written reflections.

I1: **Canvas** the opinions of potential students for your intended courseware design

The Draft Assessment Task

Engage in the contemporary debates around ODFL and advocate, using relevant scholarship, to support a position. (Assess **half** the ILOs on this course)

The Question

Prepare two short briefing papers for your head of department, each approximately 1000 words in length (not including references), outlining the advantages and disadvantages for learners in engaging with professional studies in your discipline in a) face-to-face modes of learning and b) 100% online distance learning mode. Discuss your thoughts with others and cite them amongst your sources.

By grouping these outcomes intelligently, it is possible to assess several of them through a single assessment. This is a somewhat extreme example where 10 outcomes are being assessed through two assignments. But I think it provides a useful illustration. Look at the outcomes above and you will see that they cover complimentary skills within the draft task. The draft task has been drafted to provide a framework for future assessment questions and allow for the outcomes to be amended when necessary. This is where the process of constructive alignment is important, balancing outcomes and assessment in draft. The draft assessment task seeks to enable the student to provide an insight into the relationship between models of learning in their own context, but with reference to a broader range of learning experiences.

The question above is open enough for students to be able to address all of those five outcomes with a degree of balance. In this instance none of these individual outcomes is worth more than any other. There are other courses on the assessment design process, and we will explore the broader impact of outcomes, coherence tables, and assessment design.

Well-structured Outcomes means flexible assessment

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The Draft Assessment Task
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The Question

Develop two learner personas. Write a 2000 word evaluation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each learners context, suggesting (with supporting evidence) what barriers to engagement each learner might encounter, depending on their mode of learning, and suggestions as to how these barriers could be overcome.

Well-structured outcomes and a thoughtful assessment task will allow you to generate multiple assessment types that still provide the learner with the opportunity to provide evidence that they can meet the outcomes. In this example the outcomes have remained the same, the draft assessment task has been validated, and a new question, or task has been written. Given that there is no specific outcome that suggests that there needs to be an ability to write in a particular style, report or essay, you have the flexibility to rewrite different versions of the questions providing they are open enough for all of these outcomes to be assessed. I acknowledge that this is a postgraduate course, but writing an assessment rubric, and marking guidelines would support this approach at any level and in any discipline.