

Learning Goals and Outcomes

The most important concept in bringing quality to any curriculum or course is the fundamental relationship that must exist between goals, outcomes, and assessment. The closer this relationship is, the more effective the learning and teaching experience will be. Unfortunately, too often there is a significant disconnect among the three. . . . It is essential that our learning outcomes describe in detail what we mean by our goals . . .

Robert Diamond, *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula*, p. 148

So, goals should drive how students are evaluated. Collectively the goals and objectives for a course, along with the means of evaluation to be used, should drive what happens in a course.

- Course design does not proceed in the same order as course execution.
 - The final exam follows the course, but since the course has to prepare students for the final exam, the instructor has to know what, and how, students will be evaluated before deciding what to cover in the course, and how to cover it.
 - The content of the evaluation determines the content of the course.
 - The modality of the evaluation determines what students will be asked to do during the course.
 - Instructional method should match the objectives for student learning.

Terminology

- Outcomes = Objectives
- Terminology is not consistent; different authors use different words for each of these concepts.
- Bethel's standard syllabus uses "objectives." (section V for goals and VIII for objectives)

Goals v. Outcomes

- Goals are more general, objectives more narrow.
 - Each objective should be tied to to a particular goal.
 - Multiple objectives can, and often will, be tied to a particular goal.
- Goals can be thought of as categories: they sometimes are specified just by noun phrases.
- Objectives identify what a student must be able to do.
 - Satisfying the objectives demonstrates that the goal has been met.
 - Objectives provide performance criteria.

Learning v. Teaching v. Program Goals

- Learning goals are goals for the student. Teaching goals are goals for the faculty. Program goals are goals for the program.
- The purpose of teaching is to facilitate learning. Teaching is not an end in its own right.
 - Teaching goals should be subordinate to, and justified by their success in facilitating, learning goals. Similarly for program goals.
- Having teaching goals is not sufficient: this doesn't help determine what students should learn.