



Learning Outcomes, Bloom's Taxonomy, and Transparency

It is best practice in higher education to organize your courses beginning with what you want the students to learn, the **learning outcomes**, then tailoring the content and activities to provide the students with the opportunity to achieve those outcomes. Assessments in a course should evaluate the students' actual levels of achievement of these goals, and their grades should similarly reflect their overall proficiency at the specified learning goals. This is what gives college degrees value in the job market—they indicate that the holder of the degree has certain proficiencies.

In the abstract, this all seems reasonable and easy to accomplish. But in practice, this type of alignment is difficult to achieve because of the cultural and academic baggage, biases, and assumptions that both faculty and students bring to their interactions. These two groups may occupy the same planet, but they live in different worlds. So, the single most important responsibility that faculty has is making all aspects of their courses, rules, expectations, assignments, and grading transparent to their students.

Following these tips will help:

1. Never assume that students understand words you have not defined. This is especially true for the action words we use from Bloom's taxonomy to specify learning goals, and the words we use to describe tasks.
2. Describe your rationale for all content and assignments in your course.