



Explicitly Share Course Outcomes and Learning Objectives With Students

Showing students that the content and skills they are learning in your course are valuable now, in subsequent courses, and in the future helps to engage and motivate them.

Share Course Outcomes and Learning Objectives

Ken Bain (2004) shares that dedicating time during the first day of a course to discuss outcomes is time well spent because it allows you to show your students how the concepts and skills they will learn are connected to their interests and future. When students are aware of what they will learn and understand how that learning is related to their goals and interests, they are more likely to be engaged.

A possible first day or week activity is to ask students to reflect on the course outcomes and either discuss in small groups in a face-to-face course or post in a discussion forum the outcome they are most interested in learning more about and why.

It is also helpful to share the learning objectives for each week, module, or unit with students so again, they have clarity regarding what it is they are to learn. It is also helpful to show them how those learning objectives connect to the broader course outcomes.

You may even share the learning objectives that each assignment is intended to help students practice or master. Making learning outcomes and objectives transparent to students is motivating, creates more equity, and contributes to their overall academic success.

Use Student-Friendly Language

Some students may not know the purpose of course outcomes or learning objectives. Therefore, it may be helpful to dedicate some time in the beginning of the course to explain the purpose of outcomes and objectives.

When discussing outcomes and objectives, you may also take steps to define academic language that may be confusing for students. For instance, if the course outcome is "Apply the scientific method," you may explain to students that to meet the outcome, they will demonstrate that they can use the scientific method and that the scientific method is a specific thinking process used in science to ensure that all scientific findings are based on observation, measurement, and experimentation.

Tie Learning Objectives Back to Course Outcomes

Explicitly sharing how the learning objectives are met through specific assignments or assessments and then showing how those build to demonstrate mastery of course outcomes helps students have a clear understanding of the work they need to do to master course outcomes and achieve a good course grade. Understanding these connections helps motivate and engage students in successfully completing coursework, therefore it is best to revisit the learning objectives and outcomes throughout the course rather than only discussing learning objectives and outcomes on the first day or week of a course.

Sources

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press.