

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

#Texas Tuning Event

Nancy Quam-Wickham, Ph.D.
Washington State University and
Long Beach State University



Tuning's Essential Question

1. What should your students know and be able to do upon completion of a course, certificate, minor, degree?

Tuning's 2nd (& 3rd) Essential Question(s)

2. How do we, as instructors, help our students meet our expectations?
3. And how do we know when they have met our expectations?

Assessmen

t:

What it is and why we do it.

Assessment of Student Learning is

- ▶ A systematic way to evaluate student achievement, with the goal of
- ▶ Improving student learning. And...

Assessment of Student Learning is

- ▶ A systematic way to evaluate student achievement, with the goal of
- ▶ Improving student learning. And...
- ▶ A way to strengthen course & curriculum, by...
- ▶ Providing a space & opportunities for faculty professional development.

Assessment of Student Learning

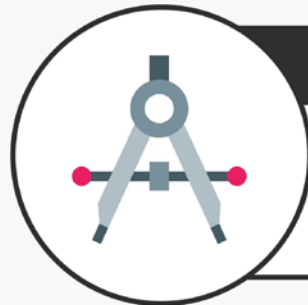
QUICK TIPS

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES



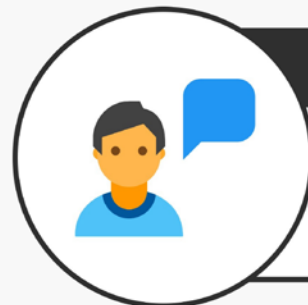
Central Idea

- A good set of learning outcomes provide answers to this question:
What do you want your students to know and be able to do when they graduate?



Be Precise

- Active verbs convey precise expectations
- Clarify unclear statements: *What tasks must students do to "demonstrate an ability"?*
- Precision makes assessment easier by improving measurability



Tools for students

- Clear and precise learning outcomes give students the language they need to explain to others (employers, parents, graduate schools) what they know and can do

We can help! Contact the Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning: <https://atl.wsu.edu/>

Assessment of Student Learning starts with a clearly and precisely stated set of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Precision in an SLO facilitates measurability.

The SLOs should also provide the language that students need to explain what they know and can do.



Assessment: Best Practices for Improving Student Learning in the Classroom

Understanding Types of Assessments of Student Learning

Formative Assessments

- ▶ Suskie: *“Assessments of Learning Process”*
- ▶ Assessments of student learning “midstream” -- while student learning is taking place

Summative Assessments

- ▶ *Assessments of Learning Outcomes*
- ▶ Assessments of student performance aligned with SLOs, usually at end of course or program

Frequent use of *formative assessments* improve performance

- ▶ Provide students with multiple opportunities to practice essential skills and demonstrate knowledge
- ▶ Low-stakes assignments: “CATs” & ungraded work¹
- ▶ Peer- & self-evaluations: “Taking the pulse”
- ▶ Content: Encourage use of technology to reinforce content knowledge (e-flash cards, annotation tools, e-learning tools, online quizzes)
- ▶ *IDEA: Practice with Frequent Feedback*

¹Angelo and Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (Jossey Bass)

Summative Assessments (end of course)

- ▶ Active learning: *Inquiry-driven* assignments (with a social component) have been shown to improve learning
- ▶ Performance tasks: “Real-life” applications of skills and knowledge
- ▶ Clear & Transparent assignments: TILT at UNLV -- Easy modifications to assignments (interventions) to improve achievement
- ▶ Be clear about expectations: Research has shown that providing annotated examples of superior work helps all students perform better
- ▶ Be consistent in grading (rubrics)

Do's and Don'ts of Creating Rubrics: Understand that Grading & Scoring are **Not** the Same

DO:

- ▶ Map your SLOs onto your rubric
- ▶ Use precise verbs for actions¹
- ▶ Distinguish different levels of achievement
- ▶ Use developmental rubrics for lower-level classes
- ▶ Employ clear language that students understand
- ▶ Build on the work of others: AAC&U, NILOA

DON'T:

- ▶ Concatenate SLOs into one category
- ▶ Use imprecise verbs to describe an action, i.e. "*demonstrate an ability*"
- ▶ Use adjectives to distinguish levels of performance
- ▶ Use deficit models (i.e., "lacks," "fails") in lower-level classes
- ▶ Use tiny font, colons, semi-colons
- ▶ Ignore best practices in higher education

Metacognitive* Activities: Reinforce & Improve Classroom Learning, by incorporating the following:

- ▶ Self-assessments of learning styles
- ▶ Reflection papers
- ▶ Creating calendars for or logging research activities
- ▶ Journaling about the learning process
- ▶ Revising papers in response to self- and peer-evaluations
- ▶ SLO-aligned self-assessments or demonstrations of achievement

Metacognition: Learning how to learn and managing your own learning based on your understanding of how you learn.

Assessment to improve student learning: Faculty Development

- ▶ Participate in professional development workshops, go to conferences
- ▶ **Assignment Design charrettes** -- assignments are where “rubber hits the road” in assessment
- ▶ Read SoTL & pedagogical journals & newsletters
- ▶ Write for SoTL audiences & assessment professionals (newsletters, journals)

Some Resources...

The American Historical Association's *Tuning Project*

AHA \ Teaching & Learning \ Tuning the History Discipline

In This Section

- Why Study History?
- Teaching Resources for Historians
- Globalizing the US History Survey
- [Tuning the History Discipline](#)

Tuning the History Discipline in the United States

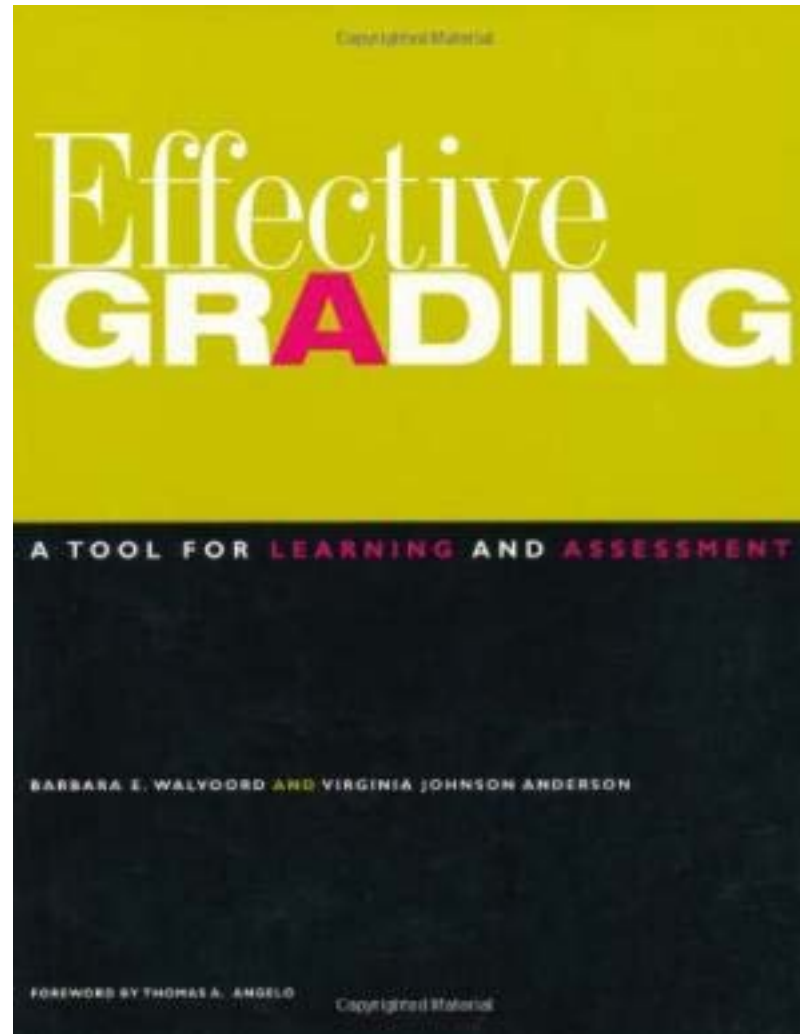
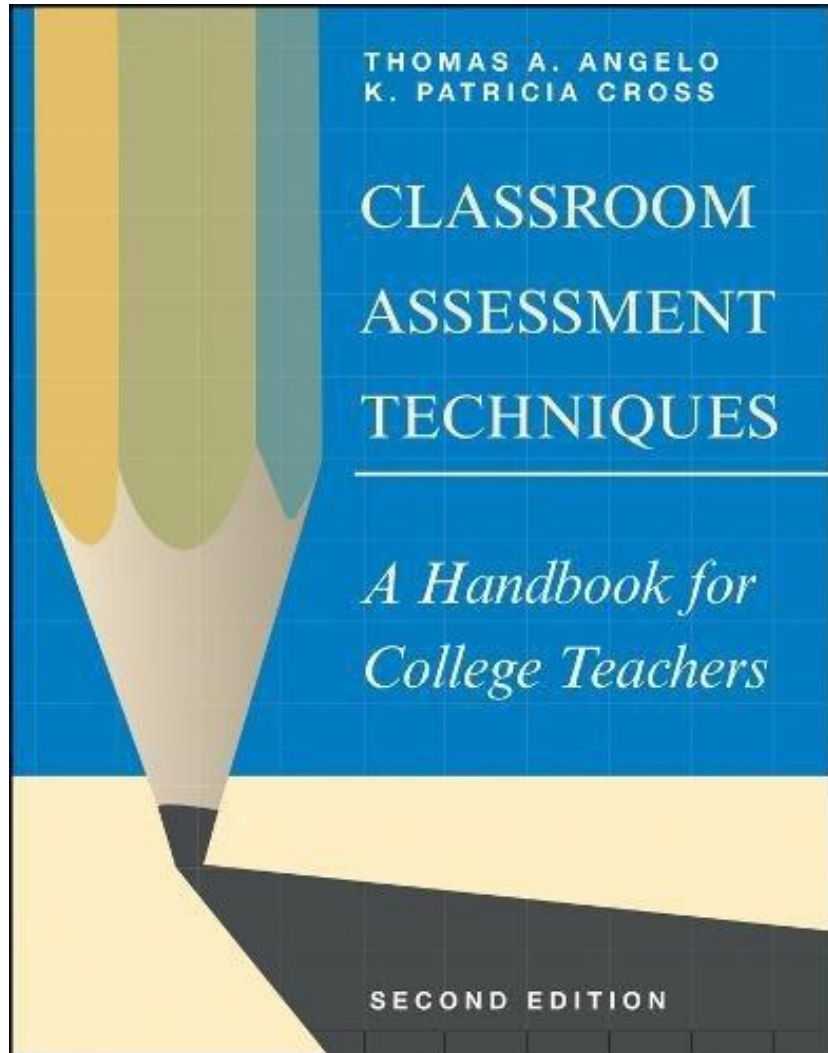
The American Historical Association is coordinating a nationwide, faculty-led project to articulate the disciplinary core of historical study and to define what a student should understand and be able to do at the completion of a history degree program.

The updated map below shows institutions where faculty historians have been involved in the project. The blue locations were part of the first wave of AHA participants, beginning in 2012. The red locations joined the project in January 2015, as part of the second phase of implementation.

This project has brought together accomplished history faculty historians from a range of 2- and

<https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-discipline>

Some More Resources:

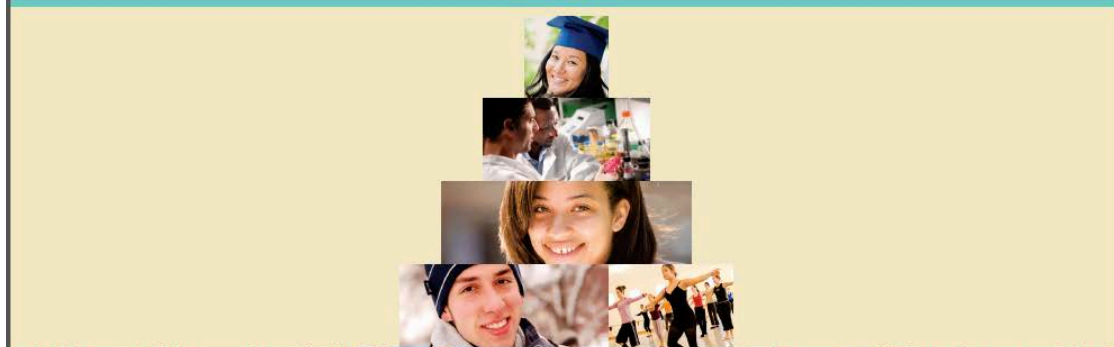


National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

February 2015

To Imagine a Verb: The Language and Syntax of Learning Outcomes Statements

Clifford Adelman



knowledge accountability connection self-reflection
intellect curiosity challenge create achievement
access ingenuity intellect curiosity challenge
ingenuity self-reflection educate action understand
curiosity challenge create achievement connection
connection self-reflection educate action
educate innovation success ingenuity inter
understand communicate curiosity challenge
action understand communicate listen learn
challenge knowledge accountability
ingenuity self-reflection educate action
accountability connection self-reflection
challenge connection knowledge acc
access ingenuity challenge create achievement
listen learn access quality action create achievement connection self-reflection educate action understand communicate listen learn access quality
knowledge accountability communicate listen learn achievement connection self-reflection educate action understand communicate listen learn acc
innovation success ingenuity intellect access quality innovation success self-reflection curiosity challenge create achievement connection self-reflec
understand educate action understand communicate listen learn action understand communicate listen learn access quality innovation success inge
curiosity challenge create achievement connection self-reflection understand communicate listen learn access quality action create achievement co
self-reflection educate action understand communicate listen learn access quality innovation success educate action communicate listen learn acc

The logo features the word "TILT" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a red rectangular box with a slight 3D effect. To the right of this box, the words "Higher Ed" are written in a large, black, sans-serif font.

TILT Higher Ed

Transparency in Learning and Teaching

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

Copyrighted Material

ASSESSMENT CLEAR **AND** SIMPLE

A Practical Guide for
Institutions, Departments,
and General Education

BARBARA E. WALVOORD

For more information, contact
nancy.quam-wickham@wsu.edu