First Steps: Articulating Learning Goals in Courses

February 2, 2010
Agenda

- Overview of Assessment and Introductions by the Provost (12:00 – 12:15)
- Course Outcomes Overview (12:15 – 12:30)
- Small Groups: Draft Course Outcomes (12:30 – 1:10)
- Results and Challenges (1:10 – 1:25)
- Next Steps (1:25 – 1:30)

http://www.brandeis.edu/assessment
At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Draft learning outcomes for a course.
- Find additional resources to support their development of learning outcomes for a course and a major.
Your Courses Have Outcomes

- All courses have outcomes and objectives... they just may not be written down!
- Make explicit what has been implicit.
Defining Terms

- **Learning Outcomes (Behavioral)**
  - Reflect skills that can be demonstrated

- **Learning Objectives (Cognitive)**
  - Reflect understanding/knowledge to be gained
Learning Objectives

“This course will provide students with an understanding of...”

Knowledge and Comprehension

Terms
- Learn how to
- Know
- Understand

Learning Outcomes

“At the end of the course, students will be able to...”

Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

Terms
- Hypothesize
- Differentiate
- Analyze
- Evaluate

Additional terms found in your packet
Sample Brandeis Course Outcomes

- War in European History (HIST 145a)
  - Recognize the social determinants of military organization, the links between armed conflict and state formation, and the cultural dimensions of war.
  - Analyze military conflicts not only in terms of outcomes but in terms of the mentalities of those waging them.
  - Criticize primary texts narrating distant military events and treat them not only as sources but as objects of study in themselves.

http://www.brandeis.edu/assessment/docs/HIST_145a_syllabus_spring2010.pdf
Sample Brandeis Course Outcomes

- Beginning Russian (RUSS 20b) – a subset
  - Write and converse in Russian at the intermediate level as defined by the ACTFL guidelines.
  - Analyze complex texts through critical close reading and respond to them in literate English.
  - Apply basic critical methodologies to the study of Russian literature, history, and culture.
  - Engage in research in the field using primary and secondary sources.

http://www.brandeis.edu/assessment/docs/Russian_Studies_outcomes_110409.pdf
Sample Course Outcomes

- **Applied Microeconomics: Consumers, Producers, and Markets**
  - Identify, define, and solve microeconomic problems including those related to markets, pricing, investment, the effects of government regulations, and market failures.
  - Locate and critically evaluate information related to consumer and producer decisions.
Sample Course Outcomes

- Literature of the World: Crossing Borders, Coming-of-Age
  - Build capacity for literacy analysis, exploring ways the authors have used language and writing strategies to evoke response.
  - Write reflectively on the roles of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression, exploring the relationship between author and reader.
Thinking About Outcomes

- Is the course a core or an elective?
- Does the course fulfill any University or Department requirements?
- What texts, articles, and supplementary materials did you select for the course? Why?
- What vocabulary is commonly used in your field? Consider:
  - Topics of study
  - Verbs used to describe focus areas
Thinking About Outcomes

□ What assignments do you include in your course?
   ▪ These indicate what you’re hoping students will be able to learn and do upon course completion.

   Compare/contrast the two approaches …
   Evaluate the results of …
   Critique the methods applied in …
   Illustrate in your solution the principles of …

Additional examples found in your packet
After thinking about your course, its texts and readings, its terminology, and its assignments, ask:

- What do you want students to understand? (objective)
- Why do you want students to have this understanding? In other words, what do you want them to do with this knowledge? (outcome)

If you asked students on the last day of your course what they can now do, what would they say?
Work in pairs with another in your field or a related field.
Draft 1 to 3 course outcomes for each course.
If time, consider objectives as well.
Re-group at 1:10PM.
Results and Challenges

What went well?

What challenges did you face?

What questions or concerns remain?
Sharing Your Outcomes
Challenges

...
Questions

☐ ...
Next Steps

Checklist available in your packet.
Defining course outcomes is the first step.

The Outcomes/Assessments Model

- Outcomes
  - Assignments
    - Feedback/Analysis
      - Cognitive (e.g., exams)
      - Behavioral (e.g., papers, projects)
    - Self-Assessment
      - Course Assessment
        - include
          - update
            - provide
              - revise
                - determine
                  - include
                    - Outcomes
Next Steps

- Refine course outcomes and Add to the syllabus
  - Analyze against assessments
  - Analyze against student work

- Develop Major/Program outcomes
  - Review against University Learning Goals
  - Review against major sheet and objectives for the major in the Bulletin
  - Review against relevant professional association guidelines

Additional details found in your packet
Resources

- [http://www.brandeis.edu/assessment/](http://www.brandeis.edu/assessment/)
  - University Learning Goals
  - Workshop Materials
  - Internal Resources
    - Sample Syllabi with Learning Goals
    - Sample Learning Goals in Majors
    - Guidelines for Creating Learning Goals in Majors
  - External Resources
    - Examples from other institutions
Sample Outcomes of a Major

- Anthropology majors from Brandeis will be well prepared to:
  - Conduct scholarly, professional, and original research using a variety of published sources as well as core anthropological research methodologies, including interviews, participant observation, excavation and laboratory analysis
  - Evaluate information critically, with particular attention to examining taken-for-granted assumptions using the lens of culture
  - Express clearly facts, ideas, opinions and beliefs in a variety of written and oral formats, such as traditional, web-based, visual and other media

Sample Objectives of a Major

- Brandeis students completing the major in anthropology will come away with a strong understanding of:
  - The diversity of human cultures and the interdependence of people around the world
  - The inequality in relations of power within and among the world’s societies and nations in the past and present
  - What it means to be a human being: who we are, how we came to be that way, and where we may go in the future
  - The major questions, concepts, theories, ethical issues and methodologies of anthropology as a professional discipline

Sample Outcomes of a Major

- Students acquiring the undergraduate degree in English are expected to acquire the ability and skills to:
  - Analyze literary texts
  - Interpret texts on the basis of such analysis
  - Relate analyses and interpretations of different texts to one another
  - Communicate such interpretations competently in written form

English, B.A., University of Colorado at Boulder; http://www.colorado.edu/catalog/catalog09-10/arts_sciences/english.html
Sample Objectives of a Major

- The undergraduate degree in English emphasizes knowledge and awareness of:
  - Canonical and non-canonical works of English and American literature
  - The general outlines of the history of British and American literature
  - Literary theories, including recent theoretical developments
  - The social and historical contexts in which the traditions developed

English, B.A., University of Colorado at Boulder; http://www.colorado.edu/catalog/catalog09-10/arts_sciences/english.html