

# **Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria**

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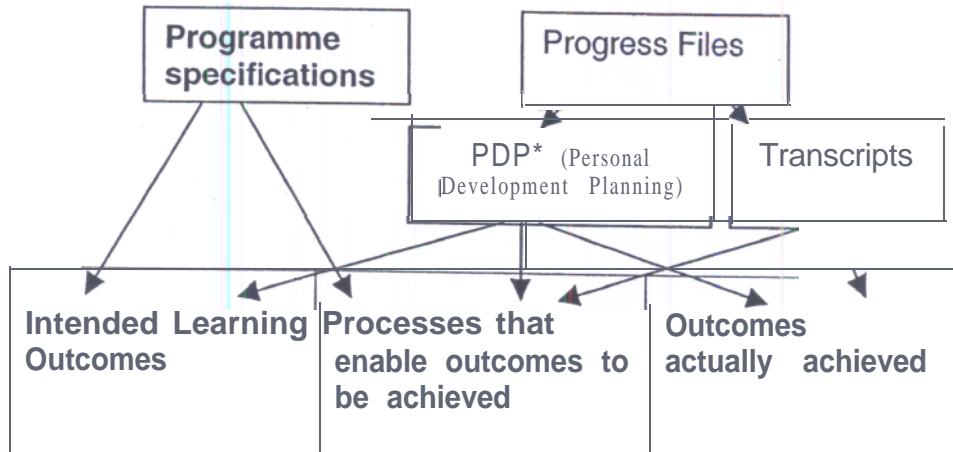
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# Learning outcomes for the day.....

Group members will be able to.....

- ✍ discuss the benefits and issues around developing/using learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- ✍ identify good practice in writing and using learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- ✍ write appropriate learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- ✍ consider any implications for their own practice

# QAA model



# What are we trying to deal with?

✂✂ **Coherence**  
(in design and student experience)

✂✂ **Level**  
(of academic study)

✂✂ **Standards**  
(student expected to meet )

We need to be:

✂✂ **Educationally 'sound'**

✂✂ **Explicit**

✂✂ **Accountable**

**plus a whole raft of other areas . . . . .eg**

✂✂ **efficient and effective**

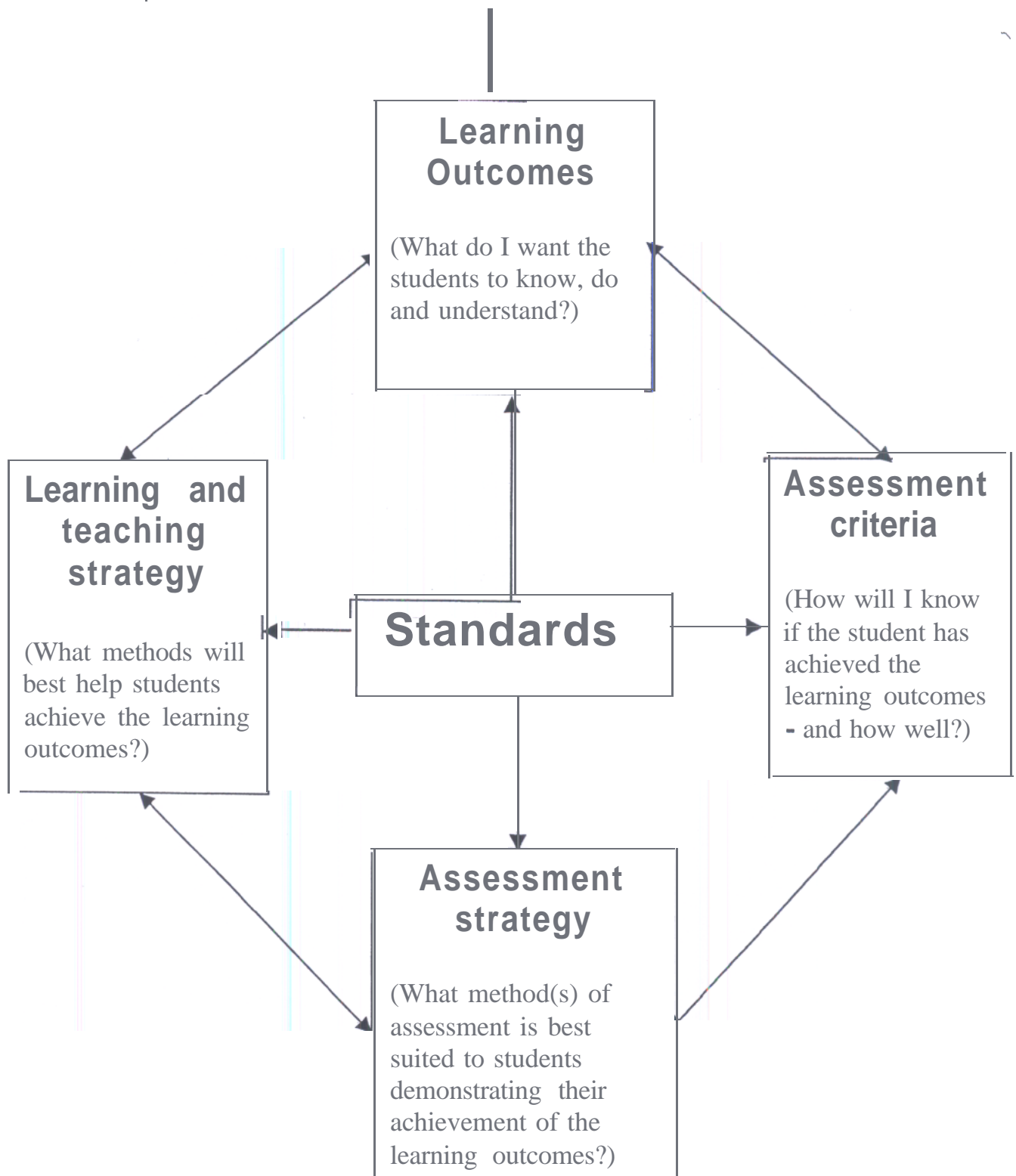
✂✂ **feedback for learning**

✂✂ **autonomous learners**

✂✂ **employability**

# Module planning

## Programme Specification



Level 4 Module title:	Learning Outcomes	Assessment Strategy (balance of cw/exam, and methods)	Learning and Teaching Strategy

Not a validation requirement, but used by subject teams working together to:

- discuss and share their ideas and thinking,
- identify gaps
- identify overlaps
- identify over-assessment
- negotiate changes

## A helpful way of writing Learning Outcomes.....

Active verb/phrase	Object	Context/condition
<i>explain and evaluate</i>	<i>the relationship</i>	<i>between the company directors and shareholders</i>
<i>describe and illustrate</i>	<i>the principles</i>	<i>of behaviourist psychology</i>

## Tips for writing learning outcomes

- Keep to a manageable number - most modules have between 5 and 9
- You may not get them right first time – you may need to re-visit them as you develop teaching, learning, and assessment/feedback strategies.
- Each outcome should be written at a pass level - not what you would expect from the highest achiever
- Make sure they are expressed at the appropriate level (see SHU LOs).
- Look at the balance between intended subject, personal and professional learning outcomes. Does this reflect what your module is about?
- Make sure your learning outcomes relate to overall programme outcomes.
- Can they be assessed?
- Are all your learning outcomes of equal importance? Determine what are **essential, useful** and **optional**. **How will your students know?**
- As you are developing learning outcomes, think about how you would know if a learner had achieved them ie the possible assessment method and criteria.
- Could your typical learner achieve the outcomes within the timescale?
- You could ask your previous learners what outcomes they identify/value.
- Ask colleagues if they understand what your learning outcomes are about
- Consider the relevant context – ie where your module fits into what learners have done before and what they will progress to

### Try to avoid:

- evaluative words eg “good” and “adequate” - they are assessment criteria
- ambiguous verbs such as “understand”, “know”, “be aware” and “appreciate”. *What level of ‘understanding’ do you mean?*
- educational jargon - students and others will need to use them
- references to the process by which the learning takes place eg “*undertake a project*” *suggests it is actually the ability to plan and implement a project which you want the student to learn.*
- long lists of separate outcomes which are variations of the same outcome.
- learning outcomes which are not easily assessed
- referring to specific information in learning outcomes eg *particular theories and techniques*. These are included as content.
- learning outcomes which are too broad (they will be unassessable) or too narrow (leads to over-detailed and cumbersome lists).

## A drive to develop:

- **holistic and coherent** learning experience
- **standards and expectations**
- **reliability, validity and consistency** of the assessment process
- **accountability and transparency**
- **efficiency and effectiveness**, for students and tutors
- **feedback** to improve and develop student learning
- **student skills - to foster autonomous learners**



# Assessment criteria

## Students' assessed work may be:

- ✍ **Norm-referenced** – judges student work on the basis of their performance in relation to each other.
  
- ✍ **Criterion-referenced** – judges student work on the basis of their performance in relation to clearly stated criteria.
  
- ✍ **Ipsative** – judges student in relation to his or her own previous performance.

## Main questions about criteria:

- Do they enable students to know what they need to do to achieve the learning outcomes?
- How will students (and others) know what they need to do to achieve a particular grade or mark?

# KEY FEATURES OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

## Assessment criteria should:

- ☞ relate closely to the unit Learning Outcomes, describing those aspects of the Learning Outcome which will be assessed
- ☞ indicate what is required at a pass level, in a positive way
- ☞ help students know what they need to do
- ☞ help students understand what you expect at differing levels of achievement
- ☞ be understandable to all stakeholders
- ☞ be manageable in number
- ☞ be distinct from each other
- ☞ be seen as an indication of achievement rather than an exact measurement.

**It should be clear to tutors, students and other stakeholders, how and why marks/grades have been awarded, and that they have been awarded fairly.**

**Open, fair and justifiable**

## Some issues raised by students include:

- ✍ mixed messages about what to do
- ✍ the need to second guess what's in the tutor's mind
- ✍ 'fairness'
- ✍ marks and feedback not relating to each other
- ✍ not knowing which aspects of their work were good and which weren't (eg a mark of **60%**, *but which 60% was good and which 40% was weak*)?
- ✍ not knowing what to do to improve

When developing criteria, you might find it helpful to think of them in terms of a flow chart, linking one stage to the next:

Start here: 1. Learning Outcome	Assessment criteria		
	2. Assessment Criterion	3. Pass/threshold Descriptor	4. Differentiated descriptors
a statement of what a student should know, do or understand	1 statement of which aspects of student work will be judged, in relation to the Learning Outcomes	1 statement of the typical pass requirement, in relation to the Learning Outcomes	1 description of what the student must do to achieve a particular grade/mark against the assessment criterion
By the end of the unit, a student should be able to.....	Student work will be judged on .....	For a typical pass the student will.....	In order to achieve a particular mark/grade (eg degree classification) the student's work will.. . . .
<b>The critical question is:</b> Where do you want the student to get to?	<b>The critical question is:</b> On what basis will you judge whether they've got there?	<b>The critical question is:</b> What must they do to get there, ie to meet the criterion?	<b>The critical question is:</b> How will you know how well they have got there?
<b>For example</b> By the end of the unit, a student should be able to....  locate and select from information sources (Level 1)	Student work will be judged on.....  <i>the range of information sources and the relevance of material selected for their needs</i>	For a typical pass, the student will . . . .  <i>locate the main sources of information and select those most relevant to their own needs.</i>	In order to achieve a <b>1, 2.1, 2.2, 3rd</b> student's work will . . .  <i>1st • locate a wide range of sources, identifying appropriateness of sources for own needs. Select and justify, making explicit, their choices,</i>  <i>2.2 • locate a wide range of sources and select those most relevant, in relation to own need. Justify, making explicit, their choices</i>  <i>2.2 • locate a range of sources and select those most relevant, clearly identifying own needs</i>  <i>3rd • locate main sources and select those most relevant to own needs</i>  <i>below 40% • limited sources located. Inappropriate or inaccurate selection</i>

## Areas to consider

- ✎ How many criteria will you have?
- ✎ How many grades of achievement will you have?
- ✎ How will you relate them to the Learning Outcomes?
- ✎ How will you avoid telling the student what to do?
- ✎ How will you avoid writing criteria which could restrict or restrain students?
- ✎ Weighting criteria
- ✎ How will you ensure a holistic approach?
- ✎ Exam criteria?

## Tips for developing grids:

- ⌘ **It takes time** – to articulate your thoughts, to select appropriate and meaningful language, to clarify the progression from one grade to another, and to check out understanding with others. Never the less, it is a valuable and important exercise.
- ⌘ It helps to **start by developing the criteria for the 40% column** - what is the minimum standard required to pass? Once this is articulated, you can build up and down the columns. Some staff find it easier to next articulate the 70%+ level.
- ⌘ **Phrase the 40%/pass descriptor in positive terms.** Words such as 'inadequate', 'limited', 'inaccurate' generally describe failing work.
- ⌘ Tutors have found it useful to create grids with a colleague(s) – discussion helps articulation of difficult ideas.
- ⌘ **As you move up the grades, avoid introducing new criteria into the descriptors.** The main aspects of the criterion should follow up the levels, with an increasing demand in that particular aspect
- ⌘ The following are some examples of ways you could move up the levels:
  - ⌘ Increasing the degree of **autonomy** required –  
*eg the level of independence or decision-making needed, initiative*
  - ⌘ Broadening the **situation/context** in which the student applies the learning  
*eg a pass might be unit-specific, higher grades might draw on wider experiences/sources*
  - ⌘ Increasing the range/number of **elements you** expect the student to use  
*eg using a wider range of presentation techniques, combining more problem solving techniques, using a combination of skill elements*