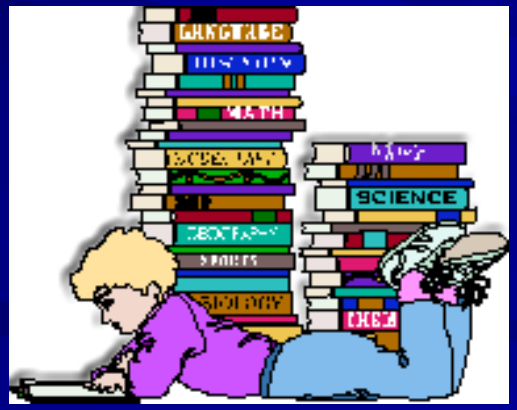
Learning Outcomes – the International Language for describing programmes in Higher Education Institutions



Presentation 1

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Voronezh State University, Russia.

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NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Lifford
NORTHERN IRELAND
Bangor
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Sligo
Castlebar
IRISH SEA
IRELAND
Galway
Dublin
Aran Islands
Limerick
Waterford
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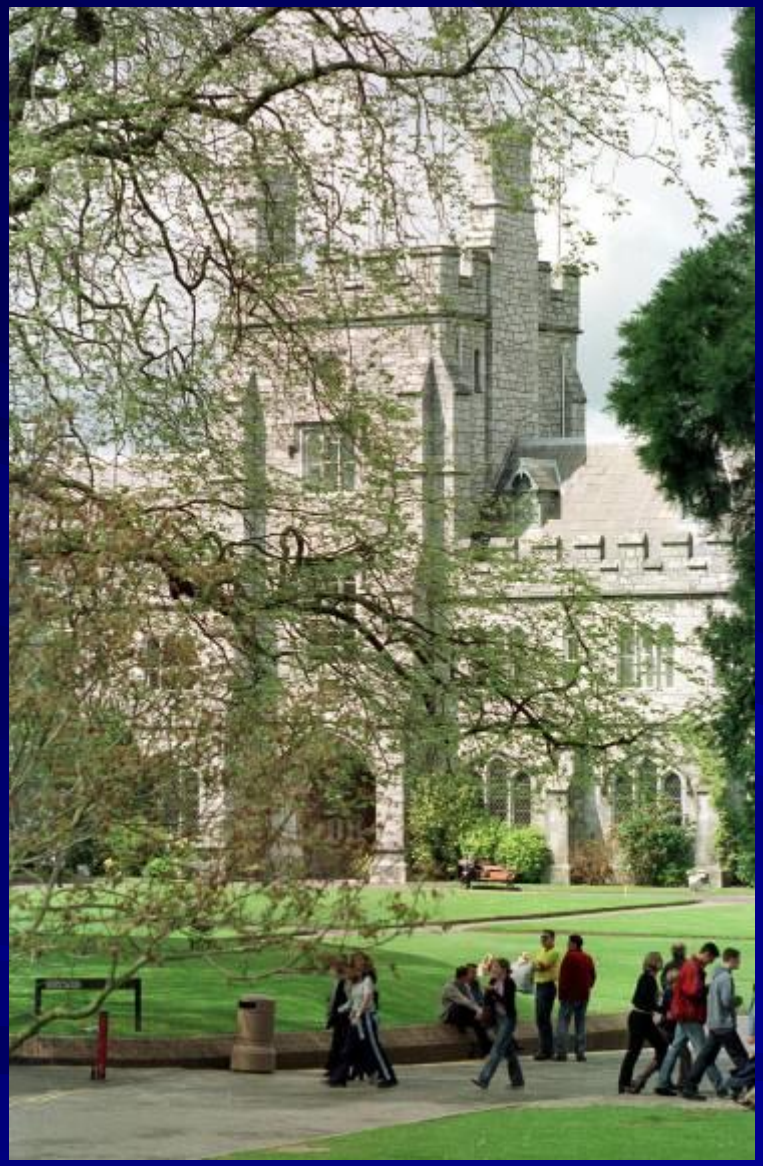
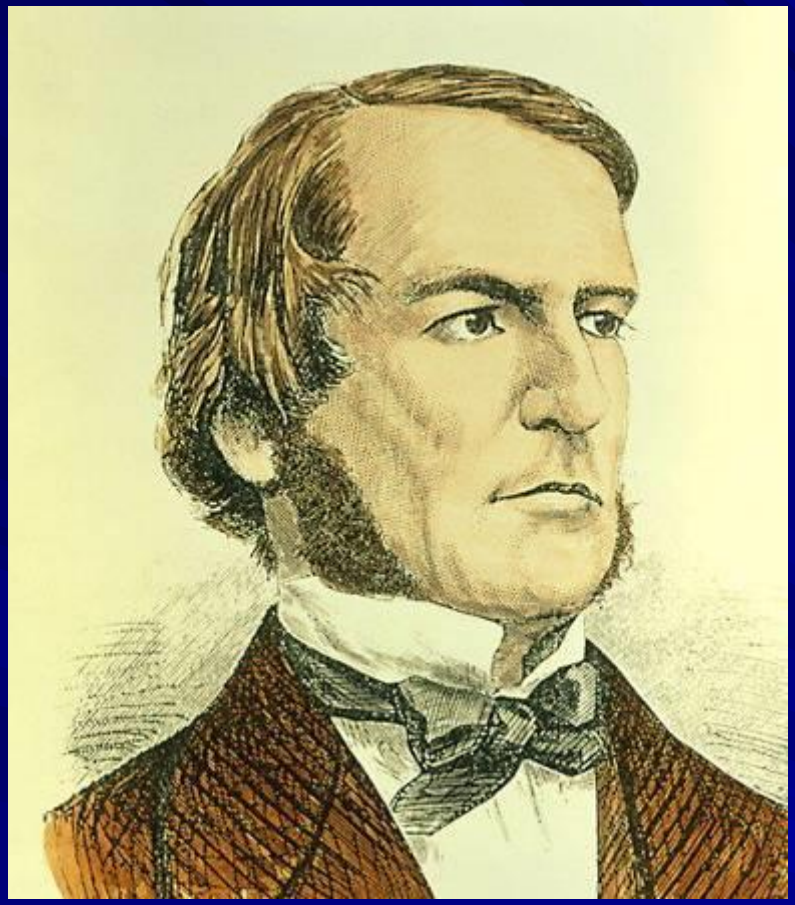
Cork
CELTIC SEA

COBH

Cobh


FOTA
WILDLIFE PARK
Open your eyes
County CORK





George Boole (1815 - 1864)
First Professor of Mathematics in UCC

Ethel Voynich (1864 – 1960)
Daughter of George Boole
Author of Novel *The Gadfly*

1. What are Learning Outcomes all about?
2. Why have Learning Outcomes adopted such an important place in Higher Education throughout the world?
3. How are ECTS and Learning Outcomes related?
4. What are the implications of Learning Outcomes for Quality Assurance, Teaching and Learning Activities and Assessment in Higher Education?

What are learning outcomes?

- Learning Outcomes are specific statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of learning (Morss and Murray, 2005)
- Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that a student will be able to DO as a result of a learning activity….(Jenkins and Unwin).
- Learning outcomes are explicit statements of what we want our students to know, understand or to be able to do as a result of completing our courses. (Univ. New South Wales, Australia)
- "Learning outcomes are statements that specify what learners will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills or attitudes". (American Association of Law Libraries).
- Learning outcomes are an explicit description of what a learner should know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning. (Learning and Teaching Institute, Sheffield Hallam University)

Working Definition

Learning outcomes are statements of what a student should know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning

- The learning activity could be, for example, a lecture, a module (short course) or an entire programme.
- Learning outcomes must not simply be a “wish list” of what a student is capable of doing on completion of the learning activity.
- Learning outcomes must be simply and clearly described.
- Learning outcomes must be capable of being validly assessed.

Aims and Objectives

- The Aim of a module or programme is a broad general statement of teaching intention, i.e. it indicates what the teacher intends to cover in a programme, module or learning activity.
- Example of aim: To give students an introduction to organic chemistry.
- In some countries “Aim” is called a “goal”.
- The objective of a module or programme is a specific statement of teaching intention, i.e. it indicates one of the specific areas that the teacher intends to cover.
- “My aim is to lose weight. My objective is to lose one kg per week”. My aim is to travel to Australia. My first objective is to get as far as Hong Kong”.
- Objectives tend to be specific and measurable.

Aims and Objectives

- Examples of objectives:

1. Give students an appreciation of the unique nature of carbon and it ability to bond to other carbon atoms.
2. To give students an understanding of the concept of hybridisation.
3. To ensure that students know some characteristic properties of alkanes and alcohols.
4. To make students familiar with a range of families of organic compounds: alkanes, alcohols, carboxylic acids and esters.

- Aims are general and long term and refer to a series of lectures or unit of work (module).
- Objectives are more specific and short term.

The language of aims and objectives

- To give students an understanding of …..
- To give students an appreciation of…..
- To make students familiar with……
- To ensure that students know…….
- To enable students to experience …..
- To encourage students to …….
- To provide students with the opportunity to…….

etc.

Examples of Aims

- To give students an introduction to current theories and practice in the area of science education.
- To give students an understandign of what constitutes good science teaching.
- To give students an appreciation of the contribution that science education can make to the ovearll education of young people
- To help students develop the knowledge and professional skills teach science in the secondary school.
- To give students a critical understanding of current debates and issues relating to science education.
- To provide students with the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills to enable them to engage in highly effective science teaching in schools.
- To assist students to develop as reflective practitioners with an understanding of research methods in education and how these can inform practice in the classroom.

From the definition of Learning Outcome we see:

- Emphasis on the student.
- Emphasis on the student's ability to do something.

- Focus on teaching – aims and objectives and use of terms like *know, understand, be familiar with.*

- Outcomes: Focus on what we want the student to be able to do - use of terms like define, list, name, recall, analyse, calculate, design, etc.

• Aims: Give broad purpose or general intention of the module.
• Objectives: Information about what the teaching of the module hopes to achieve.
• Learning outcomes are not designed to replace the traditional way of describing teaching and learning but to supplement it.

Why are Learning Outcomes at the heart of the Bologna Process?

Focus on Learning Outcomes – Bologna

- Bologna Agreement signed in Bologna, I
countries. A total of 46 countries have n
agreement.
- The overall aim of the Bologna Agreeme
efficiency and effectiveness of higher edu
of academic standards of degrees and qu
- One of the main features of this process
traditional ways of describing qualificatio
structures.

Bologna, Italy (1999)

What countries have signed the Bologna Agreement?

European Union - all 27 countries
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
United Kingdom

Non-European Union
Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia
Georgia
Holy See
Iceland
Liechtenstein
Montenegro
Moldova
Norway
Macedonia
Russia
Serbia
Switzerland
Turkey
Ukraine

What is the Bologna Process all about?

- Setting up of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to ensure the increased international competitiveness of the European system of higher education.
- The Bologna Process is not based on a European Union initiative. The agreement is between both EU and non-EU countries.
- Setting up of system to make it easier to understand the description of qualifications and qualification structures.
- Every student graduating will receive a ***Diploma Supplement*** describing the qualification that the student has received. The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to improve transparency and facilitate recognition. A standard format will be used to help compare qualifications and make them easier to understand. The Diploma Supplement will also describe the content of the qualification and the structure of the higher education system in which it was issued.

The 10 Action Lines of Bologna Process

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system based on three cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in Higher education
7. Focus on Lifelong Learning
8. Inclusion of Higher Education Institutions and students
9. Promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area
10. Doctoral Studies and the links between the European Higher education Area and the European Research Area

Learning Outcome in Bologna Process

- ‘Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, **learning outcomes**, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.’

  Berlin Communique 2003

- ‘We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on **learning outcomes** and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles.’

  Bergen Communique 2005

- ‘We underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study. Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on **learning outcomes** and student workload.’
- ‘Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on **learning outcomes** and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.’
- ‘We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on **learning outcomes**.’
- ‘With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next [Stocktaking] exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, **learning outcomes** and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.’

London Communiqué 2007

“The Bologna reforms have changed the face of higher education across Europe, thanks to the involvement and dedication of higher education institutions, staff and students. Higher education structures in Europe are now more compatible and comparable. Quality assurance systems contribute to building trust, higher education qualifications are more recognisable across borders and participation in higher education has widened. Students today benefit from a wider variety of educational opportunities and are increasingly mobile. The vision of an integrated EHEA is within reach”.

Bucharest Communique
(2012)

How are Learning Outcomes related to ECTS?

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

- The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was initially set up in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the framework of the Erasmus programme.
- Its aim at that time was to facilitate the recognition of study periods undertaken abroad by mobile students through the transfer of credits.
- A credits system is a systematic way of describing an educational programme by allocating a certain value (credits) to each module of the programme to describe the student workload required to complete the module.
- A module is a self-contained fraction of a student's programme workload for the year with a unique examination and a clear set of learning outcomes and appropriate assessment criteria.
- Mobility to Accumulation. Bologna Process has developed the ECTS system from simply being a system for recognising study at foreign institutions into a Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. This takes ALL learning into account – not just study in other countries.
- Hence, ECTS now stands for “European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System”.

ECTS, Learning Outcomes and Modularisation

- "ECTS is a tool that helps to design, describe, and deliver programmes and award higher education qualifications. The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications. ….ECTS is one of the cornerstones of the Bologna Process."

ECTS Users' Guide p.7 (2009)

- “ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility”.
- ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes

ECTS Users’ Guide p.7 (2009)

- “Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.”
- “60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes.”
- I ECTS credit = 25 – 30 hours of work.

ECTS Users’ Guide p.11 (2009)

ECTS and LEARNING OUTCOMES

- “ECTS is a learner-centred system because it helps institutions to shift the emphasis in programme design and delivery from traditional teacher-centred approaches to approaches that accommodate for learners’ needs and expectations.”
- “In traditional teacher-centred approaches, subject requirements, knowledge and the teaching process itself were considered the main elements of educational programmes. Learner-centred learning puts learning at the heart of curriculum design and delivery…..”

ECTS Users’ Guide p.11 (2009)

The Bologna Process

- The Bologna Process is the process that began with the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- “The Bologna Process has brought about a quiet and irreversible revolution in the higher educational systems of Europe. To date 46 countries have chosen formally to be associated with it and it implement its protocols which are at one radical and innovative as well as spacious and enabling” – FIN Report (University Sector Framework Implementation Network, 2009)

“The aspirations and ideals of the Bologna Process are, of necessity, stated in general and high level terms but it is recognised that their achievement demands a grounding in practical reality and in enabling organisational and administrative structures and practices. The original protocols of the Bologna Process recognised the need for strong administrative instruments to give tangible meaning and shape to the ideals – the Diploma Supplement and ECTS were mentioned – and as the process developed the need for firm Qualification Frameworks, explicit Learning Outcomes and transparent Assessment procedures became apparent”

(FIN Framework Implementation Report, 2009)

Framework of Qualifications for European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – “Bologna Framework”

- Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Bergen, Norway (2005) adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in EHEA.
- This framework shows
  - Three cycles (including within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications)
  - Generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences.
  - ECTS credit ranges in the first and second cycles (i.e. Bachelors and Masters levels).
- Ministers committed themselves to drawing up National Frameworks for Qualifications compatible with Framework of Qualifications for European Higher Education area by 2010.

Bergen, Norway (2005)

Dublin Descriptors

- The Bologna Framework is a European higher education overarching framework with three cycles (Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral) and associated generic descriptors that help us to write learning outcomes.
- The Descriptors for each cycle were drawn up at meeting of Education Ministers in Dublin
- These generic cycle descriptors are used in The Framework of Qualifications for EHEA (Bologna Framework) and are commonly called the “Dublin Descriptors” adopted in 2005.
- Each country must develop its own National Framework of Qualifications which map on to the Bologna Framework, i.e. the Bologna framework is a type of translation or benchmark device.

First Cycle : Bachelor's Cycle

[180 – 240 ECTS credits]

	Outcomes	ECTS Credits
First cycle qualification	Qualifications that signify completion of **the first cycle** are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; • can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study; • have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues; • can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; • have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.	Typically include 180-240 ECTS credits

Minimum of 3 years = 180 credits

4 years = 240 credits.

Generic Descriptors - Not Learning Outcomes

Second Cycle: Master's cycle

[60 – 120 ECTS credits]

Second cycle qualification	Qualifications that signify completion of **the second cycle** are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; • can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; • have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments; • can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; • have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	Typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle

1 year
or
2 years

Third Cycle: Doctoral cycle

[Number of ECTS credits not specified]

Third cycle qualification	Qualifications that signify completion of **the third cycle** are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; • have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; • have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; • are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; • can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; • can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.	Not specified

See two page summary of framework of qualifications on:
www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Framework_qualificationsforEHEA-May2005.pdf

Time involved in various cycles

- Bachelor's degree = 3 or 4 years
- Master's degree = 1 or 2 years
- Doctoral degree = 3 years

Each of the three Bologna cycles is described in terms of generic descriptors as outlined in the "Dublin descriptors" (2005).

Note: The three cycles are closer to models in the UK and Ireland than in many countries of continental Europe where the model is based on the Magister or Diploma.

Recommendation that Member States:

"Use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning… paying particular attention to those citizens most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment, for whom such an approach could help increase participation in lifelong learning and access to the labour market"

(EU Commission, 2008)

Progress of Bologna Process

- Bologna 1999 – 29 Countries, 6 action lines
- Prague 2001 – 33 Countries, 9 action lines
- Berlin 2003 – 40 Countries, 10 action lines
- Bergen 2005 – 45 Countries
- London 2007 – 46 Countries

Influence of Bologna Process is now worldwide with other countries aligning their systems to Bologna.

Emphasis on implementing and making progress in the Bologna Process.

The 10 Action Lines of Bologna Process

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2. Adoption of a system based on three cycles
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5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in Higher education
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"The three Bologna cycles are based on generic descriptors of learning outcomes, so it is clear that describing higher education programmes in terms of learning outcomes is a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010. Learning outcomes are critically important in the development of national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance."

- Bologna Process Stocktaking London 2007, p. 51.

"If the Bologna Process is to be successful in meeting the needs and expectations of learners, all countries need to use learning outcomes as a basis for their national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulations, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance. This is a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010."

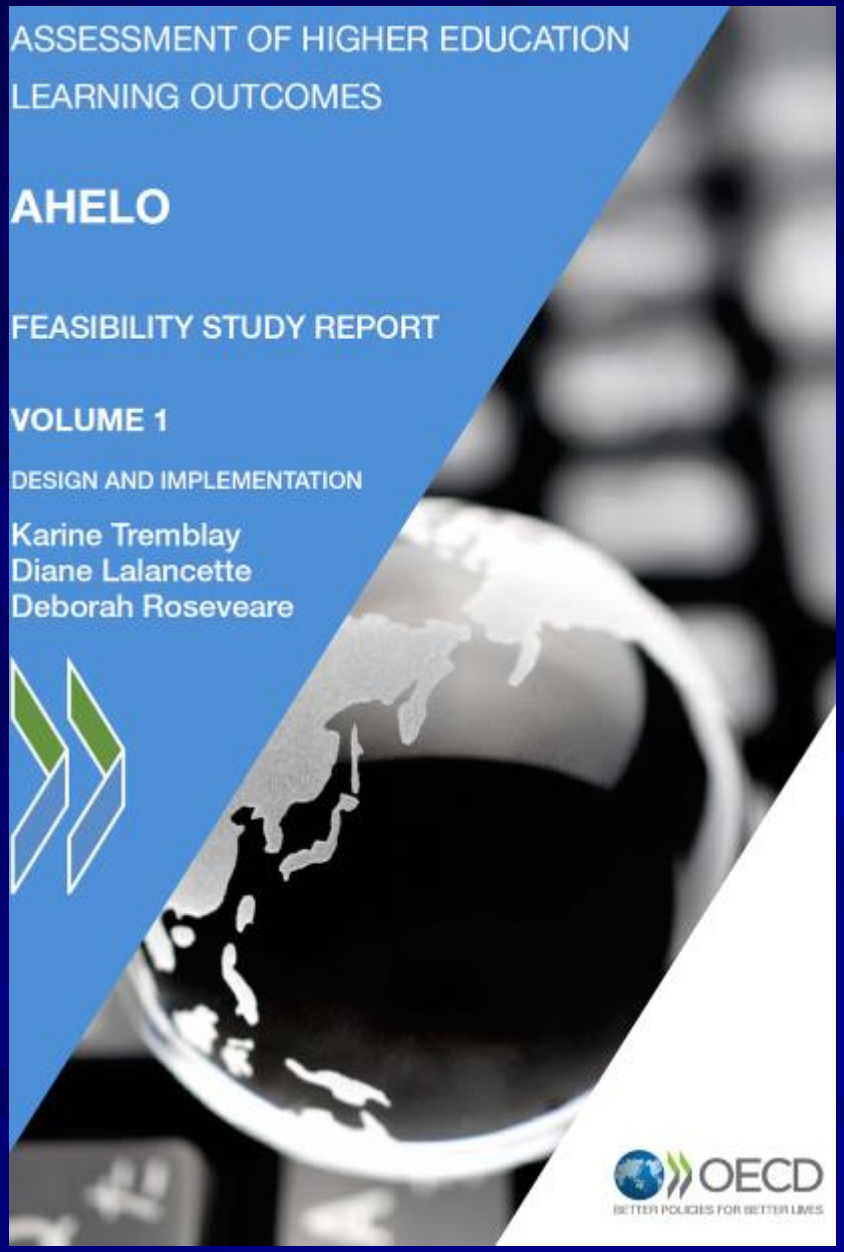
- Bologna Process Stocktaking London 2007, p. 2.

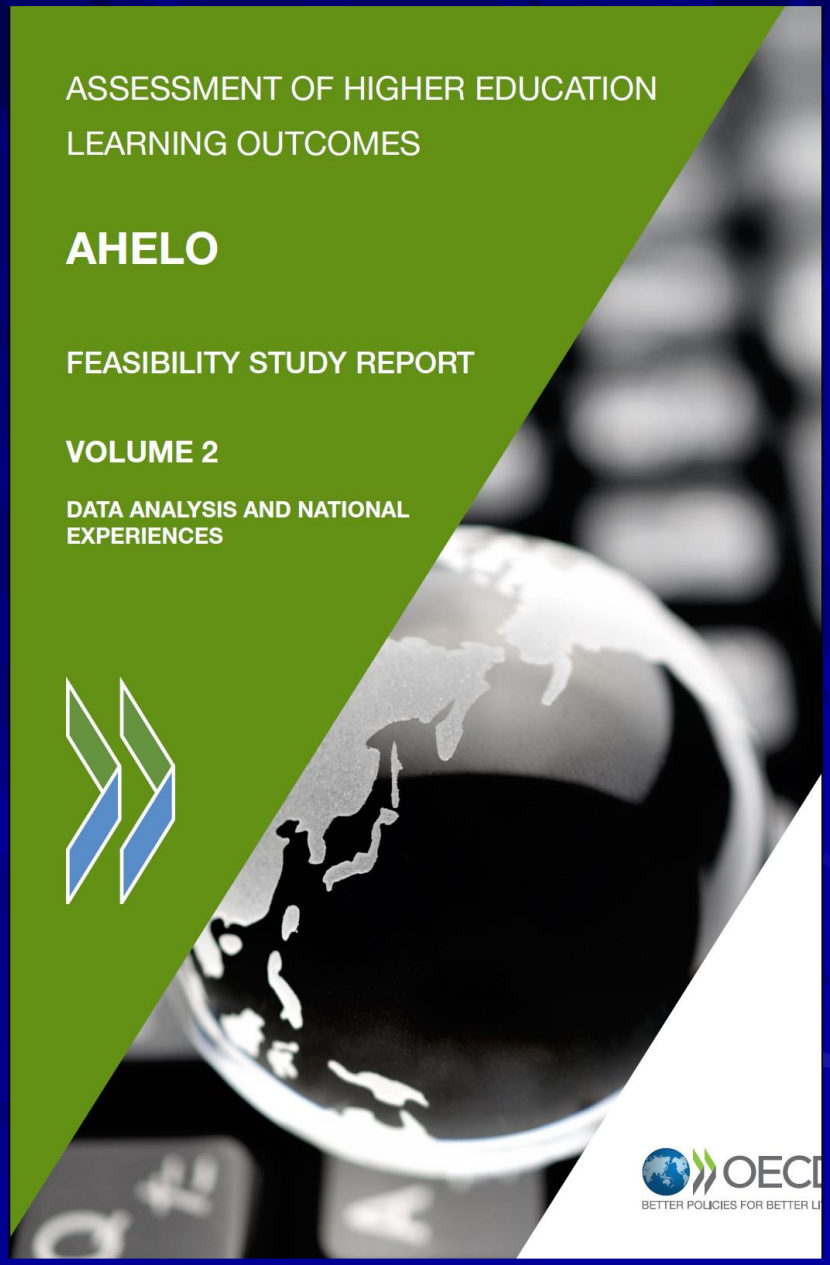
Bucharest Communique (2012)

To consolidate the EHEA, meaningful implementation of **learning outcomes** is needed. The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent. We call on institutions to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures. We will work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide5 fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning.

“However, as the report on the implementation of the Bologna Process shows, we must make further efforts to consolidate and build on progress. We will strive for more coherence between our policies, especially in completing the transition to the three cycle system, the use of ECTS credits, the issuing of Diploma Supplements, the enhancement of quality assurance and the implementation of qualifications frameworks, including the definition and evaluation of learning outcomes”.

Bucharest Communique (2012)


ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LEARNING OUTCOMES
AHELO
FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT
VOLUME 1
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION
Karine Tremblay
Diane Lalancette
Deborah Roseveare
OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES


ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LEARNING OUTCOMES
AHELO
FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT
VOLUME 2
DATA ANALYSIS AND NATIONAL EXPERIENCES
OECD

(2012)

Growing focus on student learning outcomes - Another trend sees a shift away from inputs towards outcome-based notions of higher education throughput. This shift has been most evident with the Bologna Declaration which aimed at establishing a European Higher Education Area and to write all higher education programmes in terms of learning outcomes by 2010. This trend is becoming global with many countries aligning their systems to be Bologna-compatible.

Note global trend.

Emphasis on student centred learning and research on teaching-learning processes - The turn of the Century has also seen a shift in undergraduate education, from an "instruction paradigm" towards a "learning paradigm" in which the emphasis is no longer on the means but on the end. A corollary of this emphasis is to better understand the teaching-learning interplay. In this context, outcomes' assessments are important for the evaluation of instructional effectiveness.

Note emphasis on Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

bologna process

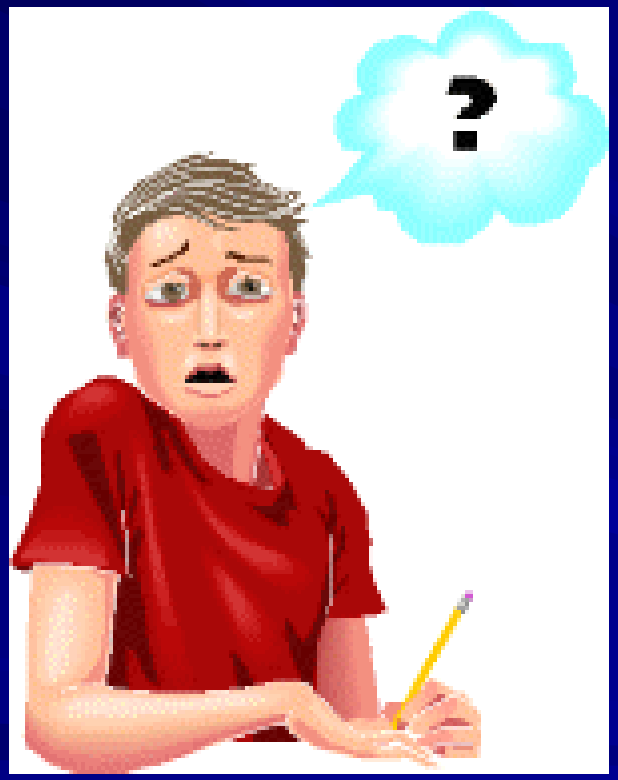
benelux 2009

The Bologna Process 2020 -
The European Higher Education Area in the new decade

Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009

6. The Bologna Process is leading to greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education and is making it easier for learners to be mobile and for institutions to attract students and scholars from other continents. Higher education is being modernized with the adoption of a three-cycle structure including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications linked to the first cycle and with the adoption of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance. We have also seen the creation of a European register for quality assurance agencies and the establishment of national qualifications frameworks linked to the overarching European Higher Education Area framework, based on learning outcomes and workload. Moreover, the Bologna Process has promoted the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to further increase transparency and recognition.

What are the benefits and potential problems of Learning Outcomes?



“We welcome the clear reference to ECTS, to the European Qualifications Framework and to learning outcomes in the European Commission’s proposal for a revision of the EU Directive on the recognition of **professional qualifications.** We underline the importance of taking appropriate account of these elements in recognition decisions”.

Bucharest Communique (2012)

“Learning Outcomes represent one of the essential building blocks for transparent higher education systems and qualifications… It is important that there should be no confusions about their role, nature and significance or the educational foundations of the Bologna process will be weakened”

(Adams S, 2004)

“Learning outcomes represent what is formally assessed and accredited to the student and they offer a starting point for a viable model for the design of curricula in higher education which shifts the emphasis form input and process to the celebration of student learning”

(Allan J, 1996)

The benefits of Learning Outcomes

- Help to explain more clearly to students what is expected of them and thus help to guide them in their studies – motivation and sense of purpose
- Help teachers to focus more clearly on what exactly they want students to achieve in terms of knowledge and skills.
- Help teachers to clarify their thinking about what they want to achieve and the common language of learning outcomes helps to facilitates discussion with colleagues.
- Helps to define the assessment criteria more effectively.
- Help to provide guidance to employers about the knowledge and understanding possessed by graduates of programmes, i.e. show the value of the programme in terms of programme learning outcomes and module learning outcomes.
- Help to start discussion on Teaching and Learning in third level institutions.

Transnational Implications of Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes have applications at three levels:

1. Local level – individual third level institutions for describing modules and programmes.
2. National level – within each country for describing National Qualification Frameworks and systems for Quality Assurance.
3. International Level – facilitate clarity and transparency of qualifications and mutual recognition of qualifications.

Learning outcomes provide the common language in the clear description of programmes and modules. The ECTS system provides the common currency.

Learning Outcomes - Facilitating Transnational Mobility

- Traditional approach focuses on input (e.g. emphasis on just listing content of programmes) but Learning Outcomes provide a clear and comprehensive set of statements outlining what students have achieved after successfully completing a course of study.
- Greater participation in higher education in many countries has resulted in the need for clearer information about programmes, qualifications, clarity about standards and levels of qualifications, i.e. more precision in curriculum design.
- Internationally, statements of Learning Outcomes contribute to the mobility of students since recognition of qualifications is made easier due to the explicit nature of Learning Outcomes and the clarity associated with them. Hence, qualifications are made more transparent and this simplifies credit transfer.
- Learning outcomes provide a common language for describing different structures of teaching and learning, e.g. traditional formal teaching, distance education, part-time, full-time, etc.
- Learning Outcomes help to form a link at both national and international level between vocational/training courses and higher education enhancing the concept of lifelong learning.

International Recognition and Mobility

"Learning outcomes are important for recognition, since the basis for recognition procedures is in the process of shifting from quantitative criteria such as the length and type of courses studied, to the outcomes reached and competencies obtained during these studies. The principal question asked of the student or the graduate will therefore no longer be "What did you do to obtain your degree?" but rather "What can you do now you have obtained your degree?". This approach is of more relevance to the labour market and is certainly more flexible when taking into account issues of lifelong learning, non-traditional learning and other forms of non-formal educational experiences"

Council of Europe, 2002.

Potential problems with Learning Outcomes

- Could limit learning if learning outcomes written within a very narrow framework – lack of intellectual challenge to learners.
- Learning outcomes should not be reductionist but rather expansive and intended to promote the higher order thinking skills.
- Danger of assessment-driven curriculum if learning outcomes too confined.
- Could give rise to confusion among students and staff if guidelines not adhered to when drawing up learning outcomes, etc.

That’s all Folks. Hope you learned something about the background to Learning Outcomes! In the next presentation we will learn about the rules for writing Learning Outcomes.