

ALIGNING YOUR LEARNING OUTCOMES/ CURRICULUM WITH BLACKBOARD

A Quick-Start Guide for Teaching and Learning

Technology Support/Creative Studios @ UTEP

stvarela@utep.edu

Aligning Your Learning Outcomes/Curriculum with Blackboard

If you would prefer a video tutorial to learn how to align your learning outcomes, please click here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=v8Waa_daDNY

Teaching and Learning Considerations

Learning outcomes are statements, objectives, and standards. They identify the expectations and end result about what students should know, or be able to do, upon completion of a course, program (major and/or degree), and graduation.

Learning outcomes typically start as broad statements, often addressing competencies such as critical thinking, quantitative analysis, and scientific/informational literacy. They are then required to become more specific to meet the needs of an academic program, major, certification, or class using discipline-specific language to articulate specialized expectations.

The importance of learning outcomes cannot be understated. Aligning course content and assessment to learning outcomes makes it easier to demonstrate how a course meets standards and goals and how student course performance measures up to them. They can also illustrate coherence in curricular objectives across the continuum of learning.

Learning outcomes lead to a more learning-centered approach. They can:

- help faculty focus on exactly what they want students to achieve in terms of knowledge and skills.
- help guide students in their learning by alleviating concerns about what they need to do to succeed in a class and their studies.
- provide a useful guide to inform about the intellectual and practical skills that a student will possess upon completion.

In addition, accrediting associations also have expectations that call on institutions to collect and use evidence of student learning outcomes at the programmatic and institutional levels to confirm and improve student learning.

It is imperative; therefore, to design classes with learning outcomes as a guide—knowing students, faculty, administrators, and the institution can greatly benefit by doing so.

Best Practices: Outcome Assessment

To use learning outcomes as a measure of student success requires **outcome assessment**—or aligning course content, assignments, and assessment to a set of learning outcomes. This can be a rigorous, sometimes tedious, process for administrators and faculty. It requires extensive time, collaboration, course examples/artifacts, and narrative to show how student performance has met the standards or goals of a degree, certification and/or course.

The challenge, however, of assessing student success in a course or degree/program can be made more efficient through the use of a learning management system (LMS).

Blackboard (Bb), UTEP's LMS, has the functionality to streamline the process of outcome assessment, and help to quantify student success with data gathered from within a course.

To exemplify, in its most simplified form, the outcome assessment process consists of 5 basic steps:

Creating a Test/Assignment and Rubric - The first step in the outcome assessment process is to create an assignment and align it with desired goals or outcomes. **When Bb is used for teaching and learning, faculty can easily create assignments and assessments within the LMS.** Faculty can also create one or more rubrics to be used in evaluating the goals or desired outcomes of the assignment.

Creating an Evidence Collection - The next step in the outcomes assessment process is to create an evidence collection or project that can be used to collect all the relevant assignment submissions (artifacts) within a course or set of courses. **Because Bb serves as a repository, as well as a content delivery system, assignments and assessments are stored as a collection of work submitted by students.** They are then easily accessible through Bb's Grade Center and can be filtered by student, test, or assignment.

Sampling a Collection - Once an evidence collection has been started, evaluators need to decide how the student artifacts (assignments) will be sampled—one can choose to use either all of the artifacts in the collection or just a specified random sampling. **In addition to requesting artifacts from faculty, College/department evaluators could be provided access to Bb into identified courses to gather their sample collections, speeding up the process of gathering and downloading artifacts.**

Evaluating an Evidence Set - The next step is to assign evaluators who will use the rubric attached to an assignment to evaluate how well the aligned goals were met. **Rubrics and assignment sheets can be downloaded from Bb for use in this part of the evaluation—again, quickly and easily.**

Analyzing the Results - The last step of outcome analysis is to run an analysis of the evaluations and to generate a report that summarizes how well each of the aligned goals was met. **This is a key functionality provided by UTEP's Blackboard. Faculty can align learning outcomes to any type of course content or assessment by using the "Add Alignments" feature.**

Getting Started with Learning Outcomes

Before learning outcomes are uploaded into the Blackboard Learning Management system for institutional use, there are a few steps needed in the initial set up process.

In summary, here is the **5-Step Process**:

1. Learning outcomes should be identified and established by the College/Department. Much of this work can be done offline, through department meetings, and subsequently formalized with a Department Chair/Director. The key to writing effective learning outcomes is the selection of active, measurable verbs—the tasks you want students to do at the end of your class. Words like “know,” “understand,” or “appreciate” are difficult to measure, and they rarely get at the higher order thinking tasks most of us really want to see in our students.

Consider, instead, more specific words like these, which progress toward more complex intellectual tasks.

By the end of the class, students should be able to

Recall
Explain
Interpret
Compare
Differentiate
Implement
Judge
Create

2. A “Learning Outcome Coordinator (LOC)” should also be identified by a College/Department--a faculty or staff member is needed as a liaison with Technology Support Services (Blackboard Central) to upload and implement the learning outcomes into Blackboard.

3. The LOC will work with Technology Support's Blackboard Central who will provide a copy of the policy and procedures associated with setting up learning outcomes in Blackboard (*see attached policy sheet*). They will also be provided with training in how to set up their learning outcomes, needed nomenclature, and structure of creating a batch file (XML) for uploading.

4. The LOC will undergo any additional training for aligning course content in Bb with Blackboard Central.

5. The learning outcomes will be reviewed by the LOC and Blackboard Central and subsequently uploaded into **Bb Test Environment** for final review.

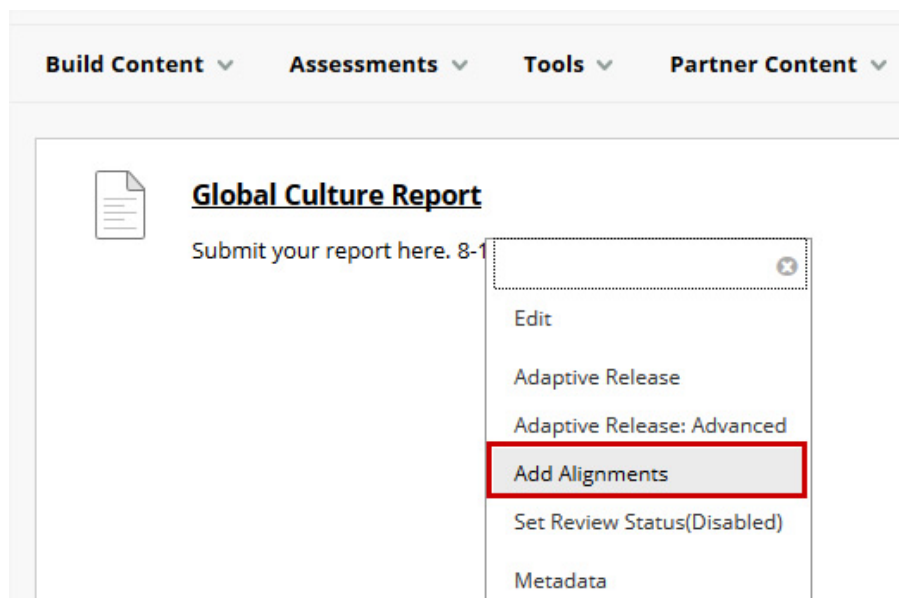
Learning outcomes will be uploaded into **Blackboard Production Environment** for faculty and institutional access.

Aligning Your Outcomes to Gradeable Content

Faculty can align learning outcomes to any type of course content or assessment by using the “Add Alignments” feature. This can be done in several areas of a course including:

- Grade Center columns;
- Assignments;
- Discussion Boards;
- Rubrics;
- Individual Rubric Rows;
- Tests, and
- Individual test questions.

To begin adding alignments, navigate to the gradeable content or assessment in the course. Place your mouse cursor over the content or assessment, then click the drop-down arrow to the right of the name, and select **Add Alignments** from the resulting drop-down menu.



In the **Discover Goals** pop-up window, use the **Browse Criteria** side bar to select the Source, Goal Set Type, Goal Set, Category, or Goal Type for the desired goal.

Then, click the checkbox in front of the goal to select it. Once all goals have been selected, click the **Submit** button to save the alignments.

Use the filter to get the exact learning outcomes needed for your class.

Discover Goals

Align content items to Goals in order to report goals coverage information for this course. [More Help](#)

The screenshot shows the 'Discover Goals' interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'Search current results:' and a 'Go' button. Below the search bar is a 'Criteria Summary' section with filters for Source (System), Goal Set Type (Academic Affairs), Goal Set (All Goal Sets), Category (All Categories), and Goal Type (All Types). On the left side, there is a 'Browse Criteria' sidebar with a 'View' dropdown and a 'Reset to Default' button. Under 'Source', 'System' is selected, and 'The University of Texas at El Paso' is listed. Under 'Goal Set Type', 'Academic Affairs' is selected, and several other categories are listed. The main area displays a list of goals with checkboxes and descriptions. The third goal, 'CO-EDGE-2018-03 - CO-03: Students will collaborate effectively with individuals and groups to accomplish a common goal while demonstrating respect and value for a diversity of perspectives.', is highlighted in yellow and has its checkbox checked. Other goals include 'CO-EDGE-2018-01 - CO-01: Students will demonstrate their ability to act ethically and responsibly for the benefit of society by articulating an awareness of social problems; exercising ethical leadership practices; engaging in civic, political or community activities; and/or advocating for social justice.' and 'CO-EDGE-2018-02 - CO-02: Students will articulate gains in self-confidence by identifying, evaluating, and building on their talents, abilities, strengths and skills.'

Getting Your Data!

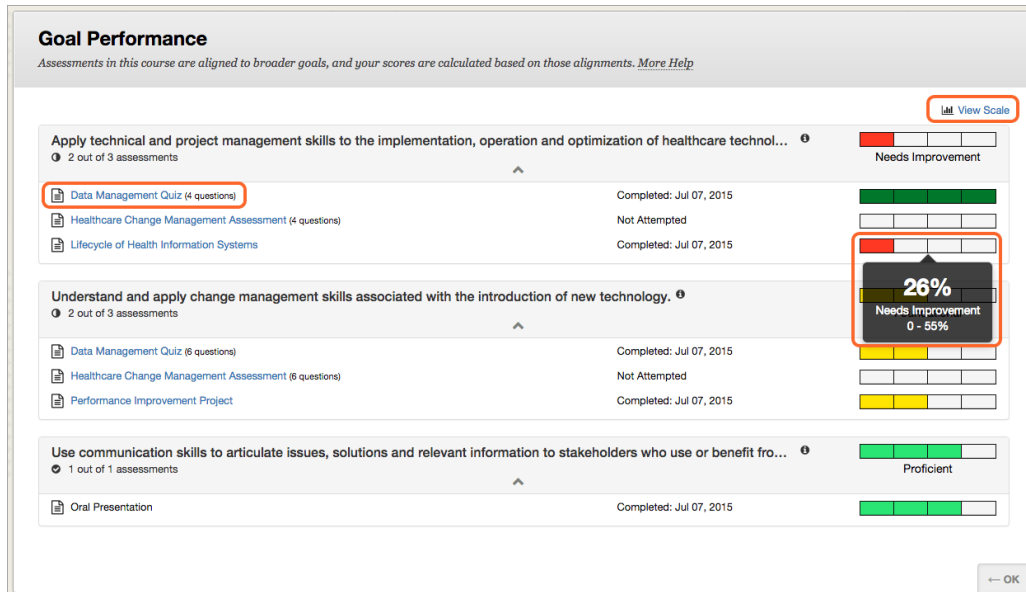
Course reports can be created and downloaded to measure student performance against desired learning outcomes. The reports come in two versions:

Student Performance- This is a *student-centric view* measuring how a particular student has performed against the stated outcomes. To access this information:

1. Go to the **Course Management** section of your course.
2. Click on **Course Tools**.
3. Click on **Goals**.

Learning outcomes are measured by reporting their performance against all graded items that were aligned to an outcome. At the course level, one can see how the student has performed against outcomes and content items within that course (*see Image 1*).

Image 1.



This view of the dashboard shows course learning outcomes and the assignments and other types of coursework that have been aligned. There is a visible measurement showing proficiency for that particularly learning outcome. Showing students this dashboard can change discussions about student grades to *student learning*.

Course Performance - This is a *course-centric view* that shows **all** student performance against a particular learning outcome. To access this information:

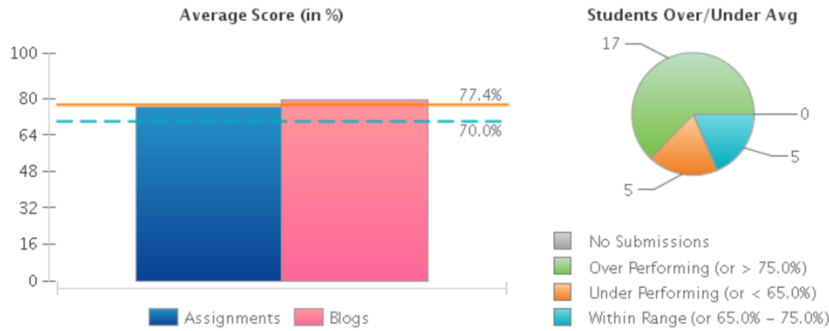
1. Go to the **Course Management** section of your course.
2. Click on **Evaluation**.
3. Click on **Course Reports**.
4. Run a report using **Course Performance**.

Instructors can view this report for the Outcome / Students in their course (see Image 2).

Image 2.

Course Overview

Performance Target	Performance Range	Course Average	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
70.0%	+/- 5% (or 65% - 75%)	77.4%	100.0%	100.0%	39.2%



	Average Score (in %)	Performance Offset	Count of Items
Assignments	76.0%	6.0%	13
Blogs	79.4%	9.4%	9

Student Overview

Essentially, Blackboard provides the ability to collect data and report on the success or failure of the outcomes and reflect on ways to achieve more successful results in the future.

This data can then be used for formal academic accreditation processes, budget projections, evidence for creating new degree programs, or simply as a tool for faculty to improve the design and delivery of their course content to meet their College/department's established standards.