

DEFINING LEARNING OUTCOMES: SOME UK EXAMPLES

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Overview

- The national situation
- Benchmarking statements
- Defining Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- Examples
- Imparting competences
- Some useful guides

QAA

- Introduction:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/heGuide/guide.asp>

- 2006 review of reports:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/outcomes/Assessmentofstudents.asp>

- Example of report:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/institutional/Oxford04/findings.asp>

QAA guidance

- Code of Practice section 7, precept 7:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section7/default.asp#precepts>
- What are programme specifications?
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programSpec/guidelines06.asp>

Subject benchmark statements

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>

- History (2007):

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/History07.asp>

QAA benchmarking statements

- devised by representatives of subject communities
- bottom-up approach
- large degree of consent
- not prescriptive, but provide models

History benchmark LOs (1)

- command of a substantial body of historical knowledge
- the ability to develop and sustain historical arguments in a variety of literary forms, formulating appropriate questions and utilising evidence (see paragraph 3.1)
- an ability to read, analyse and reflect critically and contextually upon contemporary texts and other primary sources, including visual and material sources like paintings, coins, medals, cartoons, photographs ...

History benchmark LOs (2)

- the ability to gather and deploy evidence and data to find, retrieve, sort and exchange new information (see paragraphs 3.3 and 6.16)
- a command of comparative perspectives, which may include the ability to compare the histories of different countries, societies, or cultures (see paragraph 4.3)
- awareness of continuity and change over extended time spans (see paragraph 4.2)

History benchmark LOs (3)

- ...clarity, fluency, and coherence in written expression (see paragraphs 3.1, 3.3, 6.6, 6.7, 6.12 and 6.16)
- clarity, fluency, and coherence in oral expression (see paragraphs 3.1, 3.3, 6.5, 6.7 and 6.15)
- the ability to work collaboratively and to participate in group discussion (see paragraphs 6.5 and 6.16) ...

Defining LOs

- specification of LOs now normal, by programme and module
- written at **departmental** level, and reviewed by departmental committee
- then reviewed by higher committees (e.g. Faculty, whole institution)
- ongoing regular review, e.g. 5-yearly

How does the teacher write LOs

Essentially a combination of:

borrowing from models

thinking about what students will be able to DO at the end of the course

BA History, UCL

- knowledge and understanding
e.g. ability to compare histories of different cultures
- intellectual skills
e.g. ability to design, research and present an extended piece of historical writing, using original sources
- practical skills
e.g. find, retrieve, sort and exchange new information
- transferable skills
e.g. work collaboratively
manage time and work to deadlines

BA History module, UCL

Peace, Law and Human Rights: Middle Eastern Gifts to the UN (Dr Karen Radner):

- ...knowledge of key Ancient Near Eastern text genres
- knowledge of political and ideological context in which texts used in Turkey, Iran, Iraq in 1970s
- ability to analyse and reflect critically... on... interpretations of historians and others

University of Nottingham 1st-year core course 'Learning History' (1):

- a. Knowledge and understanding:** through researching and presenting the results of their group projects, students should be able to
- explain and interpret the motives, interests and ideologies which had an impact on the outcome of the events, historical sources or historical interpretations on which their project focuses
 - evaluate the complex and diverse nature of human societies in the past and assess the interplay between continuity and change in their chosen period
 - demonstrate an awareness of the variety of perspectives adopted by historians working in the relevant field ...

University of Nottingham 1st-year core course 'Learning History' (2):

- c. Professional/practical skills:** Students should have practised and improved their ability to
- select, organize and absorb information from a range of sources
 - identify and evaluate contrasting or contradictory arguments
 - work together in a group to plan, research and write up a sustained piece of historical research
 - follow appropriate conventions in acknowledging their sources in footnotes and bibliographies ...

The British in Italy c.1550-c.1950 (Dr Rossano Balzaretti, U of Nott.)

By taking this module you should be able to:

- work actively with other students on the module to research primary and secondary sources
- manage large and often incomplete bodies of information
- develop your existing oral and written communication skills
- take responsibility for your own learning
- respect the reasoned views of others
- improve your IT skills in word processing

Imparting competences...

- depends on the subject
- focus is on what students will be able to do
- mixed methods in History
 - writing, + feedback
 - oral presentations, + feedback
 - discussion
 - group work
 - engaging in research
 - regular assessment, + feedback
 - moderation of assessment (2nd & External Examiners)

Essay evaluation (Nottingham)

Module: Essay Title: Student: First marker (%) Second marker (%) Agreed
 mark (%) Second Marker's comments: External Examiner's
 comments & marks:

(5) Outstanding (4) Good (3) Competent (2) Poor (1) Fail

Preparation, Research & Analysis

Breadth of Reading	5	4	3	2	1
Critical approach to historiography	5	4	3	2	1
Focus on question	5	4	3	2	1
Organization of the material	5	4	3	2	1
Depth of understanding and insight	5	4	3	2	1
Use of examples	5	4	3	2	1
Introduction and Conclusion	5	4	3	2	1
Factual accuracy	5	4	3	2	1
Comprehensiveness of coverage	5	4	3	2	1

Presentation

Written in fluent and correct English	5	4	3	2	1
Accurate spelling/proof reading	5	4	3	2	1
Sources cited correctly	5	4	3	2	1

Seminar presentation (Nottingham)

Module: First marker (%) Seminar Topic: Second marker (%) Student: Agreed mark
 (%) Date of Seminar: Second Marker's comments: External Examiner's comments:

(5) Outstanding (4) Good (3) Competent (2) Poor (1) Fail

Research & Analysis (60%)

Clarity of aims & objectives	5	4	3	2	1
Breadth & depth of reading	5	4	3	2	1
Use of primary sources (if applicable)	5	4	3	2	1
Introduction to topic: content	5	4	3	2	1
Understanding of historical issues	5	4	3	2	1
Evidence of critical awareness, historiography	5	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues/concepts	5	4	3	2	1
Quality of report: content	5	4	3	2	1

Presentation & Management (40%)

Design and production of agenda	5	4	3	2	1
Introduction(s) to topic: presentation	5	4	3	2	1
Oral communication skills	5	4	3	2	1
Use of handouts, audio-visual aids etc	5	4	3	2	1
General structuring of session	5	4	3	2	1
Responsiveness to group; methods etc	5	4	3	2	1
Quality of teamwork	5	4	3	2	1
Quality of report: presentation	5	4	3	2	1

Assessed presentation (Nottingham)

Project	Group	Date of Presentation	Mark	(%)
(5) Outstanding (4) Good (3) Competent (2) Poor (1) Fail				
Content & Structure				
Evidence of good research			5 4 3 2 1	
Sophistication of argument			5 4 3 2 1	
Effective use of examples			5 4 3 2 1	
Introduction			5 4 3 2 1	
Structure and logic			5 4 3 2 1	
Maintaining interest			5 4 3 2 1	
Conclusion			5 4 3 2 1	
Delivery & Visual Aids				
Engagement with audience			5 4 3 2 1	
Pace, Clarity and Fluency			5 4 3 2 1	
Timing			5 4 3 2 1	
Well designed & legible visual aids			5 4 3 2 1	
Appropriate range & number of visual aids			5 4 3 2 1	

General Comments and Advice:

Some useful guides

- D. Gosling and J. Moon (2001) *How to use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria*
- J. Moon: 'Linking Levels, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria': http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/Bol_sem/Seminars/040701-02Linking_Levels_plus_ass_crit-Moon.pdf
- EUA Bologna Handbook, e.g. B2.3
- Bologna Seminar 'Learning Outcomes based higher education': <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/BolognaSeminars/Edinburgh2008.htm>

