

MSU-BILLINGS

# BASICS OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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Assessment Process, Key Questions, Grades vs Assessment, Learning Goals and Learning Objectives,  
Assessment Measures

## I. Assessment process

Palomba and Banta (1999) define the outcomes assessment process as:

*The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development .*

## II. Key questions

1. What will our students learn in our program? What are our expectations?
2. How will they learn it?
3. How will we know they have learned it or not?
4. What will we do if they have not learned it?

## III. Grades vs Assessment

Course grades, by intentional design, measure student learning associated with content and activities specific to a course. In most instances, this falls short of providing evidence of student learning designed around broad knowledge and skill areas. Course grades fail to provide this evidence because:

- Course grades are aggregate measures (mean or total points) on examinations, research papers, other projects, homework, presentations, class participation, etc. and, therefore, cannot measure students' performance or achievement of a specific skill or knowledge set.
- Professors set the criteria and standards for their courses which may not be completely aligned with program-level learning goals because of the need to facilitate student learning relative to a specific discipline for which the faculty member is responsible.

Of course, a course product (e.g., paper, presentation, report, etc.) may be an excellent assessment tool for evaluation against a program learning goal. Thus, course products may have dual purposes, but course grades, by themselves, will not provide the information needed.

## IV. Learning Goals and Learning Objectives

Learning goals should be broad statements of accomplishment that cut across a curriculum. Learning goals are broad statements and, taken alone, are not suitable for assessment. Therefore, each learning goal must be translated into one or more learning objectives which describe a measurable attribute of the overall learning goal.

**Table 1: Examples of Learning Goals and Corresponding Objectives**

**Learning Goal:** Our graduates will understand the importance of behaving ethically in their professional lives (i.e., have an ethical perspective).

**Corresponding Objectives:**

- Our students will know the professional code of conduct within their discipline.
- Our students will identify the activities/issues in their chosen profession that may present ethical challenges, and will articulate the consequences associated with unethical behavior.
- Our students will identify an ethical dilemma in a scenario case and apply an ethics model or framework to propose and defend a resolution.

**Learning Goal:** Our graduates will demonstrate problem solving skills, supported by appropriate analytical and quantitative techniques.

**Corresponding Objectives:**

- In a case setting, students will use appropriate analytical techniques to identify a business problem, generate and compare alternatives, and develop a solution.
- In a case setting, students will recognize and analyze ethical problems, choose, and defend a solution.

**Learning Goal:** Our graduates will be effective communicators.

**Corresponding Objectives:**

- Our students will produce professional quality business documents.
- Our students will deliver a professional quality presentation accompanied by appropriate technology.
- Our students will demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills in a team setting.

**Learning Goal:** Our graduates will have a global perspective.

**Corresponding Objectives:**

- Our students will define key components of countries' business environments and give examples of how environmental components differ across countries.
- Our students will evaluate the foreign market potential for a product and develop and entry strategy.
- Our students will adapt a domestic marketing (or human resource) strategy for a foreign operational setting.
- Our students will diagnose cross-cultural communication issues in a case setting and propose appropriate solutions.

Note: Multiple objectives are not required for each learning goal, but multiple learning objectives could be observed in support of a particular learning goal.

V. Assessment Measures

**Table 2: Examples of Assessment Measures-Selection**

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate competency in a second language to qualify for admission.

□ **Assessment Measure:** Acceptable score on standardized examination of a second language is required for admission to a business program.

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate an acceptable level of written communications skills.

□ **Assessment Measure:** An essay is required for admission which is evaluated for writing competencies.

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate competency in statistical analysis and reasoning skills.

□ **Assessment measure:** A placement exam is given to measure competency as part of the admissions process.

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate competency in use of technology prior to entering the business school.

□ **Assessment measure:** A standardized examination or users test is used and students must earn an acceptable score to be admitted to the business school or successfully complete remedial work.

**Table 3: Examples of Assessment Measures-Course Embedded**

**Learning Objective:** Our students will produce professional quality business documents.

□ **Assessment measure:** Students' work from a case analysis assigned in a senior capstone course is assessed for writing effectiveness.

**Learning Objective:** Our students will demonstrate appropriate abilities to integrate knowledge across business disciplines in a case solution.

□ **Assessment measure:** A case analysis presentation in a business strategy class is assessed for developing a strategic recommendation that spans functional areas.

**Learning Objective:** Students will recognize and analyze ethical problems, choose, and defend a solution.

□ **Assessment measure:** A case analysis from the capstone MBA policy class is evaluated in regards to students' recognition of the ethical dilemma, generation and comparison of alternatives, and development of a solution.

**Table 4: Examples of Assessment Measures-Demonstration Through Stand-alone Testing or Performance**

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate competence and understanding of basic business disciplines and concepts

□ **Assessment measure:** Students must successfully complete a standalone, standardized examination at the end of their degree program.

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills to produce quality business documents.

□ **Assessment measure:** A written communications assignment at the end of the degree program is evaluated for writing competence.

**Learning Objective:** Students will demonstrate competence to integrate knowledge across business fields in solving a business problem.

□ **Assessment measure:** A senior thesis or project is required and evaluated for integration of business knowledge across fields.

**References:**

“AACSB Assurance of Learning Standards: An Interpretation”, An AACSB White Paper issued by: AACSB International Accreditation Coordinating Committee and AACSB International Accreditation Quality Committee, 20 November 2007.

Palomba, C.A., and T. W. Banta. (1999). *Assessment Essentials*. San Francisco, CA., Josey-Bass.