



Teaching Toolkit

Constructive Alignment

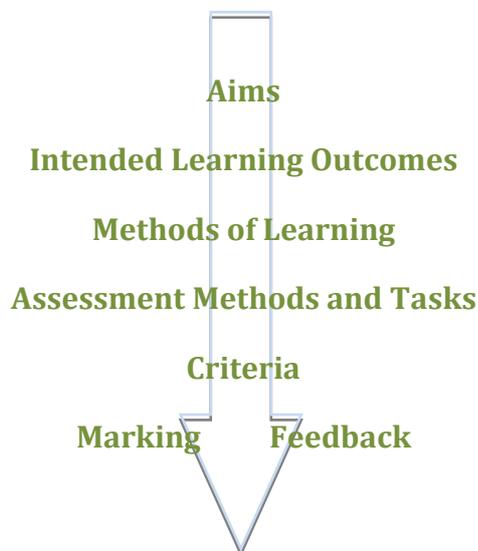
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Constructive Alignment

Constructive alignment is a theory of learning that begins with the premise that the learner constructs his or her own learning through relevant learning activities (Biggs, 1999). The key to achieving this goal is that all components in the teaching system (i.e., each aspect from inception to completion) are aligned to each other to facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Thus, the curriculum, the intended aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods and resources and the assessment tasks and criteria for evaluating it, are all aligned



Alignment is central to effective assessment - there should be a clear relationship between learning outcomes (statements of what the learner should be able to do as a result of the teaching) and assessment.

The main steps in the alignment process are:

- Defining the intended learning outcomes
- Choosing teaching/learning activities likely to lead to help and encourage students to attain these objectives
- Engaging students in these learning activities through the teaching process
- Assessing students' learning outcomes using methods that enable students to demonstrate the intended learning and evaluating how well they match what was intended
- Arriving at a final grade, and perhaps in the case of formative assessment, giving feedback to help students improve their learning.

Learning and assessment tasks should engage the student in the appropriate activity. It's important, therefore, to avoid falling back on traditional, established methods. For example, Brown (2003) suggests that if we want to assess a students' skill in hedgelaying, we shouldn't ask them to write a report on hedgelaying in the 20th century, including relevant instructions for overcoming common problems etc. To determine whether a student is a competent practitioner in a professional context it's essential to assess their skills using experiential approaches - failure to do so could result in missing the core skills we aim to impart.