LOYALIST COLLEGE
EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Contents

Background

Educational philosophies and paradigms have long informed structures and practices in formal education settings. The concept of outcomes-based education (OBE) is not new to education. Spady (1994) suggests that its roots may even go back as far as 500 years ago to the craft guilds of the Middle Ages where performance expectations for the craft were established. In the past century, a number of different educational approaches have been utilized in various educational sectors. These approaches include the use of educational objectives, competency-based education, the mastery movement and criterion-referenced instruction (Malan, 2000). There are common features amongst all of these approaches when compared to OBE with the distinction that OBE tends to incorporate the strengths of each of them. Outcomes-based education can be characterized by the following main features: (Malan, 2000)

1. Curricula is needs-driven
2. It is outcomes-driven
3. It utilizes a design-down approach
4. It specifies outcomes and levels of outcomes
5. There is a shift of focus from teaching to learning
6. The framework is holistic in nature.

The first multi-national endorsement of outcomes-based education in higher education came with the signing of the Bologna Declaration by 29 European countries in 1999. This marked a concerted effort by many nations (now at 47) to adopt a set of guiding principles that would shift focus away from the teacher to the learning and would use learning outcomes to define the learning. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has endorsed the Bologna Process and currently acts in a consultative manner to partner and promote this through the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG). The Canadian post-secondary education landscape has been influenced by this agreement through the ongoing relationship between the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the European University Association (EUA) and the American Council on Education (ACE). This group meets biennially for transatlantic dialogues on higher education.

Unlike the European Union, Canada does not have formal national policies that drive a unified approach to education. Therefore, forums such as the AUCC and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) serve to promote the sharing of best practice and the discussion of common challenges. With education residing as a provincial responsibility, educational approaches regularly follow a tri-level format with adoption at a provincial, sector/board and institutional level. With respect to outcomes-based education, this holds true in Ontario with endorsement from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), the Ontario college sector and individual college institutions.

The MTCU has embraced many of the characteristics of the Bologna process by establishing and publishing vocational learning outcomes for programs, offering credentials as defined by learning outcomes, incorporating quality assurance processes and facilitating transfer opportunities, to name a few. These goals, along with outcomes-based education, learning-centredness, principals of adult

learning and other provincial legislation (e.g. AODA), have all contributed to the development of Loyalist College's educational philosophy.

Educational Philosophy

Loyalist College embraces a learning-centred approach to outcomes-based education in accessible learning environments.

Foundational Principles of the Educational Philosophy

The following principles inform Loyalist College's educational philosophy as we strive to maximize student growth and achievement through the co-creation of authentic curriculum.

Learning-Centred

Characteristics that describe Loyalist's learning-centred approach are that:

- The primary role of faculty is to facilitate learning (vs. teaching).
- Power and responsibility in the learning environment is shared between the faculty and the student.
- The role of content is more than to impart knowledge. The learning facilitates the practice of using content in inquiry and in solving real-world problems.
- Through this approach, students develop skills as life-long learners and can self-assess their own learning.
- Assessments are authentic and measure the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)

Outcomes-based education is an educational system that communicates intended learning through outcomes and their related elements of performance. It requires the authentic assessment of the outcomes and it is the achievement of these outcomes that will determine the learner's success.

Maximizing Student Growth and Achievement

Maximizing student growth and achievement refers to a number of factors. The concept of differentiated learning stresses that approaches like assessment for learning serve to meet students where they are. By considering the student's prior knowledge and skills, learning can be more effectively facilitated for each student. This principle would also include quantitative metrics such as student success, graduation rates and employment rates. Loyalist's commitment to maximizing student engagement through a robust array of educational pathways will enhance this student growth and achievement.

Co-Creation

The term co-creation implies a number of different relationships between diverse individuals and groups of individuals. Loyalist College supports these relationships by fostering an environment of respect and positivity.

Faculty and Faculty This relationship involves such things as curriculum design and modification, as well as other general program quality standards (PQA) in general. Specific to the learning, techniques such as team-teaching and shared assessment patterns across courses could also be a characteristic of this relationship.

Faculty and Student This relationship is best described by principles of adult learning and outcomes-based education. Specifically, in the classroom, this would involve ownership of the learning, as well as openness to all the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In a general sense, both current and past students provide feedback about the learning and about industry expectations and needs to assist in keeping the curriculum current and relevant.

Student and Student This relationship allows for the consideration of various learning theories such as social learning theory, constructivism and connectivism, to name a few. This category of learning theories includes a social component to the learning where the learner's acquisition of knowledge and skills is enhanced by positioning it in a social context.

Stakeholders and Faculty This relationship is especially reflective of the needs-basis nature of OBE to create new or use established vocational best practices. Stakeholders such as industry, employers, accreditation bodies, research and ministry standards all have roles to play in informing and influencing the learning environment.

Authentic

Authentic refers to the concept that learning be reflective of real-world demands as defined by current and relevant program learning outcomes. Learning involves the application of attitudes, skills and knowledge to resolve real-world problems that exist in the chosen vocation. Assessment of outcomes is aligned and relevant to real-world context and performance expectations.

Accessible

Accessible is first and foremost defined as adhering to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Additionally, this refers to compliance to federal and provincial legislation such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This principle would also include the leveraging of technology to enable and enhance face-to-face, hybrid and distance delivery of education. The college system was founded on principles of providing accessible education to the community to meet the needs of industry and to grow the economy. As the community becomes more diverse in nature, all

consideration must be given to potential barriers to under- represented learners that limit their access to a post-secondary education.

Options for Program Models

All programs at Loyalist College must identify a set of program learning outcomes (PLO) along with related elements of performance for those outcomes. Program learning outcomes will be derived from vocational learning outcomes (VLO) (where they exist), institutional learning outcomes (ILO) and essential employability skills (EES). As a result, the model utilized will fall into one of three categories as illustrated in figure 1.

Fig1. Program Learning Outcomes Models

Program Learning Outcome Models

1	VLO	EES
2	VLO / ILO	EES
3	ILO	EES
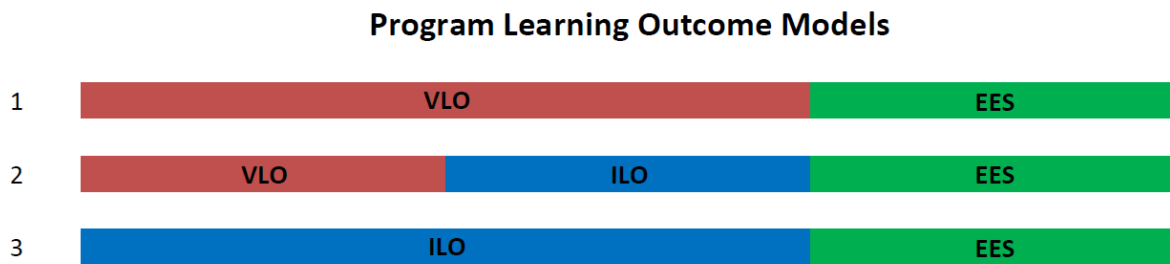
Option 1 represents a program adopting the existing VLO from the published provincial standards along with the requisite EES outcomes.

Option 2 is comprised of the VLO from the published provincial standards along with additional institutional learning outcomes (ILO) for the program. Elements of performance must be developed to accompany the added ILO. It is also possible to build on the elements of performance that are established with the VLO.

Option 3 is reserved for programs that do not have published VLO and are required to develop outcomes (now called institutional learning outcomes) and associated elements of performance.

For all certificate, diploma, and advanced diploma programs, essential employability skills will be delivered and assessed as per the MTCU credentials framework. Similarly, for all diploma and advanced diploma programs, the general education requirement as outlined by the same MTCU credentials framework will be adhered to.

Glossary of Terms

Learning Outcome Learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning has been achieved and verified. Outcomes are successful demonstrations of actions and performances that embody the attitudes, skills and knowledge inherent in the learning. A learning outcome is comprised of three key elements: a performance, a context and a standard.

Performance Describes the action that is required in the learning.

Context A clarifying statement to modify the performance that serves to specify the situation or complexity of the learning.

Standard/Criterion The level of performance that is considered acceptable for the outcome to be successfully demonstrated. This often is directly linked to the assessment of the outcome.

Program Learning Outcomes Program learning outcomes (PLOs) represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified. PLOs are a collection of outcomes that consist of vocational learning outcomes (where they exist), institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) and essential employability skills.

Vocational Learning Outcomes *(as defined by the MTCU)* Vocational learning outcomes (VLO's) represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, vocational learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation of one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified. Furthermore, at Loyalist College, vocational learning outcomes contribute to the overall program learning outcomes.

Institutional Learning Outcomes Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified. ILOs are locally determined and contribute to the overall program learning outcomes.

Course Learning Outcomes Course learning outcomes (CLO's) represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning has been achieved and verified by the end of a course. CLOs follow the same structure as VLO's and ILO's but are of a smaller scope. These course learning outcomes contribute to the achievement of the program learning outcomes.

Elements of Performance *(adapted from the MTCU definition)* The elements of the performance for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements of performance are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the learning outcome. The elements of performance do not stand alone but rather in reference to the learning outcome of which they form a part.

Program Standard *(as defined by the MTCU)* A program standard is an MTCU document that applies to all similar programs of instruction offered by colleges across the province. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

> **Vocational standard** *the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question*;
> **Essential employability skills** *the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction*; and,
> **General education requirement** *the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction*.

Essential Employability Skills Outcomes *(adapted from the MTCU definition)* Essential employability skills (EES) outcomes are comprised of 11 learning outcomes that define skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living and for life-long learning. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning has been achieved and verified by the end of a program. These EES outcomes contribute to the overall program learning outcomes.

General Education Requirement *(as defined by the MTCU)* In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

Design-down approach Linked to needs and the purpose of the programme, learning content is only selected after the desired outcomes have been specified. Content becomes a vehicle to achieve the desired learning outcomes which are aimed at inculcating a basis for life-long learning.

References

Malan, S.T.P. (2000). The "new paradigm" of outcomes-based education in perspective. *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Science,* 28*.*

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. (2014). *Published College Program Standards*. Retrieved from http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/colleges/progstan/.

Spady, W.G. (1994). *Outcome-based education. Critical issues and answers*. Arlington. American Association of School Administrators.