

Pilot OBE Course Project

Embedding Intended Learning Outcomes in Courses: Pilot Project 2008/09

In the academic year 2007/08, considerable progress was made in drafting provisional intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for Schools and undergraduate programs. These learning outcome statements were presented at the Senate meeting of June 2008, creating a platform for the further development of the OBE initiative.

In the longer run, the University will require that these program-level intended learning outcomes (PILOs) are reflected in the courses that comprise programs. Course documents will need to include a description of intended learning outcomes, and provide an indication of how course learning experiences and assessment activities will be aligned with these intended learning outcomes.

But at this stage, the implications of this long-run plan are poorly understood by both course instructors and the committees charged with developing and approving courses. To explore these implications before any general effort is made to introduce an outcomes orientation to the course level, the Outcome-Based Education Steering Group is undertaking a Course ILO Pilot Project.

The Pilot Project

The intention of this project is to:

1. Engage 40-50 interested faculty/instructors planning to teach a course in Spring Semester 2009 to:
 - Review the likely contribution of their course to program-level outcomes and the adjustments in course ILOs that might contribute to students achieving these outcomes
 - Consider the impact of the explicit outcomes orientation on teaching, learning and assessment activities for the course
 - Create a course outline for students embedding OBE elements
 - Pilot a first round of adjustments in the Spring Semester 2009
 - Assist in the evaluation of the response of teaching staff and students to OBE-oriented courses
2. Share difficulties and successes with other colleagues engaged in the project
3. Contribute to the general understanding of how the OBE approach could be scaled up for general implementation in the special circumstances of HKUST, including:

- The extent to which it is appropriate to carry the outcomes orientation to the level of courses - what can reasonably be "required", and what can only be encouraged?
- How can colleagues and approving committees judge whether courses will make the expected contribution to students' achieving the outcomes agreed for their programs - what is the level and form of information/documentation needed?

Pilot Project Timelines

Activity	Timeline
Identify interested instructors	October 2008
Establish a support infrastructure	October - November 2008
Launch and Briefing	November 2008
Sharing Session: Difficulties and Successes	March 2009
Evaluation of student and instructor response	March-April 2009
Workshop: Recommendations to the University	Late May 2009

Support and Recognition

Faculty and instructors considering joining this interesting and important exercise should note that senior staff, including the Deans appreciate and recognize the risks taken when changes are implemented in curriculum, pedagogy and grading. Taking such risks is regarded as a positive contribution in a necessary process of innovation.

We are also keenly interested in understanding and responding to the additional support that may be needed for courses to be successfully aligned with learning outcomes.

Resources, including general information about outcome-based education, program and course level examples for different schools, an OBE syllabus builder and latest OBE event information, can be found on the CELT Outcome-Based Education web site at <http://celt.ust.hk/teaching-resources/outcome-based-education>.