

EES-ing on down the road: Some tips for updating course outlines

"You just keep on steppin'
And you'll just be fine!

Ease on down, ease on down the road."

("Ease on Down the Road," from *The Wiz*, 1978)

As with the characters in *The Wiz*, the 1978 musical adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*, the process of updating our course outlines to reflect our transition to the Essential Employability Skills (EES) outcomes is really just another step down the road, and in this case it is the road of curriculum development.

There are quite a number of reasons to ensure that course outlines are updated to reflect the Essential Employability Skills (EES) outcomes. The more practical reasons include

- ensuring that students have the most up-to-date information,
- clarifying the focus for the development of lessons plans and assessments,
- meeting our legislative requirements as outlined in the Framework for Programs of Instruction, and
- being ready for the Program Quality Review (PQR) process.

When course outlines are being reviewed as part of the Program Quality Review (PQR) process for compliance with EES requirements, there are three areas of the course outlines that receive the most attention:

1. Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes,
2. Course Learning Requirements/Embedded Knowledge and Skills, and
3. Evaluation/Earning Credit.

The tips provided in this article, then, will focus on the changes that are to be made in these three areas in order to ensure that course outlines accurately reflect the EES outcomes that form part of the course.

Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes

In this section of the course outline, the term "Generic Skills" is to be replaced by the term "Essential Employability Skills."

Also, when identifying the actual EES outcomes that are covered in the course, both the numbers and the outcome statements must be consistent with the EES outcomes as found on the following web site:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/college/progstan/essential.html>

While it is true that some of the EES outcomes address content similar to the Generic Skills Learning Outcomes that were in place previously, much of the wording and numbering has changed. Using the information found on the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities

web site (above) or information available from the Essential Employability Skills Curriculum Committee will help to ensure that this section will not need to be re-visited until the next curriculum review period.

Course Learning Requirements/Embedded Knowledge and Skills

During the PQR process, this section provides evidence of the teaching that contributes to the achievement of the EES outcome or outcomes listed in the Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes section. Ideally, the evidence will be found in the Course Learning Requirements; however, it is plausible that the evidence will be found within the knowledge and skills of the various course learning requirements.

For instance, a course that teaches EES outcome #11 ("take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences") might show evidence of that teaching through the following course learning requirement:

Course Learning Requirements	Knowledge and Skills
When you have earned credit for this course you will have demonstrated the ability to	
choose a course of action based on a balanced assessment of the available alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define personal span of control for a given situation, • prepare a list of alternatives, • prioritize decision criteria for the situation, • outline the contextual or environmental factors that influence the decision, • explain the benefits and drawbacks of each alternative, • suggest opportunities that could be presented by changes in the context or environment, • justify final choice with reference to the impacts of the benefits and drawbacks identified.

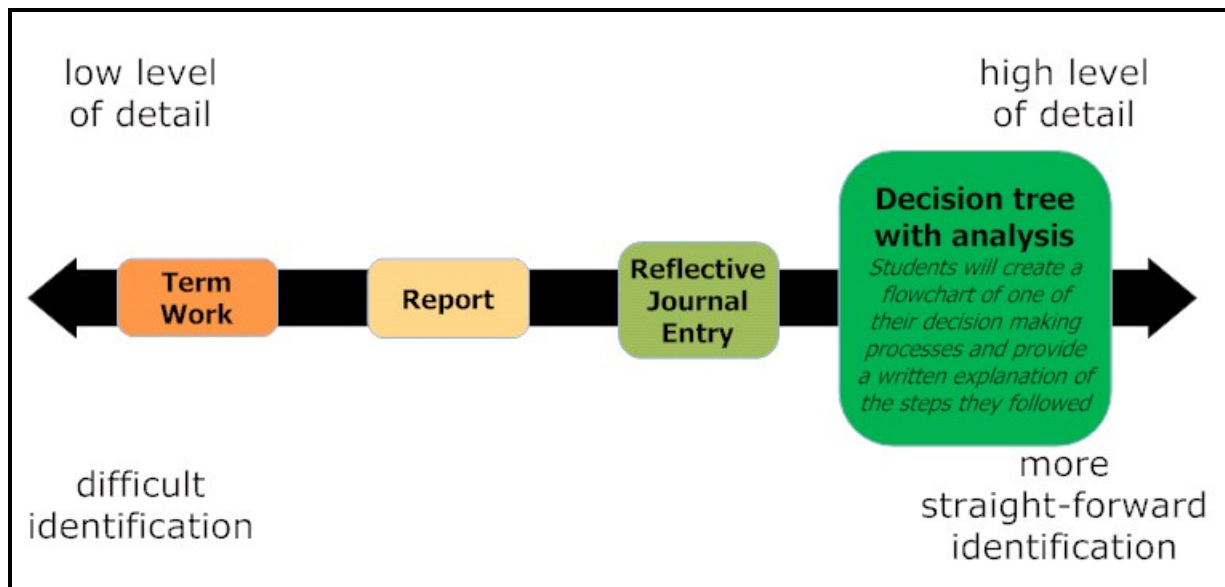
In documenting the EES outcomes in the Course Learning Requirements, as in the example above, it may be useful to think of the statements as a thread running through the course. Not all of the EES outcomes lend themselves to discrete blocks of teaching—group work and time management are two of the notable exceptions—because their very nature is such that they are transferable skills that are useful in a variety of situations and across a variety of disciplines. This makes it not only possible, but even desirable to return to the skills at regular intervals throughout the course in the context of the other information that is being presented. EES outcomes, then, do not detract from the content of a course; they support the content.

Evaluation/Earning Credit

Information found in this section of the course outline provides evidence of the assessment of the EES outcome or outcomes listed in the Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes section. Documenting this information can be done in one of two ways.

First, the evidence of learning achievement can be connected to the Course Learning Requirements, Program Learning Outcomes or both. This can be done in a table format, with a column for the assessment, a column for the value of the assessment, and a column for the learning requirements or the learning outcomes supported. Alternatively, near the assessment, the term "validates" followed by the applicable learning requirements or the learning outcomes would also serve to connect the two.

The second method involves providing sufficient detail about the requirements of each assessment to enable a relatively straight-forward identification of the outcome being assessed. The following continuum provides a sense of the ways in which the level of detail can be improved.



In both cases, the key element to remember with respect to the Evaluation/Earning Credit section of the course outline is that the connection between the assessment and the Course Learning Requirements or the Program Learning Outcomes needs to be clear.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to remember that not every course in a program of study has to contribute to the achievement of EES outcomes. Furthermore, if the course does contribute it can contribute in a number of ways: the outcome can be taught, the outcome can be assessed, the outcome can be both taught and assessed, or the course could provide an opportunity for a culminating performance.

Decisions about EES outcomes apply at the program level as well as at the course level. Therefore, once you have your ideas together about your course, sitting down with other colleagues teaching in the program will provide another opportunity to look over the curriculum, and strengthen both the program and its courses. This further step of meeting with colleagues is another step down the road of curriculum development, and it underlines one important point: unless it is your preference, there is no need for you to be "EES-ing on down the road" by yourself. We are all travelling down the same road.