KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

The implementation of ‘learning outcomes’ at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

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Structure of presentation

- Origin: Where does the concept of ‘learning outcomes’ come from?
- Definition: What are ‘learning outcomes’?
- Implementation at the K.U.Leuven
  - Where are we now?
  - What remains to be done?

Origin

Berlin communiqué (2003)

> Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile.

Bergen communiqué (2005)

> "We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (…), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences,…"

Origin

London communiqué (2007)

- Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload.
- They [qualification frameworks] should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.
- We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.
- With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

Definition

- *'A statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning.'*
- *'Learning outcomes (are) statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after a completion of a process of learning.'*
- '*Statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.'*
- '*Student learning outcomes are properly defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences.*
- *'Learning outcomes are statements that specify what a learner will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or attitudes.'*
- *'A learning outcome is a statement of what competences a student is expected to possess as a result of the learning process.'*

(Adam, S., 2004)

Definition: Learning outcomes vs. competences

"… a complex area – the subject of some debate and no little confusion." (Adam, 2004)

- Learning outcomes are formulated by the academic staff.
- Competences (as a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) are obtained or developed by the student during the process of learning.

Theoretical background:

student centred approach:

- the knowledge and skills that a student needs to achieve determine the content of the study programme
- emphasis moves from the content (what staff teach) to outcome (what a student will be able to do).

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staff centred:

- input oriented, reflect a combination of the fields of interest and expertise of the members of staff.

(Tuning project)

Implementation at the KULeuven

Where are we now?

- external: legal framework, decree of 2003
  - learning outcomes perspective incorporated in the law on higher education

- internal:
  - KULeuven educational concept:
    adopted in 1999, student-centred approach
  - ECTS – label since 2005: ECTS information package
  - involved in learning outcomes projects of 'Bologna experts': Social Work, Medicine, Linguistics and Literature

Implementation at the KULeuven

General description of degree programmes

- Qualification awarded
- Admission requirements
- Educational and professional goals
- Access to further studies
- Course structure diagram with credits (60 per year)
- Final examination
- Examination and assessment regulations
- ECTS departmental co-ordinator

www.kuleuven.ac.be/onderwijs/aanbod/opleidingen/E/index.htm

Description of individual course units

- Course title
- Course code
- Type of course
- Level of course
- Year of study
- Semester/trimester
- Number of credits allocated
- Name of lecturer
- Objective of the course (preferably expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences)
- Prerequisites
- Course contents
- Recommended reading
- Teaching methods
- Assessment methods
- Language of instruction

Implementation at the KULeuven

Example: Master of Financial and Actuarial Engineering: Objectives and exit qualifications

The main goal of the programme is to provide the students with an sound knowledge of finance and actuarial science. They develop the capabilities to understand current and future problems and solutions in the actuarial and financial context. They will be equipped with fundamental and conceptual knowledge of the mathematical and economic aspects of financial theory and insurance techniques. After graduation, students satisfy the requirements of the Royal Association of Belgian Actuaries.

At the end of the programme students will:
- be equipped with fundamental and conceptual knowledge of the mathematical and economic aspects of financial theory and insurance techniques;
- have advanced insights in the actuarial aspects of life insurance, general insurance, risk theory as well as in the interrelationship and integration of actuarial sciences and financial mathematics;
- have a strong background in quantitative methods and financial models and will be able to select and apply those methods to problems that involve risk or uncertainty;
- dispose of enhanced analytical, critical, conceptual, problem solving and decision making capabilities and skills;
- have the ability to integrate actuarial, statistical and financial modelling techniques in order to arrive at effective solutions to problems occurring in insurance and financial practice;
- be able to conduct research, not only in an academic context, but also in view of a professional career;
- be able to stay up-to-date with the advances in actuarial sciences by following up and familiarizing with new insights, developments, results and methods;
- be able to communicate and report adequately on financial and actuarial topics.

Implementation at the KULeuven

What remains to be done?

- check of all course descriptions
- check of conformity with EQF (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning) and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

What do we want to avoid?

- reduction of academic education to instrumental, vocational training
- endless checklists
- a legal stipulation of learning outcomes