

IAESB Strategy: AAT Response

1. What is your view on the Guiding Principles? Specifically, are they helpful in providing a guide for implementing an effective learning outcomes approach?

The Guiding Principles are useful in supporting the move to an effective learning outcomes approach. They provide a clear rationale for the approach and suggestions for successful implementation. These when read in conjunction with the Staff Questions and Answers document, will be helpful to those adopting the approach for the first time.

2. How do you see the use of these Guiding Principles benefitting your organisation, or other organisations with which you are familiar?

AAT has for some time adopted a fully learning outcomes / competence based approach to assessments. For this reason the guiding principles are unlikely to be a significant benefit, however for those who are unfamiliar, or have yet to adopt this approach, the principles should offer welcome guidance.

3. What additional Guiding Principles do you recommend to support the implementation of a learning outcomes approach?

AAT has no other suggestions for guiding principles, but see suggestions for implementation guidance below.

4. What other areas of implementation guidance would you recommend be developed to support a learning outcomes approach?

AAT would suggest creating a resource bank of further guidance based on the responses to the consultation. The resource bank could include:

- Case studies from organisations detailing how they have implemented a learning outcomes based approach, providing that this information is readily available and not viewed as commercially sensitive
- Guidelines on writing effective learning outcomes
- Guidelines on the progressive nature of learning outcomes and their appropriateness to the level of learning with links to Blooms taxonomy
- Examples of module/unit learning outcomes and progression by level.
Examples of assessment mapping and coverage of module/unit learning outcomes

5. Have you implemented a learning outcomes approach? If yes:

a. What recommendations do you have for others yet to implement a learning outcomes approach?

It is crucial that the initial competence statements (which act as benchmarks) are clear, appropriate and assessable. It is not uncommon to find when reviewing competence statements, that they are in fact not requiring the candidate to demonstrate what was initially intended, or indeed, make it impossible to accurately assess against.

b. Please share an example(s) of your approach- including assessment activities used- which you believe may be useful to assist others implementing a learning outcomes approach.

AAT moved to a competence based qualification system 20 years ago, which necessitated the use of learning outcomes. We adopted the national standards which had been set and agreed for the United Kingdom, rather than developing our own, because the standards were developed with significant input from employers to ensure they reflected the skills employers needed.

The use of national standards as a baseline also provided increased transferability for students in the labour market. Our starting point was feedback from employers that they needed people with skills, rather than academic, knowledge based qualifications; we chose to combine a switch to learning outcomes with switch to a competence based approach. The timing of the development of the national Occupation Standards was beneficial to AAT, and we were heavily involved from the start.

There was significant culture change required, and there was a high degree of resistance to change from students and training providers. There was also resistance from assessment writers and markers. The transition was to an entirely new way of writing and marking assessments, making sure that we covered all areas of the standards in each assessment session, rather than the more traditional exam style questions which pick different areas of the curriculum in each sitting. This particular change required very careful communication to training providers and tutors in-particular, in order to ensure that students were not disadvantaged as a result of the change.

AAT's assessments are now all computer based and fully on-demand, utilising a randomised item bank. Anyone wishing to view AAT's revised qualifications (available for first teaching in Sept 2016) will be able to view the specifications via our website from 1st September 2015.

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