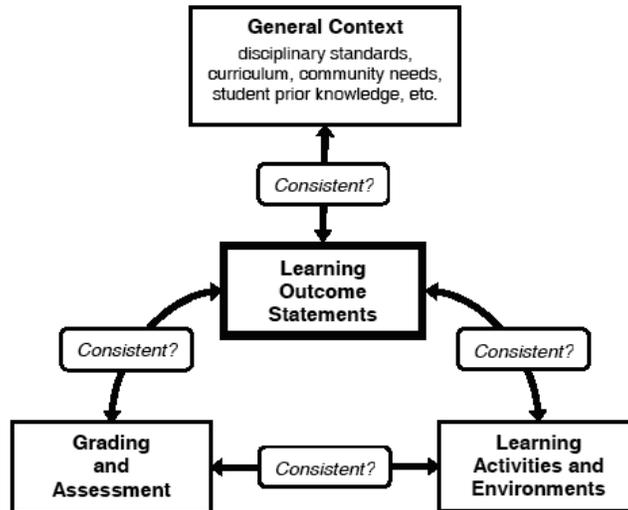


## Outcome Statements as a Foundation for Student Grading and Program Assessment

Learning outcome statements serve as anchors for grading individual student performance as well as for measuring the overall effectiveness of courses and programs. As suggested in the diagram below, the underlying assumption in either case is that assessment instruments should be consistent with course or program learning outcome statements and learning activities and environments.



## Examples of Consistency Between Outcomes and Assessments

Outcome Statement	Grading or Assessment Item	
	Inconsistent	Consistent
Identify the formula for the standard deviation.	Calculate the standard deviation.	Mark the formula for the standard deviation.
Predict effects of convection.	Define convection.	Use arrows to indicate air flow.
Critique pointillist compositions.	Match these impressionist paintings with the appropriate artist.	Outline the artist's presumed intentions and the likely effects on viewers of this painting.
Analyze environmental policy.	List the major causes of environmental degradation in the Coastal Redwood Forests.	Which of these is not a direct implication of the policy except on mitigation?

## Student Learning Outcomes

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**Assessment of Individual Student Performance for Grading.** Instructors can promote understanding of grading and assessment by reviewing learning outcome statements with students in conjunction with discussion of exams and assignments and by using outcome statements as a basis for designing exam questions and rubrics for evaluating assignments. Consistency between learning outcome statements and grading methods/policies reduces confusion about grading which is, according to the Office of the University Ombudsman, the most frequent source of student complaints and grievances.

Aligning grading methods with learning outcome statements also provides a framework for diagnosing individual student learning problems by allowing instructors or programs to target specific competencies for improvement. Some departments maintain individual student records of outcomes attained to ensure that students meet minimum competency requirements.

**Assessment of Courses and Program Effectiveness.** Measuring the effectiveness of courses and academic programs involves many questions about learning outcomes that transcend mere summation of student grades. Does a course promote lifelong learning? Will a program meet professional standards or employer expectations? Does it prepare students for civic engagement or appreciation of diverse cultural expressions?

These questions clearly go beyond what can be measured within the boundaries of course requirements or grades, but that does not mean such questions cannot be measured periodically as a basis for improvement or adjustment of courses or academic programs. When the purpose of such assessment is primarily improvement of SDSU courses and programs, methods of data collection and analysis need not be as comprehensive or rigorous as might be required for generalizable research studies.

### Using Outcome Statements to Guide Assessment

Outcome	Examples of Possible Assessment Strategies (occasional or periodic)
Promote lifelong learning.	Randomized survey of students following graduation to estimate the extent they continue to learn on their own through reading or self-study.
Meet performance standards in a profession or occupation.	Focus groups with selected employers. Student performance on standardized tests.
Engage in civic affairs and appreciate diverse cultural expressions	Telephone interviews with students regarding volunteer community work, voting activity, participation in cultural events.