Programs and disciplines at Mount Royal College have been developing and implementing outcomes-based curricula since 1997 as part of the College's ongoing curriculum renewal strategy. The aim is to continually develop the quality of student learning experiences at the College.

Through ongoing curriculum renewal, new program development, and implementation of an assessment plan process, learning outcomes have been integrated into the College's curricula at the course and program levels.

Intent

The intent underlying the implementation of the learning outcomes initiative has been to encourage its development from within the college community itself. The Faculty Curriculum Group (FCG), with representation from college faculty, students, and administration, has been designated to guide the implementation.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

A key outcome of the initial work of the FCG was the identification of six College-wide learning outcomes (CWO) or abilities that the college believes should be incorporated into the studies of all students of Mount Royal College. In the spring of 1999, the six College-wide learning outcomes (CWO) were accepted in principle by the Academic Council and the Board of Governors.
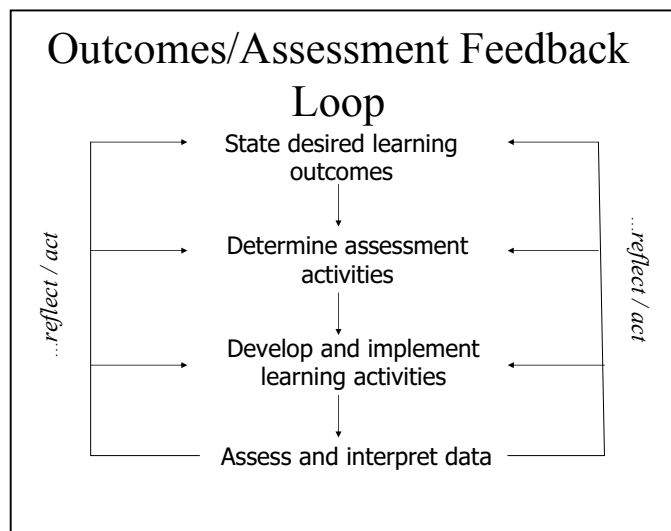
Mount Royal College's approach is to deliberately, and in a sustained manner, put curricula in place that incorporate the CWO. By incorporating these outcomes into courses and by attending to relevant teaching, learning and assessment activities associated with them, the College believes that students will develop significantly in these ability areas.

Learning outcomes denote the essential and enduring knowledge, abilities, and attitudes needed by the graduate of a course or program.

Learning outcomes describe what the graduate will be able to do as a result of the learning experience. They help to prepare graduates for a life of continuous learning and have been identified as abilities critical to personal and professional success.

Outcomes/Assessment Feedback Loop

As shown in the diagram, outcomes-based learning begins with the selection of desired learning outcomes and culminates in assessment. Assessment is the link that completes the feedback loop in the outcomes-based learning cycle; it helps us to know if teaching/learning is happening as we intended. The learning outcomes should be assessed in an "authentic" manner that tests a learner's ability to self-assess, integrate and apply his or her learning. This open-ended, interactive process of teaching and learning is cyclical in nature; it aims to enhance student learning and continuously improve curriculum.

Outcomes/Assessment Feedback Loop

...reflect / act

- State desired learning outcomes
- Determine assessment activities
- Develop and implement learning activities
- Assess and interpret data

...reflect / act

Mount Royal College's Six College-Wide Learning Outcomes

College-wide learning outcomes (CWO) are abilities considered important in preparing students for current and future work, learning and citizenship contexts. MRC has selected six College-wide learning outcomes. The bulleted statements under each learning outcome description/definition identify important components that may be considered when incorporating a College-wide learning outcome into a course.

Communication

The exchange of information, ideas and feelings. The ability to convey understandable messages and to accurately interpret the messages of others is necessary in academic, vocational and social environments.

- Interpret and evaluate meaning using a variety of texts and media
- Detect nuances of written, oral, and non-verbal messages
- Understand and use vocabulary, concepts, numbers, symbols, charts, and numerical expressions (appropriate to discipline)
- Communicate clearly and concisely using written, spoken, or visual formats and media appropriate to purpose, situation, and audience needs
- Demonstrate interpersonal skills through effective listening, establishing rapport, monitoring non-verbal signals and expressing awareness of and respect for self and others
- Assess personal effectiveness with regard to written, oral, and non-verbal communications

Computer Literacy

Computer literacy is an essential skill. Because technology is constantly evolving, students must have the ability to adapt to change.

- Demonstrate knowledge of computer concepts and terminology
- Use computers to communicate
- Use computers to process information
- Use computers to manage data
- Demonstrate competence in discipline-specific technology applications
- Apply computing skills to new situations and environments
- Show understanding of the legal, ethical, and ideological issues regarding computers, society and the individual

Thinking

The thinking process develops and evaluates perspectives based on knowledge, reasoning, and creativity, within a context of critical thinking.

- Reflective Thinking: Review ongoing thought processes and experiences
- Creative Thinking: Synthesize information leading to a novel and a worthwhile solution
- Challenging Assumptions: Identify and consider underlying beliefs, values, parameters, and postulates
- Analytical Thinking (appropriate to discipline): Break down a complex problem into its constituent elements and examine connections between them
- Problem solving: Achieve goals using thought processes to overcome obstacles preventing to obvious answers
- Decision making: Identify and weigh alternatives to make defensible and informed choices

Ethical Reasoning

Ethical reasoning is demonstrated as a College-wide learning outcome through the student's ability to:

- Articulate personal values and beliefs
- Recognize and examine multiple perspectives
- Acknowledge diversity and diverse points of view
- Examine assumptions and connections among beliefs, decisions, actions and consequences from a variety of perspectives (individual, community, national, and global)
- Analyze and discuss issues from ethical perspectives
- Apply ethical principles and frameworks in decision making

Information Retrieval & Evaluation

The ability to retrieve and evaluate information is a life skill that enhances and supports decision making and problem solving. In achieving this outcome, graduates will demonstrate their ability to identify, retrieve and evaluate information ethically and responsibly.

- Identify information requirements in a given situation
- Identify the types and levels of information which relate to these requirements
- Identify relevant information sources
- Generate search strategies necessary to complete an information search
- Analyze initial results
- Refine search strategies
- Evaluate the quality of the information (source, currency, accuracy, authenticity, relevance, bias)
- Organize information in a relevant fashion to assess completeness
- Acknowledge sources of information
- Use a recognized format for acknowledgement
- Assess personal effectiveness regarding information retrieval and evaluation

Group Effectiveness

Group effectiveness is the ability to work respectfully with others, to see multiple sides of an issue. This includes an understanding that the group is able to create more than the individual, and demonstrates a willingness to work toward a common goal or purpose.

- Demonstrate knowledge of group processes
- Apply knowledge of group process skills by participating in specific group tasks and by building relationships to support group effectiveness
- Demonstrate personal group effectiveness by being open, flexible, respectful of others and accepting of diversity
- Communicate effectively in a group setting by listening actively and giving and receiving feedback appropriately
- Demonstrate personal accountability for the success of the group by exhibiting a commitment to group functioning

Outcomes-Based Curricula

Incorporating College-wide Learning Outcomes

The approach to incorporating CWO is intended to respect the diversity of curricula at Mount Royal College. It is performed in the following manner:

- Each course taught at the College should focus on at least one College-wide learning outcome (*Curriculum Renewal Strategic Plan*, 2000).

  Focusing on one or more CWO in a course includes identifying the CWO(s), the teaching/learning activities, and the assessment approaches (assignments, exams) designed to support achievement of the outcome(s).

- MRC faculty members have developed a variety of ways to incorporate CWO into their courses. For example, some have highlighted *course outcomes* and then indicated where CWO are addressed in those course outcomes (including relevant teaching/learning and assessment activities). Others have highlighted *College-wide learning outcomes* and indicated how those outcomes relate to the *course subject matter*.

- The course outline and instructor-student discussions are two key ways to help students understand how outcomes will be incorporated into courses.

  In addition, CWO have been used as a framework for indicating broad areas of focus for teaching/learning and assessment in some multi-section courses or courses within the same level.

- Applied degree and diploma programs focus on each of the six outcomes in such a way that graduates have reasonable opportunities to become effective in each College-wide learning outcome, although not necessarily in **all** of the components identified for each outcome.

  Each program identifies specific program learning outcomes that are also integrated in the to program curriculum.

- Arts and Science areas (i.e., disciplines, university transfer) and certificate programs select those outcomes that are most relevant to them. They consider factors such as the expectations of the institutions receiving their learners, the needs of the College programs they serve, and the particular knowledge, skills, and abilities important to that discipline.

Contact

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Suggested Resources

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