Visualizing Alignment: Showing How Course Components Work Together

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This presentation has to do with the way(s) faculty, designers, and administrators can demonstrate alignment between various course components.

Objectives for the Session

- Develop a conceptual framework for evaluating the efficacy of various visualization methods for demonstrating alignment.
- Review four specific methods for visualizing alignment.
- Discuss ways that designers and instructors might improve the clarity with which alignment is described.

Setting the Stage: An ID Inherits a Syllabus

I was recently given a course to push through production at Columbia. It was clearly designed by someone who knew about Instructional Design principles. But I didn't know anything about the course. There were Learning Objectives (LOs), and assignments had been affiliated with LOs. But the **why** and the **how** of the alignment was not clear!

Question for Discussion

- What would *you* do?

QM on Alignment

"Critical course components … reinforce one another to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. When aligned … [course components] … are directly tied to and support the learning objectives."[1]

Question for Discussion

- What do we mean by that definition of "alignment"? (How) Might we supplement that definition?

Particularly Relevant Specific Review Standards

- 2.2 ("The module/unit-level objectives…are…consistent with the course-level objectives")
- 3.1 ("The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives")
- 5.1 ("The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives")

Question for Discussion

- What are some other SRSs that are particularly relevant in this conversation?

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[1] *QM Higher Education Rubric Workbook: Standards for Course Design*, Sixth Edition for Online & Blended Courses, p. 5.

Four Methods for Visualizing/Demonstrating Alignment in a Syllabus

1. The "This just goes with that" Method.

> Module reflection 2 (Modules 5-8): Efficacy, interpretability, and bias. [L1, L2, L3]
>
> Students will pick a current use of AI and provide an analysis using the methods learned in these modules. This includes: 1, A brief technical description of the topic (what is the goal, what type

2. The "Diagram" Method.
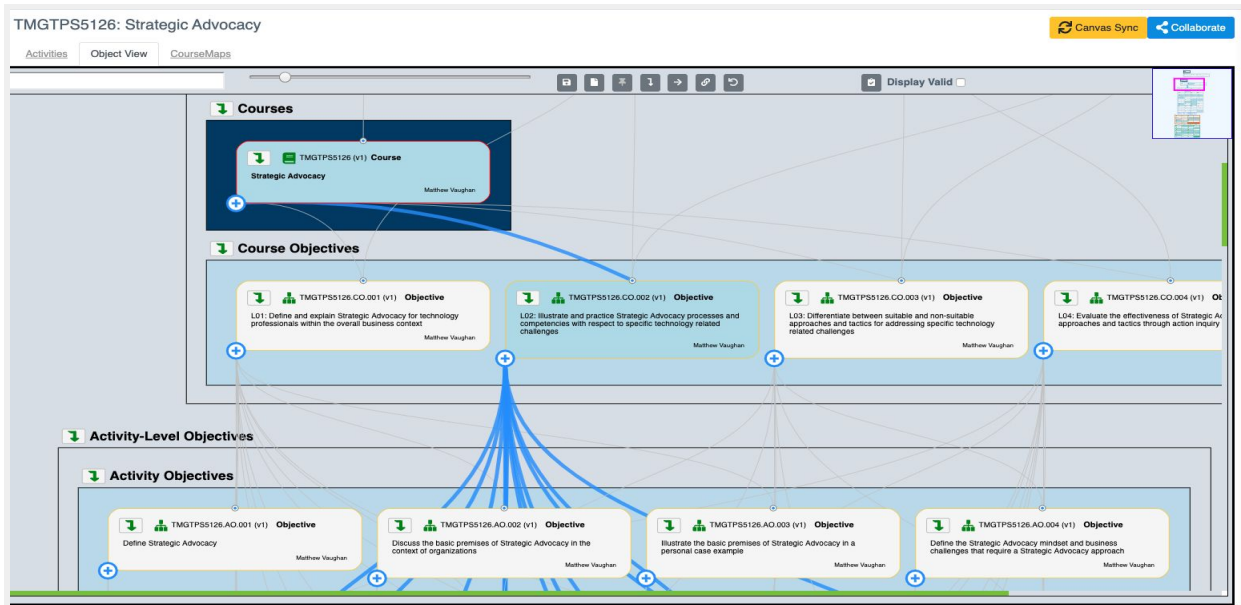
3. The "Table" Method.

Learning Objective	Will Be Assessed By...
LO1. Explain the history, origins, and key regulators of the healthcare compliance discipline in the United States	• Case #1 • Response to Audit Letter
LO2. Articulate the incentives of various models of reimbursement when making decisions about modes of treatment	• Case #2 and #3

4. The "Longform" Method.

> **Newspaper Article Summary.** Students will find, read, and summarize a newspaper article that discusses a bioethical issue/topic. It must have been published within the last two years. This assignment will be due in Week/Module 2.
>
> > *This activity aligns with LO1, in that it helps students align the aims and methods of the course with contemporary issues and practice.*
>
> **Midterm.** This exam will be divided into two parts: Part 1 will present students with objective (i.e., matching, multiple choice, and T/F) questions related to the content covered in this class. Part 2 will be an essay, in which students must reflect upon, and make an argument about, a particular topic. This assignment will be due in Week/Module 4.
>
> > *This activity aligns with LO2, LO3, and LO4, in that it will help students become more familiar with historical events and actors -- as well as providing a context for making an argument related to bioethics.*

Questions for Discussion
- What are some strengths and weaknesses of these methods of demonstrating alignment?
- Which of these is preferable for the Syllabus?

Open Discussion

A. What are some best practices for demonstrating alignment that we have not covered in this session?
B. Does the discipline of the course matter in this discussion? In other words, will instructors from different fields of study visualize alignment differently?
C. How does/should this conversation impact the way designers and instructors craft Module or Assignment descriptions?
D. Let's reflect on the "Diagram" Method. What are your thoughts about how it might function? Does it clarify or muddy the issues under consideration?
E. (How) Do we as IDs or instructors need to differentiate *learning* activities from *assessment* activities as part of these methods of articulating alignment? In other words, is anything missing from them?
F. What new points of departure is this conversation opening up for you?