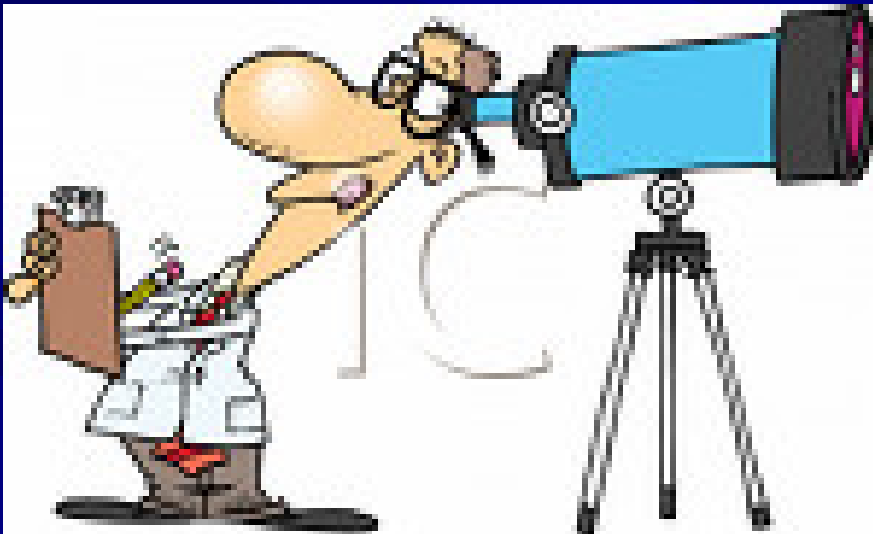


# Planning the Way Forward for our University. Some Concluding Points



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“Learning outcomes had fundamentally changed the Scottish sector’s approach to learning since the 1990s and had resulted in enhanced coherence of the learning experience, greater transparency, increased dialogue with stakeholders, more opportunity for students to manage their own learning and better support for transitions into and out of learning programmes at points that suited the needs of the student”

- Judith Vincent, Univ of West of Scotland  
(Seminar 21 – 22 February 2008)

# Students' Perspective on Learning Outcomes

- Learning outcomes are an important aspect of student-centred learning which focused on student needs.
- Learning outcomes provided students with
  - a clear idea of what was expected
  - helped them to identify their own personal and professional development
  - increased their sense of ownership of their educational experience.
  - encouraged them to engage more actively in their learning.
  - gave a more accurate and meaningful picture of student achievement than workload.

(Jill Little National Union of Students Scotland)

# Recommendations from students

- Learning outcomes should not be used in a tokenistic way e.g., only referred to in course handbooks.
- Learning Outcomes should be communicated to students so that they can articulate the knowledge and skills they have acquired.
- Learning Outcomes should be neither so prescriptive as to impede freedom of learning nor so broad as to become meaningless.

(Jill Little National Union of Students Scotland)

# Advantages of Learning Outcomes from students' perspective

The use of learning outcomes with ECTS would result in:

- A broader, fairer and more accurate recognition of students' knowledge and skills.
- A more transparent learning environment
- Easier to engage with and to choose programmes.
- Easier mobility within academic fields, education systems and countries.
- Enhanced employability in Europe
- More student centred learning.

(Jill Little National Union of Students Scotland)

# Issues with Introduction of Learning Outcomes

- Learning Outcomes are only part of a massive reform package, e.g. Qualification Frameworks, Lifelong Learning, ECTS, Mutual Recognition, Quality Assurance.
- How best to introduce Learning Outcomes (“top down” or “bottom up”? Best left to local and National autonomy.
- How best to deal with sceptical attitude of some staff members – “dumbing down”, “restricting academic freedom”? Hence, important to introduce Learning Outcomes in a proper fashion using sources of good practice and advice.
- Lack of clarity and lack of shared understanding on key terminology, e.g. learning outcomes and competences.

# Issues raised when introducing Learning Outcomes

- **Opposition to Bloom's Taxonomy.** This should not present a problem to the writing of Learning Outcomes AS mentioned already, Bloom's Taxonomy is simply a very useful toolkit to assist us in writing learning outcomes. If staff members do not wish to use Bloom's Taxonomy, they can use other taxonomies or use their own system to write learning outcomes. As long as staff members write learning outcomes that are correctly written, that is all that is important.
- **Preference to write competences.** It is not a problem if people like to describe their courses in terms of competences. However, the Bologna Agreement specifies that modules and programmes must be written in Learning Outcomes. If staff members wish to write competences as well as Learning Outcomes, that is not a problem. Learning outcomes bring clarity to competences.

# Some Advice

- Introducing learning outcomes at institutional level requires a carefully tailored strategy, whose primary goal should be quality enhancement rather than compliance with external directives;
- Learning outcomes must be capable of assessment and at the module level should be linked to assessment criteria, also expressed in terms of learning outcomes;
- The best learning outcomes are the product of sincere reflection about realistic and attainable combinations of knowledge and understanding, practical and cognitive skills, levels of autonomy, learning skills etc.
- Learning Outcomes are challenging but it is impossible to have a meaningful European Higher Education area without their widespread and consistent use

(Stephen Adams, 2008)



# Group Discussion – What are the key challenges facing this university in implementation of Bologna Process?



# Concluding Points

- Momentum generated by
  - European University Association project.
  - International Bologna conferences.
  - Setting up of Teaching and Learning Centre (Ionad Bairre).
  - Postgraduate Cert/Diploma and MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
  - Lunchtime seminars for staff.
- Keep it simple.
- Provide support to staff.
- Staff training is the key.
- Setting up of expertise within each Department – Postgraduate Cert/Diploma course.
- The UCC Quality Promotion Unit - the driving force.
- A team effort.

