ALIGNMENT

DESCRIPTION
Alignment is the teamwork of instructional activities, objectives, and assessments all serving a unified purpose of instruction. Ensuring alignment means making sure that assessments are described by objectives and prepared for by instructional activities.

Assignments have varying functions in meeting objectives. They may be meant to introduce the student to the content, enhance their involvement, foreshadow later material, or function as pre-assessments. Alignment is best when it involves an intersection of knowledge (what is gained by the assignment) and the process (the objective).

You can use Bloom’s Taxonomy for help in clarifying the relationship between learning objectives, assessments, and assignments. If an objective involves “remembering facts”, alignment entails that the assignment will call upon the student to learn or remember those facts, and the assessment will request the student recall the facts.

WHY
Alignment serves the course in several ways:
• Alignment helps students understand what knowledge and cognitive process are going to be included on assessments.
• Alignment brings you confidence that you know what your students are learning.
• Alignment makes it easier for you to determine which parts of your course students are learning and which they are struggling with.
• The student’s goal of getting a good grade motivates them to try to perform well on assessments; therefore well aligned assessments will cause their efforts to also lead to good learning.
• If alignment is not present, students feel frustrated that what they learn isn’t being tested on the assessments, or that the assessments test outside what they have learned.

BEST PRACTICES TO CONSIDER
• Assessments should be aligned with objectives, not vice versa.
• Use Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy Table to see what sort of assessments and objectives are aligned.

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