Tip sheet – Constructive alignment in FLO

At Flinders, **Learning Outcomes (LOs)** are an essential component of topics and courses. The Good Practice Guide: Developing learning outcomes, explains that 'LOs clarify for students the knowledge and skill they should acquire by the end of their studies'.

Constructive alignment is the intentional work of designing curriculum so that the 'LOs, learning activities and assessments all link together'. The Constructive alignment diagram (Figure 1) in the Good Practice Guide: Developing learning outcomes helps to explain how these are interlinked.

Within FLO, students can be supported to understand how the constructive alignment of **assessment, learning activities, learning outcomes** and the **resources and activities** in a FLO site contribute to their learning. This tip sheet provides practical FLO site strategies to make it easier for students to understand how topic resources support them to achieve the expected **Learning Outcomes (LOs)** of a topic. The FLO examples shown in the images in this tip sheet are also available in the demo FLO topic, MOCK3003.

Tip 1: In your FLO site, refer students to the learning outcomes within the SAM

Within FLO, The Statement of Assessment Methods (SAM) is an official and binding document in every FLO site. The SAM document is a primary method used by Flinders University to communicate with students about topic assessment. The SAM includes the assessment activities and how they align with the **learning outcomes** for each topic (digital learning guideline 3. 1). Every SAM contains a table that shows the alignment between assessment activities and learning outcomes **(fig 1)**. All learning outcomes are numbered, and the connections to each assessment task is explained. Learning outcomes are also communicated to students via the Topic information (digital learning guideline 2. 1) link within every topic.

To help students understand the relevance of their learning activities we recommend explaining the relationship between assessments, learning activities and resources with learning outcomes in your FLO site. Duplicating the full text of each learning outcome in multiple activities and/or assessments in your FLO site becomes tedious to update. Your FLO site can become quickly out of sync when updates are made in one place and not another.

A more efficient way to refer to the learning outcomes within the body of the FLO site is to refer to the LO numbers documented within the assessment and learning outcomes table in the SAM e. g. LO1 and LO2 (see table below).

Alignment of assessment with expected learning outcomes

On completion of this topic students will be expected to be able to:	**Assessment exercises linked to Learning Outcome**
LO1: Discuss the differences between mathematics and numeracy	Quantitative numeracy investigation
LO2: Assess examples of numeracy in the community	Quantitative numeracy investigation
LO3: Evaluate connections between their specialist teaching areas and numeracy	Quantitative numeracy investigation ePortfolio submission
LO4: Discuss the power and use of quantitative information to influence people's thinking	Unit plan and oral presentation ePortfolio submission
LO5: Design teaching sessions which use ICT as a tool to enhance their students' learning outcomes and support their students to become more aware of their needs as learners	Unit plan and oral presentation ePortfolio submission

Figure 1 Extract from SAM for MOCK3003

The LOs are also listed in the Topic information link, which can be found in the Topic blocks of each FLO site and by using the 'show details' link to display the Expected Learning Outcomes.

Topic Information

Educational Aims	This topic aims to: • develop a positive disposition toward numeracy and the use of ICTs • understand the responsibilities associated with teaching numeracy and the use of ICTs in the middle and secondary years in content area classrooms
Expected Learning Outcomes	On completion of this topic students will be able to: • Discuss the differences between mathematics and numeracy • Assess examples of numeracy in the community • Evaluate connections between their specialist teaching areas and numeracy • Discuss the power and use of quantitative information to influence people's thinking • Design teaching sessions which use ICT as a tool to enhance their students' learning outcomes and support their students to become more aware of their needs as learners

Figure 2 Sample of Topic Information showing Expected Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Tip 2: Provide information about how activities and resources contribute to the LOs and assessment

The Good Practice Guide: Principles of Assessment states 'Assessment is integral to course and topic design'. When a student accesses their FLO topic site, you can support them with good design in your FLO site to achieve the three key elements of communicating how **resources**, **learning outcomes**, **learning activities** and **assessments** are all interconnected and mutually supportive.

Topic resources may be specific to a tutorial activity, an assessment task or may be optional. You may also have included additional resources to provide choices to students through multiple means of representation (e.g. watching a video, reading articles, or contributing to a discussion). Providing clear explanations about the purpose of resources and activities can help students to understand how your FLO site supports their achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The FLO starter site can help you as a framework for arranging your FLO site so that students can find everything they need quickly and easily. By including information about how each of the online activities contributes to learning, and relating these back to the achievement of learning outcomes and assessment activities (digital learning guideline 4. 7 and 5. 1) a FLO site can make constructive alignment visible to students.

What does this look like in FLO?

Several ideas are suggested below that can be used to make constructive alignment more visible within FLO. To provide students with a consistent experience, it can be helpful to choose one strategy across topics within a course.

When referring to the Learning Outcomes in your FLO site by their number only, (e. g. LO1, LO2) it can be helpful to explain this to students because they may be new to University study and how LOs are used. If you are using the FLO starter site, you can add a general paragraph into your FLO site, or you can add this to a topic FAQ.

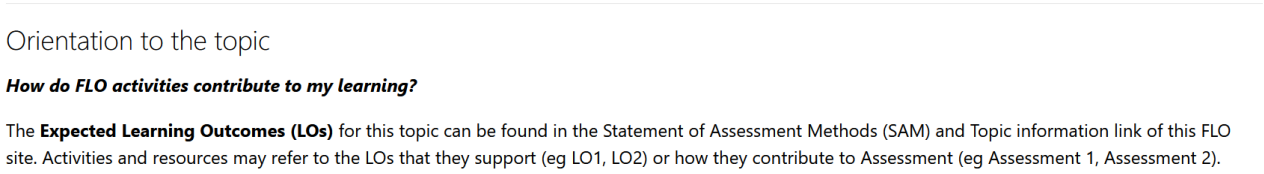

Figure 3: Example of introductory LO paragraph (MOCK3003)

Entire modules in FLO can refer to specific learning outcomes. You could create a few sentences, and use a FLO label to add this text before or after a group of FLO activities (see figure 4). Short audio recordings or a short video explanation are an alternative to using text.

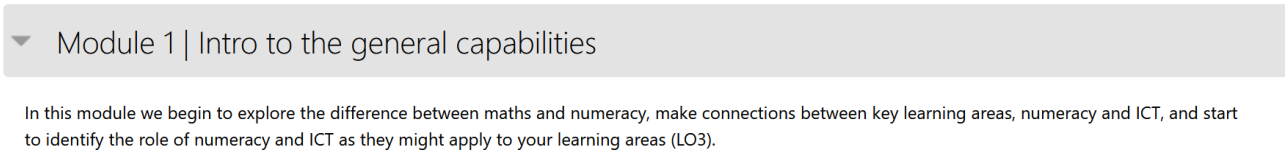

Figure 4 Example of linking to LO in a module (MOCK3003)

For individual activities and resources, you can add a brief sentence to the **Description** of the activity or resource. You can then select to display this description on the FLO topic page so that it appears right below it.

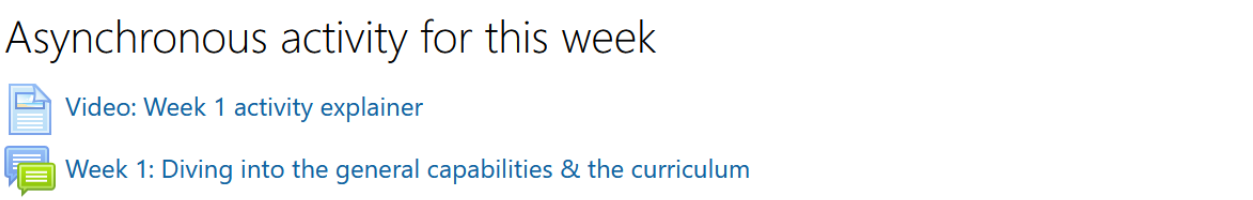

Figure 5 Example of linking to LO in an activity description (MOCK3003)

Below, are additional ideas to help students to understand how their online activity in FLO relates to the topic Learning Outcomes.

1. Key reflective questions: Use key questions for each of your modules and explicitly link them to the Learning Outcomes (fig 6).

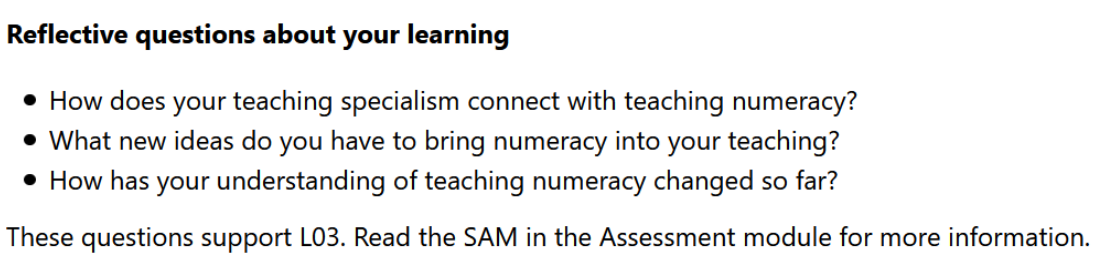

Figure 6 Key questions and LOs (MOCK3003)

2. Encourage students to self-monitor their own achievement towards the learning outcomes. You could use a feedback activity (anonymous or logged) so that students can comment on their achievement of the learning outcomes and connect this to any personal learning outcomes (fig 7).

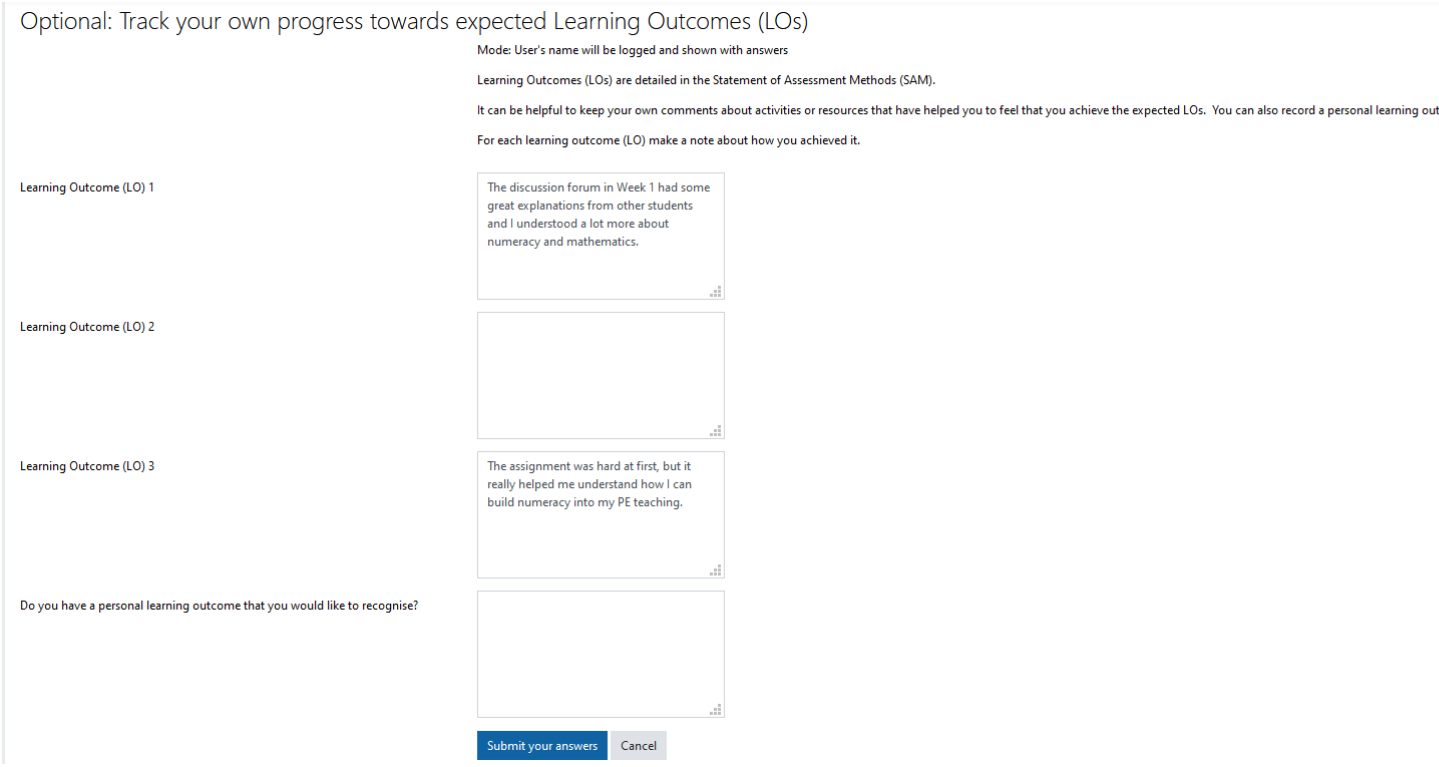

Figure 7 Using a Feedback activity for students to self-track LOs (MOCK3003)

3. Where appropriate encourage students to use an ePortfolio to compile examples of their work related to topic learning outcomes. These learning examples mapped to LOs can be valuable if students are applying for recognition of prior learning for future study or require artifacts for a career portfolio.
4. Use a FLO page or upload a document which describes how your FLO topic resources relate to LOs. (This method will only work if you have created all your FLO activities and resources at the start of the semester).

No matter which approaches you use in FLO, the intent should be to create brief and useful narrative comments that help students to understand how online activities contribute to learning. This can help students to manage their time and to understand why resources and activities in FLO sites are relevant to learning and assessment.