# Language Curriculum Coherence as a Pro-active Learning Tool

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## Abstract

This paper will report on a language curriculum initiative in the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sydney, Australia. The School undertook a complete curriculum review in 2012 with the following aims:

- achieve greater curriculum alignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks,
- use external standards to structure the various student pathways across the language curriculum. All units of study were matched with language levels of the Common European Framework of Reference and with another, more notional, standard specific to the University of Sydney: the Graduate Attributes all students need to reach at graduation.

The project was divided in two main stages:

1. detailed analysis of two 2012 language curricula, a Roman language (French) and a non-Western script language (Chinese). Curriculum coherence was examined through the evaluation of the degree of alignment of each assessment task with (1) the course's learning outcomes, (2) CEFR language levels and (3) University graduate attributes, and
2. the design of an online approach to making this alignment evident and transparent to students. The approach was integrated within the learning management system used by students.
3.

Constructive and transparent curriculum alignment is an important tool for student learning. *"The key is that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks, are aligned to the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes. The learner is in a sense "trapped", and finds it difficult to escape without learning what is intended should be learned"* [1]. Transparency increases students' understanding of the rationale behind each assessment task and the standard of performance expected. It supports student learning autonomy.

The paper will present the results of the curriculum alignment analysis, and resulting changes, as well as the online process developed to render the alignment of each assessment task visible to students and increase their understanding of what is expected in the task and how the task contributes to their achievement towards the stated learning outcomes, the CEFR levels and the University graduate attributes.

## References

[1] Biggs, J. 2002, Aligning Teaching and Assessment to Curriculum Objectives, Higher Education Academy.