

## Grades vs. Outcomes

**In most cases, there are multiple ways to measure the learning outcomes you've defined. And most are more complex than they appear.**

It seems fairly simple; after all, faculty assess student performance all the time when determining their grades, right? The problem is that a student's grade doesn't necessarily guarantee that they achieved all the outcomes in the course, even if they receive a successful grade.

Let's break it down. Rebecca is taking a math class in which there are ten units, each representing one of the learning outcomes for the course. Rebecca receives 100% on nine of the ten assignments, and fails miserably (let's say she gets 10%) on the tenth. Her instructor is a traditional 90% = A grader, so Rebecca gets an A in the course, even though she failed to achieve one of the learning outcomes that the instructor defined.

**There are different schools of thought on the matter, but it actually IS possible to use the same rubric for grading and assessment of learning outcomes, if it's done correctly. Here's how.**

In this example, let's keep it simple and say the instructor has three students and three outcomes connected with his course. He uses the rubric he developed to assign student grades. He keeps his rubric and scores for the upcoming assessment day, so he can also tally his results to look at learning outcome attainment. Please note that the instructor has documentation showing specifically what each outcome represents, and how scores are derived.

#	Outcome A	Outcome B	Outcome C	Grade
1	90	45	100	78% = C
2	95	55	95	82% = B
3	100	35	100	78% = C
Outcome Total	95%	45%	98%	

In the example above, only looking at student grades doesn't tell the whole story (everyone received at least a "C"). Clearly there is a high degree of success with Outcomes A and C, but the picture is very different for Outcome B. By analyzing student performance in this

manner, faculty can see where students are having the greatest success, as well as where they are struggling to grasp the material.