FAQ for Foreign Language Learning Outcomes

How do the Learning Outcomes help programs identify specific grammar, structures, and vocabulary?

- It is beyond the scope of this project to list specific grammar, structures, or vocabulary. That said, in order to perform the functions of the Learning Outcomes, students will certainly need to know and be able to use linguistic and cultural content. Specific content will be predicated on the contexts, tasks, and topics chosen by individual programs as suggested in the Alignment Guides.
- It is the instructor's responsibility to draw students' attention to linguistic features of the target language and to have them practice using structures, grammar, and vocabulary in meaningful ways. For example, in meeting the Learning Outcome "State what people, places, and things are like with a few/some details," students, by the end of the first beginning course, might tell what their German instructor is like and learn about their counterparts' English instructor in Germany. To do so, they would need:
  - Verbs, such as to be, to live, to like, and to have;
  - Grammar, such as adjective agreement, definite/indefinite articles (e.g., the, a) and prepositions (e.g., from, in); and
  - Vocabulary, such as a few/some nationalities, countries, and place names; physical characteristics (e.g., tall, short, blond, blue-eyed, pretty, athletic); personality traits (e.g., funny, intelligent, serious); relatives and pets (e.g., nuclear family members, dog, cat), and leisure time-activities (e.g., walk, play soccer, watch sports, read, go to the movies).
  - The resultant language sample might be: "My instructor is Helena Sauer. She's German. She's from Stuttgart. She's tall and athletic. Helena has blond hair and blue eyes. She is serious. Helena lives in Cincinnati with her husband and two sons. She has a dog. She likes to play soccer and watch VfB Stuttgart."
- The ability to perform the functions outlined in the Learning Outcomes grows more sophisticated as students add more structures, grammar, and vocabulary to their linguistic repertoires. That said, even beginning students can give a simple reason why someone should do or say something, offer a simple apology or excuse, make a simple request, or predict the outcome of a familiar situation. For example, beginners might say:

   B1: I need a book. Come with me/Do you want to come with me?
   B2: When?
   B1: 2:00?
   B2: Sorry, I'm working/I have to work.
   B1: Let's go tomorrow. You need a break/rest.
   B2: Ok. See you then.
- Rubrics help instructors measure if students know and can use grammar, structures, and vocabulary to express meaning in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Although research supports the notion of a critical period for accurate sound production, students can indeed approximate the sounds of the target language and be comprehensible to native speakers. From the first beginning course, students need to listen to a variety of speakers and be given many opportunities to imitate and practice sounds in a meaningful context. Linkages with target language peers through videoconferencing create compelling contexts to sound as good as possible.

- Most children intuitively know the syntax of their first language by the time they enter first grade. Students continue to acquire vocabulary and hone spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation skills throughout their studies and into adulthood. Similar to second language abilities, first language functioning becomes more sophisticated as students are exposed to a greater variety of texts and practice applying extracted "ways with words" in their own communications. Consequently, it is unrealistic to assume that students will use their mother tongue perfectly and control all the nuances of their native language as they enter our courses. The beauty of learning another language, however, is captured in Goethe's famous quote: "Who does not know another language does not know his own." The attention to form and function in our courses enables students to take another look at how their own language works. Studies consistently point to the cognitive and academic benefits of second language learning.

Useful Resources
- The Collaborative Articulation and Assessment Project at The Ohio State University developed rubrics geared to the third course of instruction. These could be easily modified for beginning courses by using the text type and level of detail in the Learning Outcomes.
- The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota also has a variety of sample rubrics.

How is culture addressed in the Learning Outcomes?
- Culture is interwoven into each of the Modes of Communication. Through the target language, students examine the relationship among products, practices and perspectives to demonstrate an understanding of the target culture(s). Students also enhance their understanding by making cultural comparisons and developing cultural insights. Communicating about what people believe, what they do, and what they use or make enables learners to understand authentic cultural contexts which define acceptable language and behavior.
- Integration across the modes leads to inextricable linkages between language and culture. Language always occurs in a cultural context.
- Students need many guided opportunities to practice language in order to perform in culturally appropriate ways. They learn the extent and limits so as not to overgeneralize. As with language learning, this is a gradual process.
- It is beyond the scope of the Learning Outcomes to list out specific products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture(s). These will be predicated on the topics, themes, and contexts addressed in a given program. The Alignment Guides provide many suggested ways to integrate language and culture.

Useful resources
- Pages 12-15 of Ohio's New Learning Standards: World Languages Grades 9-12 have additional suggestions on how to integrate language and culture.

How do the Learning Outcomes address topics and techniques?
It is beyond the scope of the Learning Outcomes to list out specific topics or teaching techniques that must be incorporated into courses.

- The Alignment Guides provide many familiar topics, themes, and contexts likely to be addressed in beginning and intermediate language courses. Individual programs may modify these suggestions as needed. The abbreviation "e.g." means "for example;" "including" is abbreviated "i.e."
- Students respond to language that is meaningful and personalized. If instructors dissuade students by saying, "We'll get to that topic in another chapter," rather than seizing teachable moments, they miss serendipitous opportunities to connect language to students.
- Even in a beginning I course, while not an anticipated outcome, students may, on occasion, be able to create with language, especially if they have a repertoire of highly practiced language on which to draw. In fact, on particular topics or in particular contexts, novice learners may be at the high end of the performance range and can create with language half of the time. If you as an instructor are in the habit of making small talk with students based on their interests and current happenings, this is very likely to occur. For example,
I: "What did you do this weekend?"
S: "I went to the movies."
I: "What did you see?"
S: "(name of film)"
- Learning outcomes do not address *how* instructors should teach to help students meet expectations. Instructors will need many diverse strategies to differentiate instruction based on students' learning styles and preferences.

Useful Resources
- General discussion on differentiation at the college level, University of Virginia videos.
- Specific examples of how to differentiate in the foreign language classroom

How do the Learning Outcomes take textbooks and authentic materials into account?
- The Learning Outcomes are textbook and materials neutral.
- No one resource suffices to ensure that students can meet the expectations set forth in the Learning Outcomes. Instructors will need to supplement a course textbook with a variety of authentic materials if not already included (print or digital texts and media, such as menus, brochures, short articles, short conversations, infomercials, or movie clips).
- It is the task, not the text, that needs to be level appropriate. Through guided instruction (pre-, during, and post- reading/listening/viewing activities), even beginning language learners can demonstrate understanding of the main idea and a few details.
- Programs are encouraged to make language learning relevant and interesting to students by incorporating a variety of current and personalized materials into instruction. For example, if your textbook chapter focuses on nationalities and place names, you might wish to find recent demographic data on where citizens at home or abroad come from to make the information relevant. In addition, you might ask students to share where their own families came from through several generations or have them reach out to peers at home or abroad to find out where they came from and make a chart as a class to interpret and discuss.

Useful Definitions:
- **Authentic materials**: Language samples taken from print or digital texts and media created by native speakers for native speakers that instructors use for instructional purposes. These

might include ads, menus, brochures, advice columns, travel information, weather reports, movie trailers, or short literary texts.

- **Semi-scripted materials**: Print or digital texts and media created by native or very proficient speakers for language learners that relate to specific topics or themes under study. Creators familiarize themselves with the vocabulary, structures, grammar, and cultural points under study and combine in ways likely to be found in the target culture.
- **Textbook materials**: Print or digital texts and media created by textbook authors to introduce and practice specific vocabulary, structures, grammar, and cultural points. Creators carefully sequence content and consciously recycle previously taught elements into subsequent chapters.

How do the Learning Outcomes differ by Mode?
- The Learning Outcomes are differentiated based on the Modes.
- Students usually can understand (Interpretive Mode) more than they can produce on their own (Presentational Mode).
- With frequent opportunities to interact with others, students become adept in sharing information and opinions, as well as in negotiating meaning (Interpersonal Mode).
- In consultation with the Performance Descriptors and the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Benchmarks, therefore, the Learning Outcomes in the Presentational Mode were adjusted down to reflect how language develops.

Useful Resources
- The Executive Summary of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, p. 5, Communication
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Performance Descriptors
- The NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Benchmarks. Access free at bottom of the page.

How do the Essential and Non-Essential Learning Outcomes take performance-level variation into account?
- There is flexibility in meeting the Learning Outcomes based on time and intensity of programs.
- Bridge or intensive programs as well as sections for false beginners (those who have previous instruction in the language) will adjust the pace accordingly.
- The set of Non-Essential Learning Outcomes in each course encourages learners to use language at the next higher level some of the time. By the end of the next course, students should be able to demonstrate that they can meet these same expectations, now Essential Learning Outcomes, most of the time.
- Basing courses on familiar topics and contexts, as well as incorporating a lot of repetition and practice with linguistic content and culturally appropriate ways of interacting into instruction, will enable students in beginning courses (Novice range) to meet a few of the Learning Outcomes in the Intermediate range.
- Students in the Intermediate range, by definition, can also perform a few tasks in the Advanced range, again with lots of repetition and practice.
- For example, it is quite common for programs to introduce students to description and narration in the past as early as Beginning Course II, yet this is an Advanced competency.

Students can perform such a task in guided, controlled situations in familiar contexts with familiar topics.

- Because of the exponential rather than arithmetic manner in which language competence develops, students in the Intermediate range will not be able to sustain description and narration in the past across a broad range of contexts and topics. Hence, they are not yet proficient.

Useful Resources
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Performance Descriptors
- The NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Benchmarks. Access free at bottom of the page.
- The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Click on the link on the right side of the page.

Will there be an assessment requirement to show that students are meeting Learning Outcomes?
- There are already some 120 courses aligned to Learning Outcomes across a variety of disciplines. None of these courses is assessed by the state.
- This project requires foreign language departments in the University System of Ohio to align beginning and intermediate courses to the Learning Outcomes, but assessment of learning is left to individual institutions.

Useful Resources
The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota has an online Virtual Assessment Center with many useful learning modules on assessment.

How do the Learning Outcomes facilitate placement decisions?
- When students self-place, they often sign up for beginning courses despite having studied the language for two or more years in high school or for one or more semesters in college.
- If students can demonstrate that they can meet course learning outcomes either through some sort of placement test or grade in that course, they should be placed into the next higher course.
- Institutions might choose to use the Learning Outcomes to create placement tests to ensure that students start the language sequence in the most appropriate course given their language background.

Glossary
- **Idiomatic expressions**: Phrases that do not translate word-for-word from one language to another without losing the intended meaning. Examples include "*J'ai froid*" or "*Tengo frío*" which translate to "I'm cold," but literally mean "I have cold."
- **Formulaic expressions**: Phases that one routinely uses in the daily course of life, such as "Nice to meet you" or "Have a nice day."