Curriculum alignment: A legal experience

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Abstract

The School of Law at The University of the South Pacific embarked upon a curriculum review of its LLB programme in 2018. The review started with presentations on the significance of curriculum alignment, followed with a discussion on the linkage between course learning outcomes and programme graduate outcomes. This fed into the mapping of these outcomes across the degree programme; where appropriate the outcomes were rewritten. This article discusses the process of undertaking this curriculum alignment process; the authors will draw primarily on their experiences.
Keywords: higher education, curriculum alignment, course learning outcomes, program graduate outcomes, teaching excellence

Introduction

The School of Law (SOL) at The University of the South Pacific (USP) embarked upon a curriculum alignment exercise in 2018 to align course outcomes and assessments to programme outcomes and thereby foster programme coherence. This process is associated with the School's ongoing effort to review its curriculum to ensure that the undergraduate law degree programmme outcomes are context relevant and appropriate (see Penfold, 2012). This exercise was part of USP's ongoing emphasis on the quality of teaching in higher education (on the significance, see Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). Effective teaching and learning should be based on, amongst other things, constructive alignment of teaching and assessment. The principle of constructive alignment provides a helpful foundation for designing programmes that can support effective learning and teaching. Biggs and Tang (2011) set out the key components of constructive alignment in the curriculum design process. These include the correspondence between course learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessments. Constructive alignment also refers to the alignment of course learning outcomes and assessment with programme outcomes and is a process that helps to ensure coherence across a programme.

The idea of constructive alignment of teaching and learning is student-centred. It requires lecturers to ensure that they adopt teaching methods and assessments tasks that are aligned to the learning goals for students identified in the course learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The strategies for undertaking curriculum review in the SOL were determined by USP Curriculum Review and Development Plan that sets out the key phases for programme review and development. Following USP's decision to embark on curriculum review and development, the SOL curriculum alignment exercise was based on the understanding that the learning outcomes of the individual courses must be linked with the SOL programme graduate outcomes.

This article discusses the process of undertaking this curriculum alignment exercise. It begins with a discussion on curriculum alignment, then focuses on the SOL context, the alignment approach and the

result(s) achieved. The authors will draw primarily on their experiences as law lecturers in engaging with this curriculum alignment exercise.

Curriculum Alignment

Curriculum, as defined by Watermeyer (2011, p. 6), "is a roadmap of planned educational experiences conferred to learners by their teachers." Young (2014) describes it as structure that sets the boundaries and opportunities for the transmission of knowledge through teaching and learning. With respect to alignment, it is a:

> process of linkage between individuals and events along a learning continuum by which the content of what is learnt and the relationship of the learner to this are articulated (Watermeyer, 2011, p. 4).

Generally, curriculum alignment is the relationship between learning activities, assessments and outcomes. As explained by Anderson:

> curriculum alignment requires a strong link between objectives and assessments, between objectives and instructional activities and materials, and between assessments and instructional activities and materials. In other words, content validity, content coverage, and opportunity to learn are all included with the more general concept of "curriculum alignment" (Anderson, 2002, p. 257).

The linkage between "content validity, content coverage, and opportunity to learn" is described by Biggs as "constructive alignment" (see Biggs, 1996; Biggs, 2003; Biggs, 2014). Biggs explains that the "constructive aspect refers to the idea that students construct meaning through relevant learning activities" (Biggs, 2003, p. 2). The "alignment aspect refers to what the teacher does, which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes" (Biggs, 2003, p. 2). With reference to Biggs' concept of constructive alignment, Mills, Tivendale, Chan, and Liu note that it is critical "all parts in the teaching scheme, comprising curriculum, intended learning outcomes, and assessment tasks, are aligned with each other" (Mills, Tivendale, Chan, & Liu, 2013, p. 2).

Constructive alignment recognises "knowledge is constructed by the activities of the learner" (Biggs, 2014, p. 9). It begins "with the notion that the learner constructs his or her own meaning through relevant learning activities" (Biggs, 2014, pp. 5-6). In other words, "learning takes place through the active behaviour of the student: it is what *he* does that he learns, not what the teacher does" (Tyler, 1949, p. 63). The relationship between curriculum and assessment "drives the learning activities of the student" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 2). What this means is the teaching and learning environment is student-centred because the focus is on the desired outcome that students are meant to achieve (see Biggs, 2014).

Informed by Biggs' conceptual framework of curriculum alignment, the authors suggest that the curriculum alignment exercise undertaken by SOL, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE), is premised on a constructive alignment approach. The alignment exercise emphasised the importance of being clear about the alignment between USP graduate outcomes, SOL programme outcomes and individual course learning outcomes. This reflects FALE's mission and commitment to promoting student-centred learning. Central to this system of alignment is the interface between student learning and assessments. Aligning USP graduate outcomes with SOL programme outcomes and course learning outcomes was a challenging exercise for the school. SOL had to ensure that the alignment would maintain a clear linkage across individual law courses. Also, it was a challenging exercise because the framing of the SOL curriculum, during its inception phase,

reflected the traditional model of legal education, which placed limited emphasis on alignment. Some of the participants referred to this in their responses to the process that we were undertaking, reflecting the reality that curriculum development priorities may not necessarily coincide with the priorities of a particular academic discipline.

The traditional mode of legal education, as explained by Eyes and Johnstone, has the following characteristics:

> (i) teacher focused – role of teacher is to transmit their own expertise in some specific and narrow subject matter area of the law to students; (ii) concerns with the transmission of content knowledge with teaching legal rules; (iii) strong conviction that law is an autonomous discipline; quasi scientific in nature; (iv) close relationship between legal practitioners and the academy; (v) law school experience is individualised and isolating for both teachers and students. Teachers prepare and teach their subjects in isolation from each other, resulting in no direct coordination between subjects, either within any of the degree program, or between different years (Eyes & Johnstone, 2004, pp. 539-543).

Over time, the traditional model has been reformed with an emphasis on curriculum alignment (see Chesterman, 2009; Eyes & Johnstone, 2004; Witzleb & Skid, 2009). Subsequently, USP SOL has followed a similar trend; this approach recognises that curriculum alignment is crucial pedagogically because it provides the framework for quality teaching and learning (Cohen, 1987). Not only was the teaching of law at USP influenced by traditional approaches, but also by its unique history.

USP School of Law Context

The USP SOL undergraduate degree programme started in 1994. The SOL curriculum was developed by a working group comprising representatives of USP, lawyers, judges and academics who had legal training from universities originating in other commonwealth jurisdictions. The experiences of the members of the working committee shaped the initial curriculum design; it mirrored curricula in other common law jurisdictions such as Australia and New Zealand (Penfold, 2012). This curriculum:

> has been frequently updated since, generally in line with practices and requirements
> in other common law jurisdictions, and ensuring as far as possible that the USP LLB
> degree continues to be recognised in those other jurisdictions (Penfold, 2012).

At undergraduate level, SOL offers the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree as well as combined degrees; namely, the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws (BA/LLB) and the Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Laws (BCom/LLB). These law degree programmes are targeted at those intending to become legal practitioners following successful completion of the Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP) and formal admission to legal practice. Additionally, USP students may undertake the Bachelor of Arts degree with a Major or Minor in Law. Many SOL students originate from the USP 12 member countries, namely: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. From time to time, students from Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia and elsewhere are also enrolled in the SOL degree programmes. With such varied student enrolments, the content of the curriculum is designed to suit the context within which South Pacific lawyers work (Penfold, 2012). This demonstrates that SOL's curriculum is framed in a way to ensure that its graduates are employable in their own local jurisdictions.

The SOL is part of USP's Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE). As a school, it is located at Emalus Campus in Port Vila, Vanuatu while its department branch is in Suva at the Statham Campus near the university's Laucala Campus. SOL offers face-to-face teaching at these two localities, while students from elsewhere in the region study online through regional campuses and centres. Furthermore, SOL makes available a graduate entry-version of the LLB, i.e., students who have attained a three-year bachelor degree from USP or any other recognised university will receive credit for this and only be

required to take 25 courses as opposed to 32. At postgraduate level, SOL offers the Master of Laws (LLM), the Master of Environmental Law (MEL) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

The quality of LLB students and graduates is an ongoing concern for SOL, FALE, regional Legal Admission Boards and judges. Such concerns provided the impetus for SOL, with the support of FALE and advice from its Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), to embark upon a curriculum review exercise. Of particular concern was the English language proficiency of the law students. A Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) was set up in 2016 to examine some of the issues relating to the curriculum. It made recommendations to address these issues and was approved by the Board of Studies in 2016 (Curriculum Development Committee, 2016). The recommendations informed the proposal to revise the first year curriculum for the LLB, which would become part of the process for reviewing and mapping the compulsory courses for the LLB programme.

Review, Alignment and Mapping Process

The proposal to review the SOL LLB programme is linked to the current USP and FALE curriculum review initiative as well as the revision of the USP Graduate Outcomes and also revitalised the work undertaken in the earlier institutional curriculum initiatives of the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) and the Research Skills Development (RSD). A Curriculum Review and Development Plan was created through the Office of the DVC Education in 2017 to continue and enhance the work undertaken in these earlier initiatives. The Plan focuses on building alignment within programmes and across courses as well as creating "fit-for-purpose assessments that develop core learning outcomes and prepare students appropriately for participation in the workforce" (Spiller & Sharma, 2017). As an important prelude to the curriculum review work within programmes, the University Graduate Outcomes and rubrics were reviewed and revised in 2017. The stage was then set for initiating the Curriculum Review and Development Plan, in the first instance in FALE, including in the SOL.

Course Outlines

Dorothy Spiller, an Assessment Consultant from the Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor Learning, Teaching & Student Services, visited Emalus Campus in early 2017 to review SOL courses. She consulted with individual academics with respect to their course outlines, reviewed them and where necessary made suggestions on how to rephrase learning outcomes. This review revealed that some of the outlines had not incorporated the revised USP Graduate Outcomes; those outlines were updated. In essence, this was a bottom-up approach because the process started with the examination of existing course outlines, commentary and suggestions for improvement. The revision of course outlines through such an approach provided an opportunity for SOL academic staff members to take ownership on how best to improve their course outlines. Such an approach made it possible to accommodate the preferences and strengths of each individual academic involved in coordinating and teaching specific subject areas of the law. This stage took place before the formalised process under the auspices of the Curriculum Review and Development Plan, but it was a good opportunity for the consultant to gain an insight into the LLB curriculum and build relationships before the collective review of the whole programme.

One of the interesting aspects of the SOL course outline review was the focus on learning outcomes. The consultant's comments on the course learning outcomes emphasised the use of an action verb that required a particular measurement. Academics were advised not to use descriptive words that they could not assess or measure in assessments. One of these words was "understand" or "understanding". Academics were discouraged from adopting phrases in their course learning outcomes such as: "demonstrate an understanding of the subject"; it was agreed such terminology

could not be measured. Instead, academics were encouraged to adopt words such as 'explain' because students could be assessed based on what they could explain.

The emphasis on adopting action verbs in SOL course learning outcomes differed from the conventional way of designing a course whereby '[t]eachers decided on the content they intend to teach on the programme, planned how to teach this content and then assessed the content' (Kennedy, 2007). The action verbs provide the basis for measuring the extent of learning for students. This was a new learning experience because most SOL academics tended to follow the conventional way of course design. Overall, our LLB course coordinators adapted their course outlines. This included using action verbs for learning outcomes and ensuring that they aligned with assessment activities. This step was an important enculturation process for SOL staff into an educational mindset alongside their usual disciplinary thinking. One of the challenges to this process was deciding upon the appropriate verbs from the Blooms Taxonomy that identified clear measurable learning outcomes. With Spiller's assistance, LLB course coordinators updated their course outlines. The amended course outlines were reviewed by Sean Donlan (Deputy Head of School at this time) in discussion with Eric Colvin (Head of School) and approved by SOL Board of Studies.

Following this course outline review, Spiller indicated that she wanted to review the SOL programme outcomes and the course learning outcomes with all staff. This was in line with the SOL Executive Meeting Report, which emphasised the importance of curriculum review, stating the need to:

> Review existing programme outcomes in light of WSCUC, external review, PAC and other stakeholder feedback, then revise course learning outcomes & assessments and update curriculum map to reflect revised outcomes.

> Continue review of the compulsory elements of the LLB curriculum, in light of the recommendations of the SOL External Review Panel, the recommendations of the SOL Program Advisory Committee, and the need to improve the English proficiency of students.

> Continue review of the elective offerings in the LLB curriculum, in light of available staff resources, the recommendations of the SOL External Review Panel, and the recommendations of the SOL Program Advisory Committee (School of Law. Executive Meeting, 2017).

In addition, the SOL Programme Advisory Committee recognised the importance of this review and recommends the review of the curriculum for the upper-years of the LLB in 2018 (School of Law Program Advisory Committee, 2017). Initially, SOL intended to follow this with its own alignment and assessment analysis. FALE's decision in semester 1 2018 to proceed with a Curriculum Alignment Exercise provided the opportunity for SOL to work with FALE "to ensure the alignment between USP Graduate Outcomes, LLB Programme Outcomes, SOL Course Learning Outcomes, and SOL Assessment" (School of Law, 2018).

Curriculum Alignment

The review of the programme and course outlines as part of FALE curriculum alignment began in February 2018 in preparation for The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). Dorothy Spiller and Dr. Yoko Kanemasu, Associate Dean Planning & Quality, FALE, visited SOL Emalus Campus to facilitate the curriculum alignment work, which was scheduled for two days. On the first day Kanemasu met with academics from SOL, School of Education (SOE) and School of Language, Arts and Media (SLAM) to discuss Learning and Teaching as well as Planning and Quality matters. Then, in the afternoon, the focus was on curriculum alignment work. The second day, Spiller conducted Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) training for those Emalus staff interested in becoming trained peer observers. This was followed by a session on curriculum

alignment. These alignment sessions provided an opportunity for academics to review the SOL graduate programme outcomes and engage in constructive discussion. This section discusses the curriculum alignment process focusing on the mapping of curriculum, particularly the alignment between programme graduate outcomes, course learning outcomes and assessments.

Aligning programme outcomes with course learning outcomes and the University graduate outcomes was a challenging exercise for the SOL, as we had to ensure that they were worded broadly enough to cover all aspects of the law courses. There was detailed discussion among the academics on what terms to adopt and the sentence structure for the programme outcomes. The facilitators solicited input from all academics regarding how best to improve the programme outcomes to ensure that they aligned with the University Graduate Outcomes. Also, the academics debated which action verbs should be adopted and how best the SOL program outcomes should be framed to align with the University Graduate Outcomes. One of the academics volunteered to immediately type the suggestions and presented them on a PowerPoint for everyone to review and make further comments before amendments were made to the program outcomes. This was a highly interactive exercise and all the law academics participated.

Another challenge was wording the SOL programme outcomes to ensure that they were broad enough to align with the University Graduate Outcomes. It was very clear that we had to devote two days as a School to get this whole exercise completed. We did not think that it would have been possible if we had not all come together and worked so hard towards it. One of the first things that the facilitators did during the initial Curriculum Alignment Session was to show FALE Emalus Campus academics a sample of the Sociology programme outcomes alignment with individual course assessments then they stepped back and provided space for discussion. Such an approach provided staff with an opportunity to interact, collaborate and work as team to discuss, review and finalise SOL programme graduate outcomes in a timely manner.

The new programme graduate outcomes target skills that are appropriate to the legal profession. These skills, however can be applied beyond the legal profession. Generally, the new programme graduate outcomes (PGO) align with the University Graduate Outcomes and are as follows:

PGO 1: Demonstrate knowledge of the region's laws and legal systems in their local and global context, including the role of custom;
PGO 2: Apply law to factual situations;
PGO 3: Research, analyse and argue questions of law;
PGO 4: Communicate legal knowledge and arguments effectively and appropriately both orally and in writing;
PGO 5: Demonstrate, both personally and professionally, the principles of ethics and the standards of legal professionalism; and
PGO 6: Assess systemic legal issues in the region and options for reform.

A table was created for each of the PGOs. The table had three columns that categorised the different achievables (benchmark, milestone and capstone) that a PGO could be measured against. Below is a table showing the first two PGOs.

PGO1: Demonstrate knowledge of the region's laws and legal systems in their local and global context, including the role of custom

	Benchmark (B)	Milestone (M)	Capstone (C)
Demonstrate knowledge of the region's laws and legal systems	Identifies the key laws and main features of the region's legal systems	Analyses the key laws and main features of the region's legal systems	Analyses comprehensively and critically the key laws and main features of the region's legal systems
Relate the region's laws to local and global contexts, including the role of custom	Identifies the region's laws and legal systems within a local and global context, including the role of custom	Analyses the region's laws and legal systems within a local and global context, including the role of custom	Evaluate and explain the region's laws and legal systems within a local and global context, including the role of custom

PGO2: Apply law to factual situations

	Benchmark (B)	Milestone (M)	Capstone (C)
Identify the material facts of a case or scenario	Recognises the material facts of a case or scenario	Analyses the material facts of a case or scenario	Analyses comprehensively and critically the material facts of a case or scenario
Select the relevant law for a case or scenario	Identifies the relevant law for a case or scenario	Analyses the relevant law for a case or scenario	Evaluate and explains the relevant law for a case or scenario
Apply the relevant law to a case or scenario	Applies the relevant law to a case or scenario	Applies the relevant law accurately to a case or scenario	Applies the relevant law accurately and reflectively to a case or scenario

The second day of the curriculum alignment work started with the reviewing of the SOL course learning outcomes. The rationale for this review was to ensure the course learning outcomes adopted the appropriate action verbs and corresponded to the revised Programme Graduate Outcomes and the University Graduate Outcomes. The use of action verbs as central variables to the framing of the course learning outcomes continued to be emphasised during the alignment sessions. Since we had already worked on the SOL programme graduate outcomes, it was easier to follow the explanation of the facilitator regarding how the course learning outcomes should be framed. The course coordinators were required to go through their courses to find out whether their course learning outcomes aligned with the programme graduate outcomes. Initially, the facilitators had a general session with all the FALE Emalus SOL, SOE and SLAM staff. Then Spiller, one of the facilitators, met with individual staff who needed assistance with their course learning outcomes.

Following the review of the programme graduate outcomes and course learning outcomes for Law and Society (LW 110), Courts and Dispute Resolution 1 and 2 (LW 111 and 113), LW 112 (Legislation), Contract 1 (LW 201), Criminal Law 1 and 2 (LW 205 and 206), Property Law 1(LW 300), Evidence (LW

307), Administrative Law (LW 309), Human Rights Law (LW 331), Pacific Land Tenure (LW 340), Law of the Sea (LW 355) and other courses, the academics then discussed alignment of the course learning outcomes with the programme graduate outcomes. Central to this discussion was the identification of what level of learning outcomes should be expected for a course in the first year as opposed to the final year. Each of the course learning outcomes was examined. The course coordinators with the help of fellow colleagues and the facilitators aligned their course learning outcomes to programme graduate outcomes then ascertained whether they were benchmark, or milestone or capstone achievable. At first, we had thought the alignment process would be a time-consuming hassle with lots of paperwork. However, we discovered working as a team with the constant support of the facilitator made the curriculum alignment task easier to accomplish. Below are some examples of the alignment of course learning outcomes with the programme graduate outcomes and the expected level of learning outcome.

Criminal Law 2 - LW206 (Chella)

1. Articulate key principles of criminal law, criminal procedure and sentencing as they have been developed in common law jurisdictions and applied in the Pacific region: PGO 1 (M)
2. Locate the sources of criminal law in the Pacific region, including statutory provisions and case authorities: PGO 3 (M)
3. Analyse the elements of specific defences, the rules relating to participation in crime, the principles and rules of criminal procedure, and the principles and rules of sentencing: PGO 2 (M)
4. Apply relevant criminal laws to resolve issues in factual problems: PGO 2 (M)
5. Communicate effective legal arguments in criminal cases: PGO 4 (M), 5 (M)

Evidence - LW307 (Shah*)

1. Analyse comprehensively and critically the principles of Evidence Law as they have been developed in common law jurisdiction and applied in the Pacific region: PGO 1 (M), 6 (M)
2. Evaluate the relevance and admissibility of different pieces of evidence in relation to any issues raised before a court or tribunal: PGO 2 (M)
3. Articulate clearly the relevant onus and standards of proof that apply in civil and criminal litigation in the South Pacific jurisdictions: PGO 1 (M)
4. Apply relevant case law to factual scenarios within the South Pacific jurisdictions: PGO 2 (M)
5. Demonstrate advocacy skills relating to the production of evidence in courts and tribunals at a basic level: PGO 4 (M), 5 (M)
6. Conduct legal research including analysis and problem solving: PGO 2 (M) 3 (M)
7. Communicate legal research in oral and written formats using primary and secondary sources: PGO 3 (M) 4 (M), 5 (M)

Administrative Law - LW 309 (Foukona)

1. Explain the general body of legal rules which operate to control and constrain the exercise of official power by government and public decision makers: PGO 1 (M)
2. Apply specific administrative law principles to factual situations: PGO 1 (M), 2 (M)
3. Explain the role of the courts in relation to judicial review of administrative action: PGO 1 (M)
4. Evaluate the role of administrative law in maintaining public confidence in official decision making: PGO 6 (M)
5. Analyse critically the role of the courts in balancing the strict application of legal rules with the need to maintain efficient public administration: PGO 6 (M)

6. Locate important judicial decisions that contribute to the administrative law applicable to the countries of the USP region, using them in legal problem solving: PGO 1 (M), 2 (M), 3 (M)

Pacific International Law - LW330 (Moses)

1. Critically discuss the nature, sources and basic principles of public international law: PGO 1 (M), 3 (M), 6 (M)
2. Critically evaluate the rationale, practicalities and values of public international law including the effectiveness and limitations of the modern international law framework in regulating relations between States, international organizations and individuals: PGO 1 (M), 6 (M)
3. Conduct independent research on issues of international law, presenting the findings in an appropriate academic format that follows legal writing and referencing conventions: PGO 3 (M), 4 (M), 5 (M)
4. Apply the rules of international law to provide solutions to hypothetical problems: PGO 2 (M), 6 (M)
5. Critically discuss the main elements of important treaties in the Pacific including human rights treaties: PGO 1 (M), 6 (M)
6. Critically analyse significant cases or statutes of Pacific Island states providing a written or oral briefing: PGO 1 (M), 6 (M)
7. Assess the efficacy of international law in the context of the legal systems of Pacific Island states at regional and domestic levels: PGO 1 (M), 6 (M)

The Curriculum Alignment Process

The curriculum alignment process demanded a lot of time, attention and careful mapping of the courses offered within the law programme. Hence, during the Strategic Planning Workshop presentations, academics debated a number of key issues, facilitated by the Assessment Consultant.

Firstly, one of the discussions that attracted a lot of attention was on the use of action verbs by drawing on the Blooms' taxonomy framework and determining how these could be measured. Some academics were doubtful, while others were reserved, about the significance of using specific words or action verbs to achieve a particular measured learning outcome. Some of the course coordinators opined that a course learning outcome could still be written in a certain way and measured even without the use of an action verb. Many did not appreciate the importance of drawing upon the Blooms' taxonomy framework in order to assess a student's knowledge.

Although the idea of introducing action verbs within the wording of learning outcomes seemed straight forward, the exercise of actually selecting a specific action verb when drafting the course learning outcomes was challenging. This was because in the past many course coordinators drafted their course learning outcomes with little reflection upon the choice of wording that they adopted. Hence, the discussion on the use of action verbs pushed course coordinators to take a more pedagogical approach when drafting their course learning outcomes.

Secondly, discussions on the descriptors of standards of performance levels provided the impetus for coordinators to work together to determine milestone, benchmark and capstone levels with respect to PGOs and USP graduate outcomes. The identification of standards of performance levels for first year students as opposed to the final year students was not a straight forward exercise. The process required course coordinators to spend time examining the content of each course to identify the level of learning outcomes for each year of the law programmme. The question raised was

whether milestone and benchmark should only be required of third and final year courses, while capstone should only be reserved for final year courses. The other question raised was whether milestone and capstone levels should be introduced in first year courses or whether these courses should only be assessed at benchmark level.

Following a lengthy discussion between the facilitator and course coordinators there was mutual agreement that a benchmark level is expected for first year courses. This would be the first time that most of the students would begin to learn theoretical and practical skills that were appropriate to the legal profession. The milestone level should be the indicator for second year courses, while third and final year courses should adopt both benchmark and milestone levels. Ordinarily, students continue to develop their legal skills in these years. Only in a few instances, should students be expected to achieve capstone level standards of performance, particularly in last year courses where they would be required to perform at a higher level, displaying critical thinking, research, and communication skills (Kinzie, 2013). Identifying courses within benchmark, milestone and capstone level standards of performance was a useful exercise because it provided course coordinators with a clear pedagogical mapping of the courses offered within the law program.

Finally, a discussion point raised was that the curriculum alignment process should not be adopted as a one size fits all approach. The SOL is a professional school, which involves the teaching of a particular skill set for professional legal practice. Therefore, the approach of curriculum alignment for the SOL should be considered carefully. Some academics were concerned that the University might, through this exercise, require the same level of standards of performance expected from students within the same year level across all the schools. Given the unique skill set of the law programme it was felt that SOL, offering professional degrees, should be considered differently from other the schools within the University. For instance, academics noted that High Schools across the Pacific do not offer any law courses. Hence, many of the students admitted to the law programme start to learn legal jargon and vocabulary in their very first year of university. Therefore, their expected level of standards of performance should not be compared to the performance of the students within the same year level in other schools of the University.
The discussion concluded with the academics and facilitator agreeing that the exercise of the curriculum alignment was not about comparing the achievable i.e., benchmark, milestone and capstone levels, between the schools of the University, but rather about helping course coordinators to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Academics came to understand, through this exercise, that effective learning and teaching requires not only constructive alignment of teaching and assessment, but also the alignment of the course learning outcomes with the PGOs and the USP graduate outcomes.

Curriculum Mapping

Once the process of aligning the course learning outcomes with the programme outcomes was completed curriculum mapping was undertaken. Curriculum mapping, as explained by Dyjur and Kenny, is the "process of associating course outcomes with program-level learning outcomes and aligning elements of courses (e.g. teaching and learning activities, assessment strategies) within a program, to ensure that it is structured in a strategic, thoughtful way that enhances student learning" (Dyjur & Kenny, 2015). It is a process that is "about representing spatially the different components of the curriculum so that the whole picture and the relationships and connections between the parts of the map are easily seen"' (Harden, 2001, p. 123). Veltri, Webb, Matveev and Zapatero further articulate that the "curriculum mapping process is designed to engage faculty members in a structured analysis of the extent to which program curricula intentionally and transparently integrate intended program outcomes" (Veltri, Webb, Matveev, & Zapatero, 2011, p. 33). Informed by this literature, we concur that the curriculum mapping that was introduced as part of the curriculum alignment sessions

was an important step for measuring and ensuring that "performance on assessments is a valid measure of student achievement in relation to USP and programme outcomes" (WSCUC, Information Sheet).

We consider curriculum mapping as a stocktaking process because it provided us with the opportunity to look closely at how USP graduate outcomes could be integrated into the SOL programme and all law courses. So far, SOL has mapped the first year law courses as shown in the table, below:

Graduate Outcomes and Programme Graduate Outcomes	LW110	LW111	LW112	LW113
Pacific Consciousness/PGO 1	B	B/M	B/M	
Creativity/PGO 2	B	B	B	
Critical thinking and quantitative reasoning/PGO2	B	B	B	
Creativity/PGO 3	B	B	B/M	
Critical thinking and quantitative reasoning/PGO3	B	B	B/M	
Communication (written and oral)/PGO4	B	B	M	B/M
Ethics/PGO5	B/M	M	M	B/M
Professionalism/PGO5	B/M	M	M	B/M
Pacific Consciousness/PGO 6	B			
Teamwork				

The table is a matrix showing the alignment of USP graduate outcomes, programme graduate outcomes and first year law courses learning outcomes. The mapping exercise is still a work in progress.

Conclusion

We compliment the SOL, with the support of FALE, for providing us with the opportunity to review our course learning outcomes and the programme outcomes. Our Head of School and fellow colleagues have been very helpful in guiding each other throughout this process. The collaborative interaction and exchange of ideas on how to improve the curriculum among staff members has been commendable. One of the positive aspects about the SOL academics is that they are always eager and ready to help each other and work together to ensure that there is quality of learning. This was demonstrated during the curriculum review process. Ultimately, this makes the working environment more enjoyable and refreshing. The facilitators, Spiller and Kanemasu, contributed a lot by supporting and guiding us through the curriculum review process. The strength of this process is the fact that it offered academics an opportunity to rethink how best to improve teaching and learning and take ownership of the process. Once we completed revisions to the programme graduate outcomes and course learning outcomes, we realised that curriculum alignment was not as difficult as we had envisaged. However, it challenged us to pay attention to discipline content at the taught and assessed levels. It was an enriching experience working together as a team to ensure there was curriculum alignment. Curriculum review is a positive strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning. We perceive curriculum alignment and mapping as vital educational tools that we were able to review and revise within a limited timeframe. This was an achievement for SOL. There is still much curriculum work that is needed to be done. The next process will involve alignment of assessments.

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