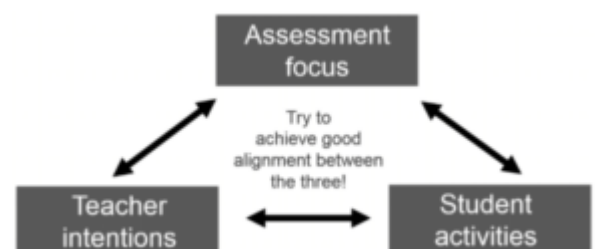


# Constructive Alignment

**Definition:** Constructive Alignment is a principle stating that teachers should try to align (1) what the students need to do, in order to learn, with (2) what is being assessed.

**Description:** Constructive alignment is based on the relationship among (1) active learning, (2) intended learning outcomes and (3) assessment activities. The learner constructs meaning through the learning activities undertaken. Assessment should then align with these activities, so that the activities that students need to learn from are actually those being assessed. The learner is in a sense 'trapped' and finds it difficult to escape without doing those activities that need to be done in order to learn what is intended to be learned. Learning outcomes should be stated with a verb that is then also used for assessment tasks. Examples include: explain why a particular course topic is important, apply a course topic to your own life, reflect on a theory you have learned in the course, evaluate a situation that has gone wrong and apply a solution.

**Benefits:** Constructive alignment requires teachers to reflect upon what it means to understand a subject on a deep level, and how students can attain such a deeper understanding. By asking teachers to state those verbs that describe necessary learning activities for students, a gap between abstract theoretical knowledge and personal competent practice can be bridged. This increases consistency, improves educational effectiveness and minimises ineffective surface learning.



**Challenges:** Although the approach is common sense, it requires a different way of thinking about teaching, and in particular about defining levels of understanding. It requires a theory

of teaching one's discipline over and above knowledge of the discipline itself; and knowledge about options for teaching and assessment. The initial stages of setting up an aligned system require careful consideration and possibly also redesign of the curriculum. This can be a challenge in educational settings where planning time is a scarce resource, such as in compulsory education.

**Applied to entrepreneurial education:** Since entrepreneurial education is often recommended to be based on a learning-by-doing approach, constructive alignment can be used as a method to put more assessment focus on those activities that really foster entrepreneurial learning outcomes. Constructive alignment can be a way to get a more explicit activity-based assessment focus, thus facilitating experiential and entrepreneurial teaching and learning. Activities that have been shown to foster entrepreneurial competencies include interaction with the outside world, value creation for others, teamwork over long periods of time, uncertainty in learning environments, time pressure, presentation for others (preferably unknown), experiencing individual differences in a team and helping others.