

# Alverno College (US)

**In short:** Alverno College is an independent, liberal arts college located in Milwaukee (US). Alverno College was selected as a National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) due to its innovative and long-standing assessment practices and its commitment to student-centered teaching. For over 40 years, Alverno College has led the way in competency-based curriculum design and the assessment-for-learning approach to education



**Age group:** 18 +.

**Initial challenges:** Alverno's unique approach to assessing student learning began in the early 1970s when faculty established eight core abilities: Communication, Analysis, Problem Solving, Valuing in Decision Making, Social Interaction, Developing a Global Perspective, Effective Citizenship and Aesthetic Engagement.

**What they did about it:** Abilities are woven into the curriculum across all disciplines and students must demonstrate proficiency at beginning and intermediate levels in all eight abilities, and at advanced levels in two of the eight. Students do not receive grades; faculty use rubrics to assess students' learning and provide detailed feedback on assignments. External assessors from business and professional communities help in assessing abilities not linked to a particular course (eg. Problem solving, social interaction)

**Results:** Alverno students identified four components of the model as particularly positive: explicitly stated learning outcomes, useful feedback, self-assessments and faculty who

see the value and purpose of assessment. Students are better able to tell and show potential employers what they know and what they are able to do.

**Relevance for entrepreneurial teaching:** Each faculty member serves in one of eight Ability Departments, which focuses on implementation and assessment of one of the eight core abilities. This structure provides students with opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in each ability across disciplines and at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. Assessment processes are collectively designed. Faculty provide students with a thoughtful and thorough analysis of their performance, how students have met the learning outcomes and how they align with Alverno's eight core abilities. The model creates a heavy workload for faculty and requires significant training and mentoring.

**Applied assessment methods and tools:** This is an example of applying assessment for learning, self-assessment, constructive alignment and feedback. The Alverno Model and Methods have been explained in depth in several publications and workshops such as the 41st Teaching for Competencies using Performance Assessment Workshop (<https://www.alverno.edu/workshop/>)

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