

# Strong yet flexible **COURSE DESIGN** with “constructive alignment”

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# Agreements (with Zoom agreements)

- Ensure all have chance to speak
- Critique the idea, not the person
- OK to share what was said, but not who said it
- Beware of stereotyping disciplines, roles, and people
- It's ok to be wrong – fail forward
- Use “ouch” and “oops” as you need to
- Tolerate silence
- Listen to learn
- *Keep microphones muted unless speaking*
- *Use the “raise hand” function for attention*
- *Use the chat function for any extra questions – but prompt us if we don't see them*
- *Bear with one another through any technical difficulties*
- Others?

# Working from the presumption that we want

- faculty**
  - to enjoy their teaching
  - to have better work/life balance

- students**
  - to be intellectually challenged
  - to persist in their studies
  - to learn and succeed

- the course design process**
  - to feel manageable and useful
  - to save faculty time in the long run

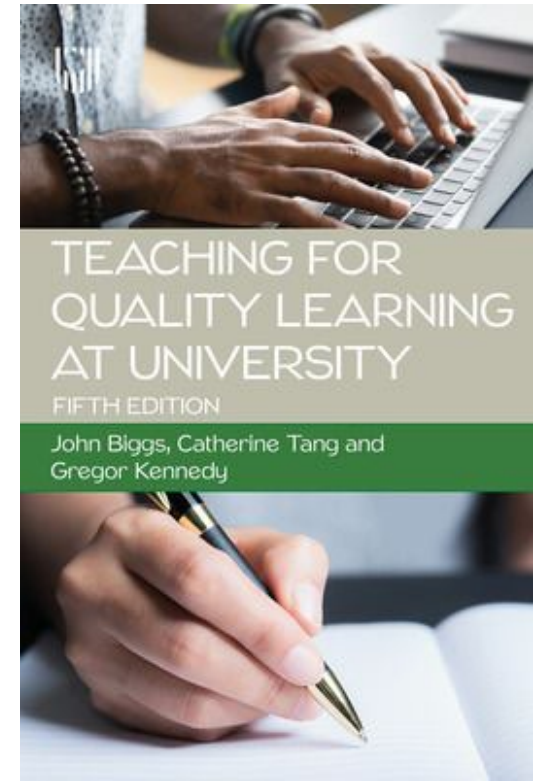
Constructive alignment aids student success

# Goals of this workshop

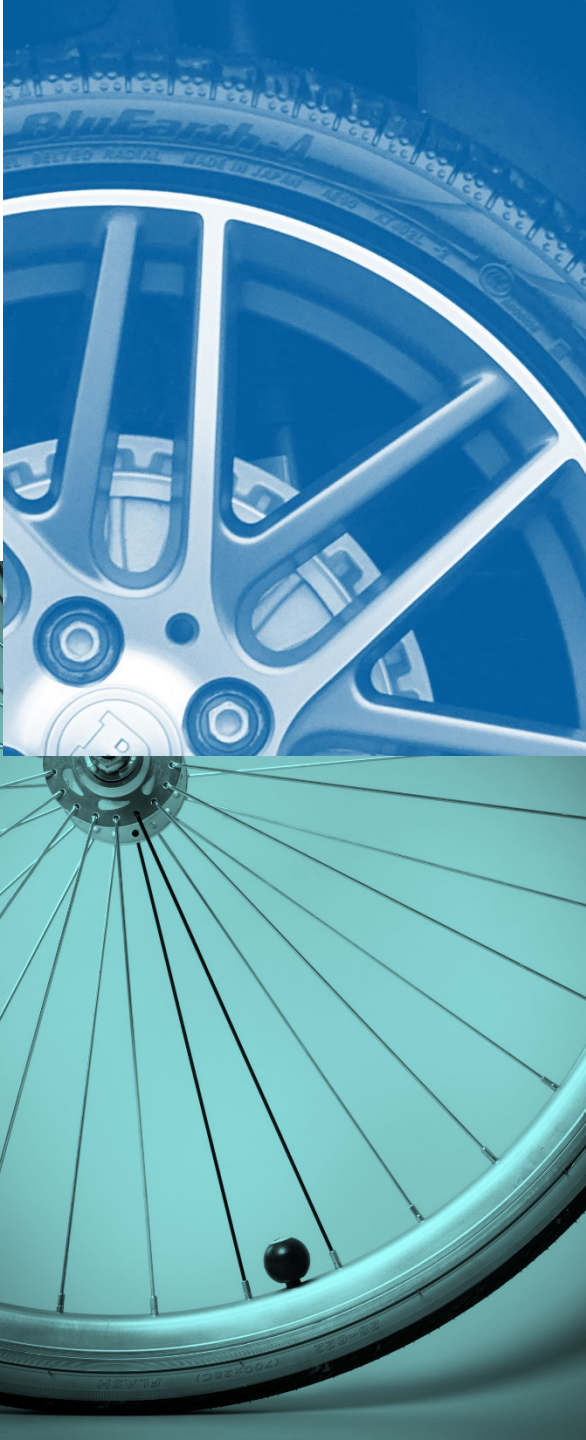
- Learn about “Constructive Alignment”
- Apply principles of constructive alignment to the design of one of your courses
- Create a plan for next steps in your course design

## Key text

Biggs, J., Tang, C., & Kennedy, G. (2022). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does*. (5th ed.). Open University Press/McGrawHill.







Who taught  
you how to  
drive a car or  
ride a bike?

**How did they  
teach you?**

# Constructive alignment

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

analyze texts with unreliable narrators via an oral presentation

LEARNING  
OUTCOMES



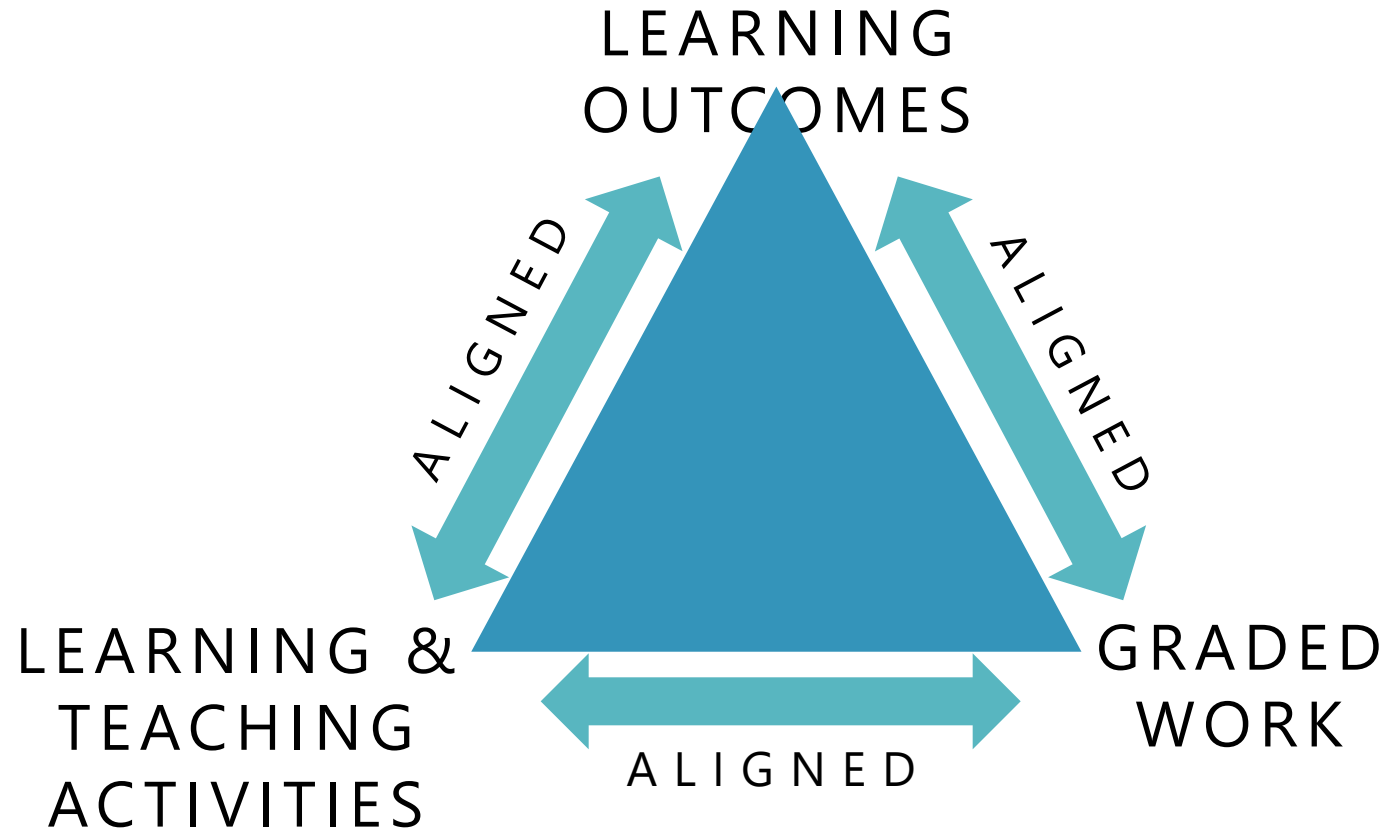
LEARNING &  
TEACHING  
ACTIVITIES

GRADED  
WORK

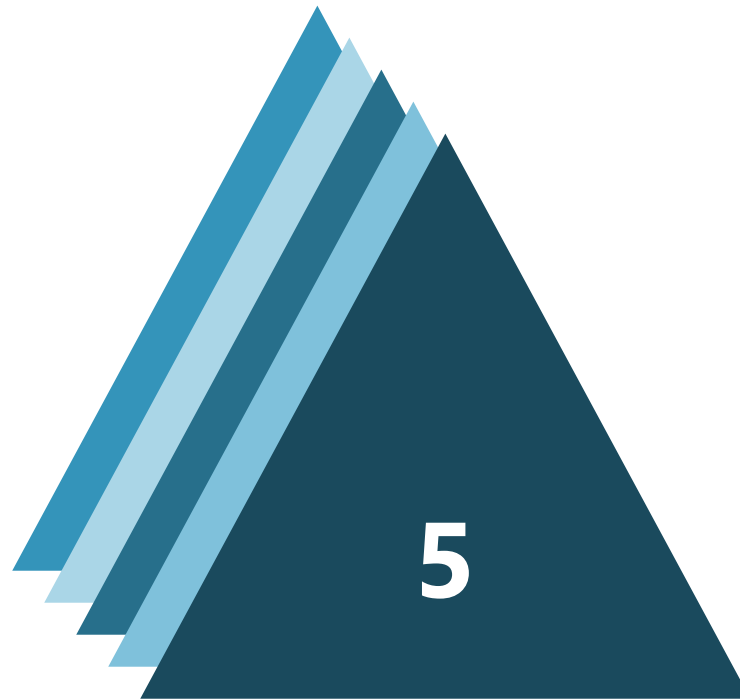
readings; discussions; ungraded mini-presentations; short written assignments; instructor feedback; skill sessions

individual presentation on potential reasons for unreliability

# Connecting course level to program level

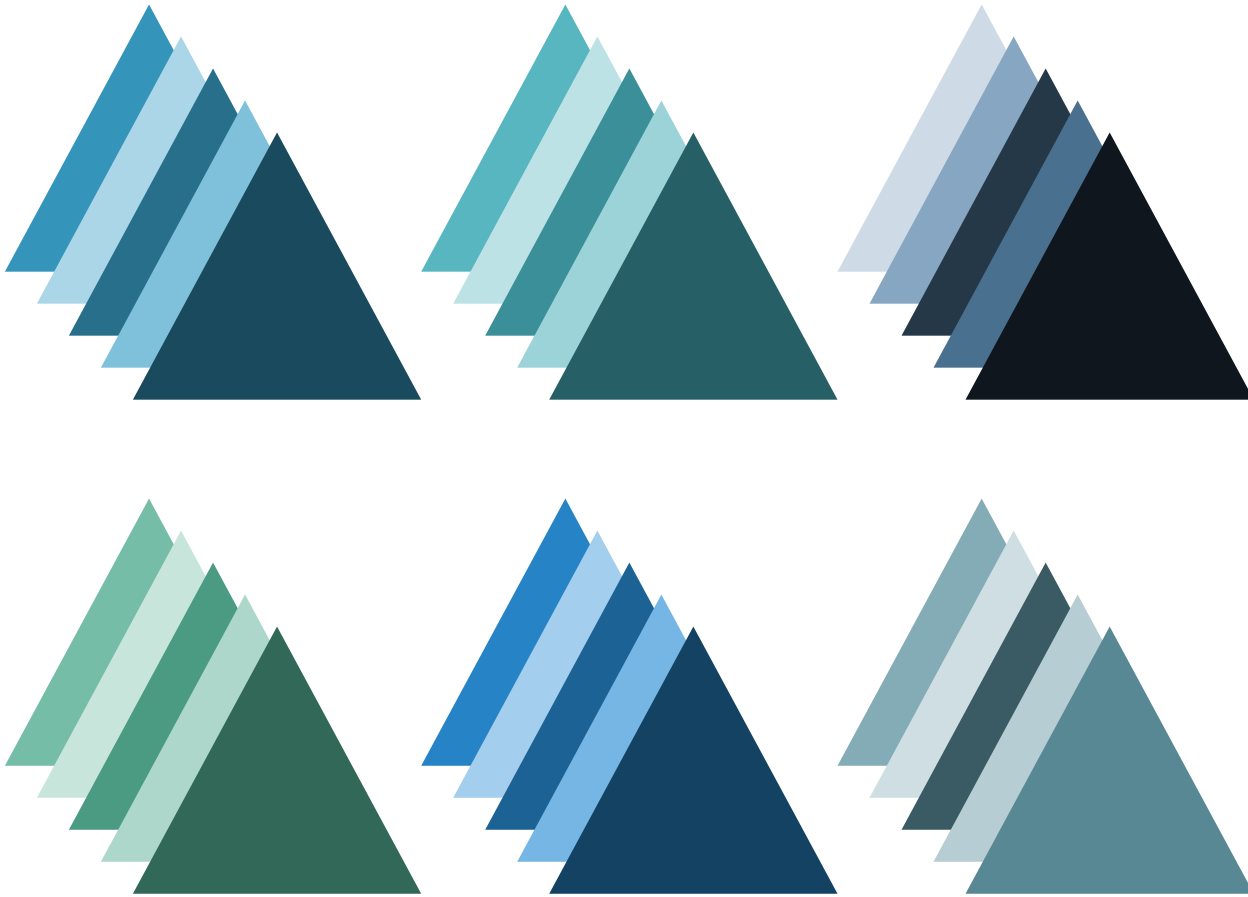


# Connecting course level to program level



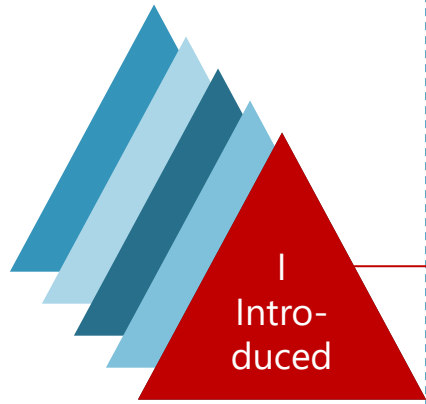


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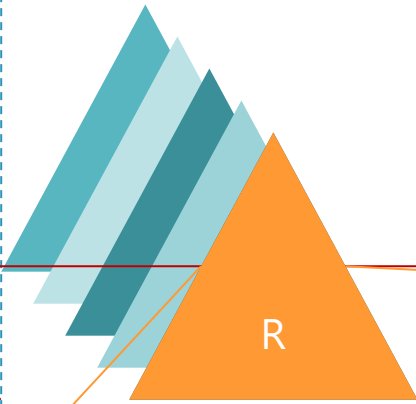


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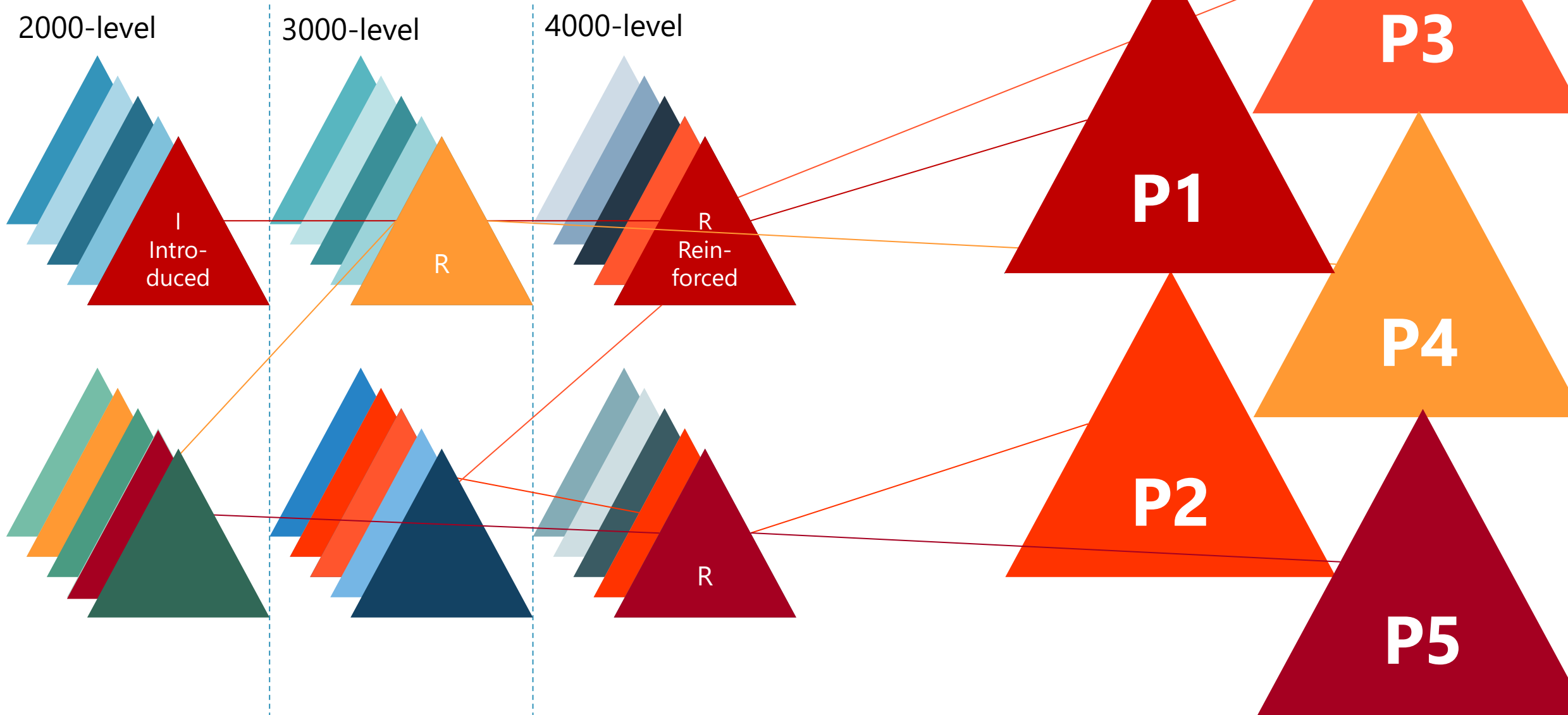
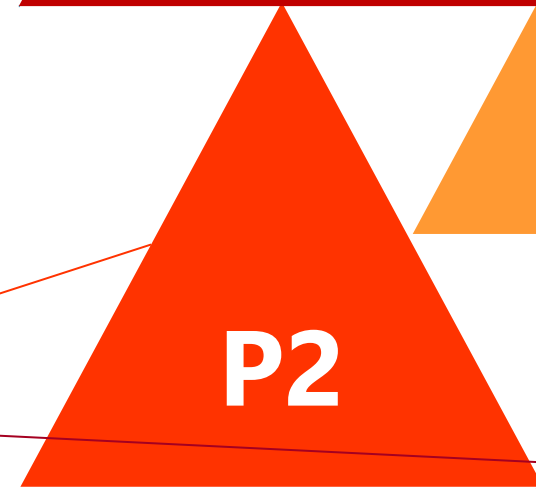
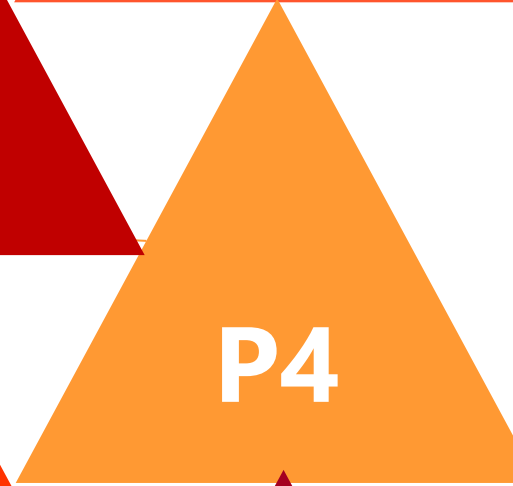
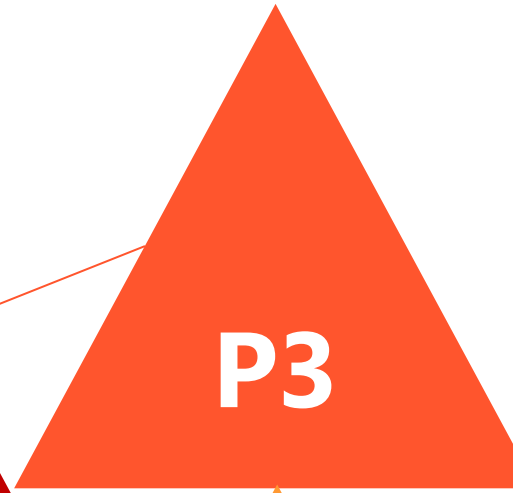
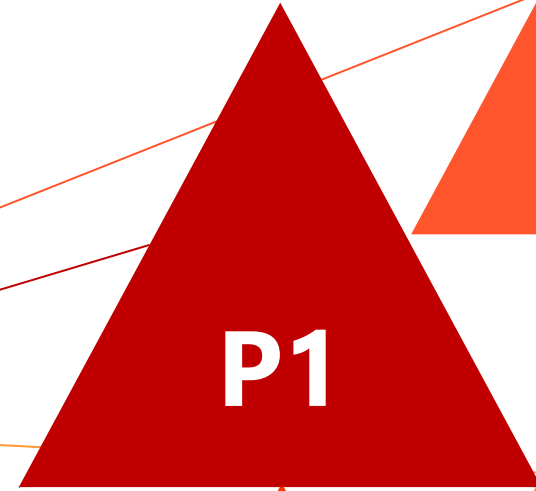
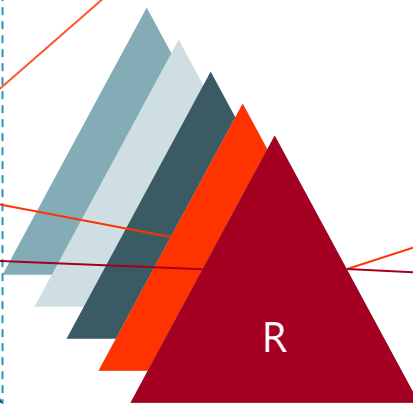
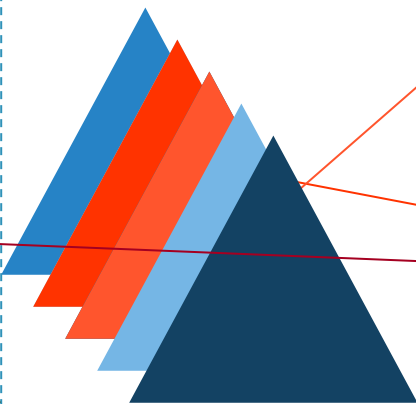
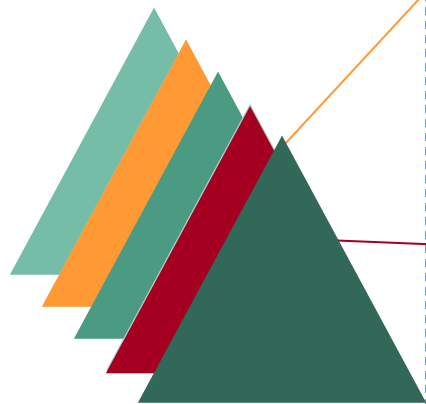
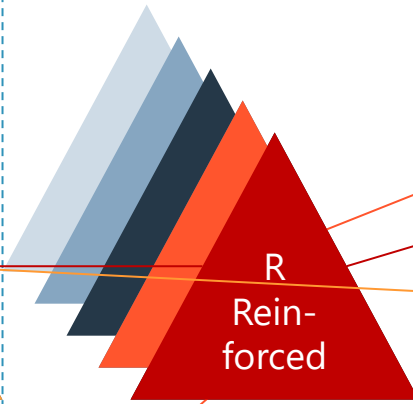
2000-level



3000-level



4000-level




# Why bother?

## This will bolster student success

Student success depends on:

- Their **motivation**, which is fueled by
  - **Transparency** in what students need to do and to what end
  - Seeing the **value** in what they are doing
  - Feeling **confident** that they can do the work
- Our keeping true to the **purpose** and trajectory of the course
  - Leads us to ask helpful questions of ourselves

The background of the entire image is a close-up of a spiderweb. The web is composed of numerous fine, intersecting lines that form a complex, geometric pattern. Small, clear water droplets of varying sizes are scattered across the web, some resting on the lines and others at the intersections. The background is a soft, light blue sky, which transitions to a slightly darker shade of blue towards the top. The overall composition is clean and minimalist, with a focus on natural patterns and textures.

Constructively  
aligning your  
own courses...

“ COVERAGE  
STHEENEM  
YOFUNDER  
STANDING”

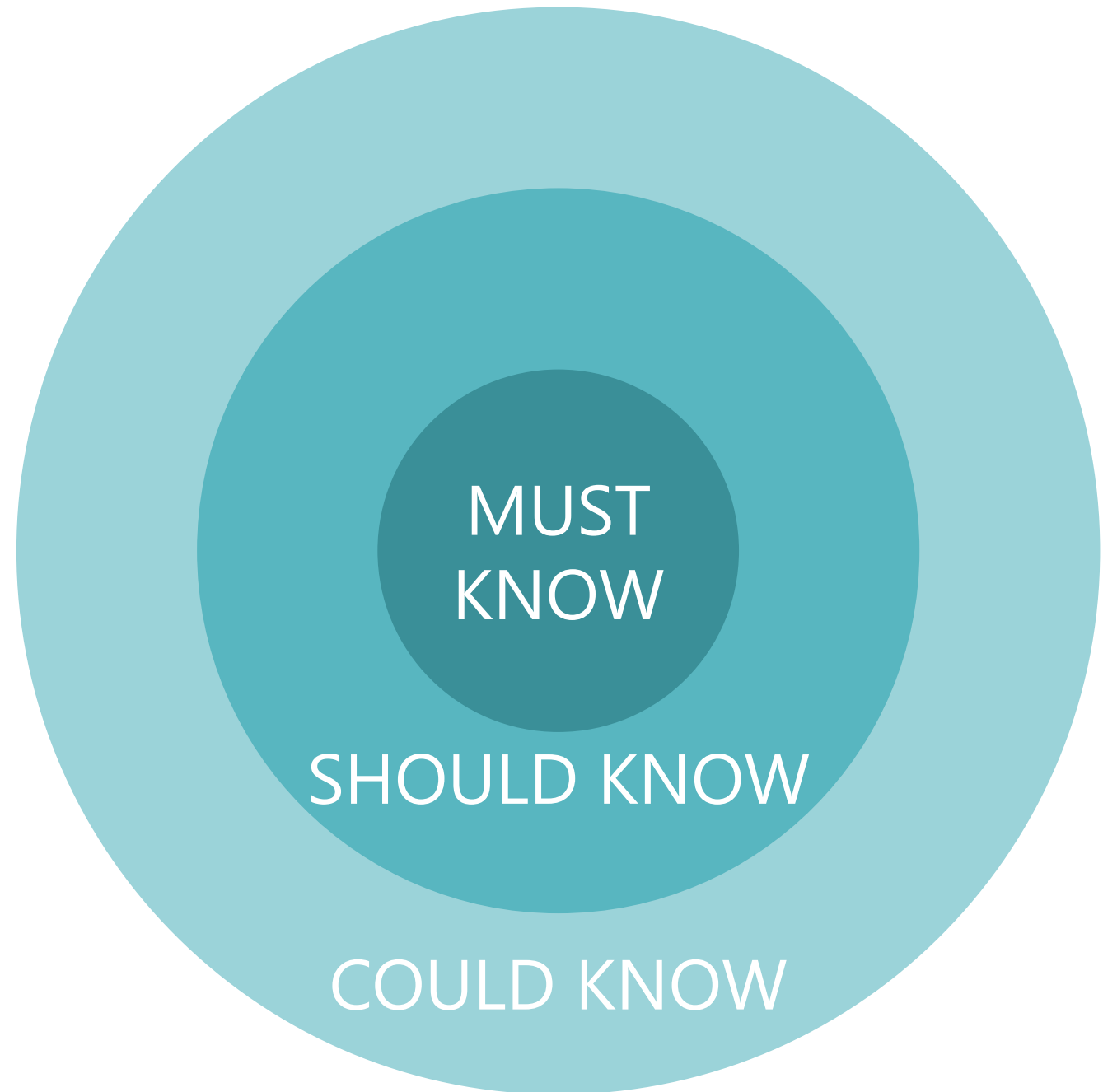
(Gardner, 1993)

# Looking at your course or program

What do you want your students to UNDERSTAND?

For example:

- Content (e.g., facts, theories)
- Process (e.g., methods, practices, skills)



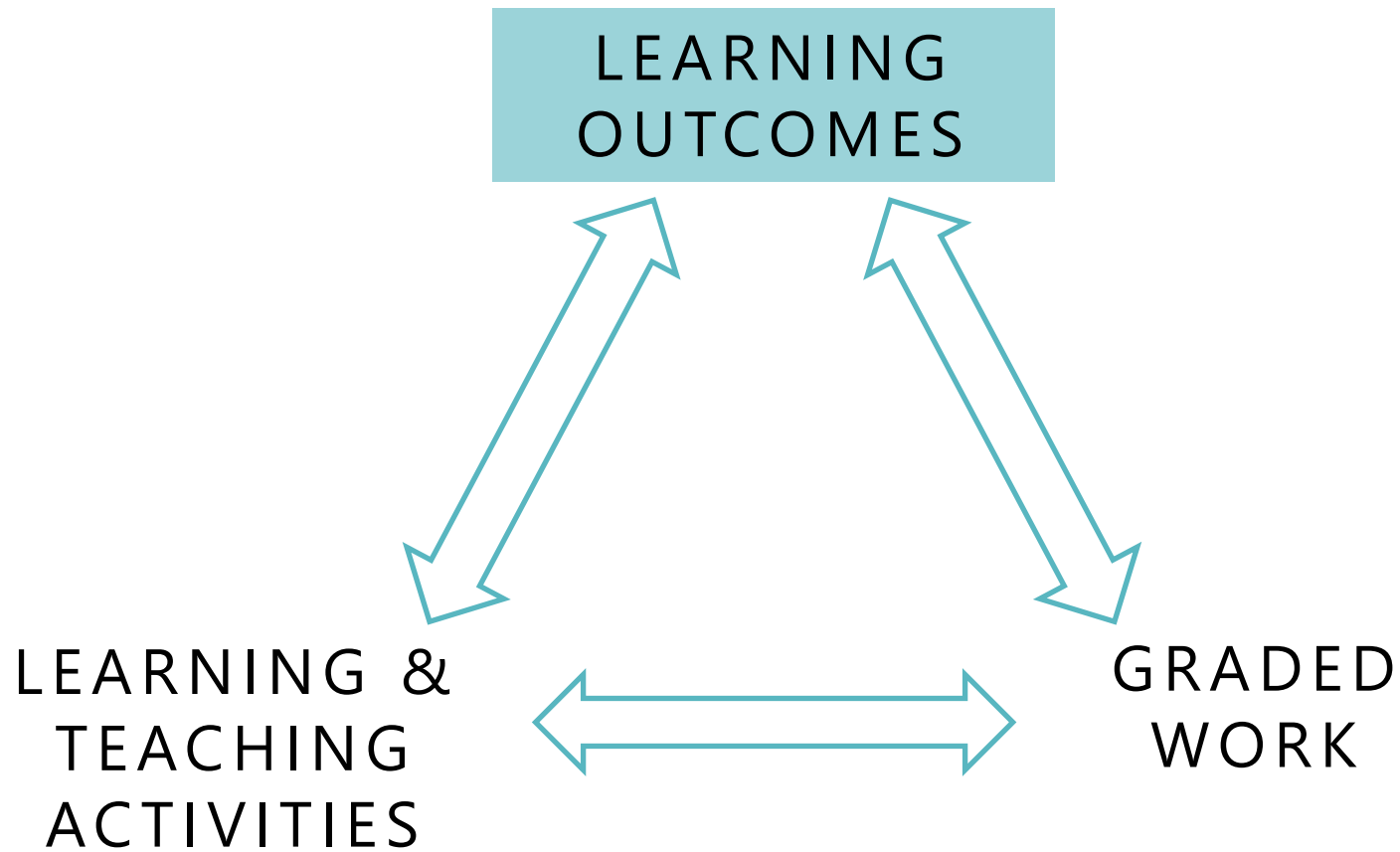
# Learning outcomes: Common pitfalls

On successful completion of this course, you will have:

1. "given a virtuoso performance on your chosen musical instrument."
2. "stated the six categories of Bloom's Taxonomy."
3. "comprehended the fundamental concepts of structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering."
4. "acquired the management skills necessary to secure an executive-level position within five years of graduation."
5. "understood the theory of relativity."
6. "improved your ability to speak in public."

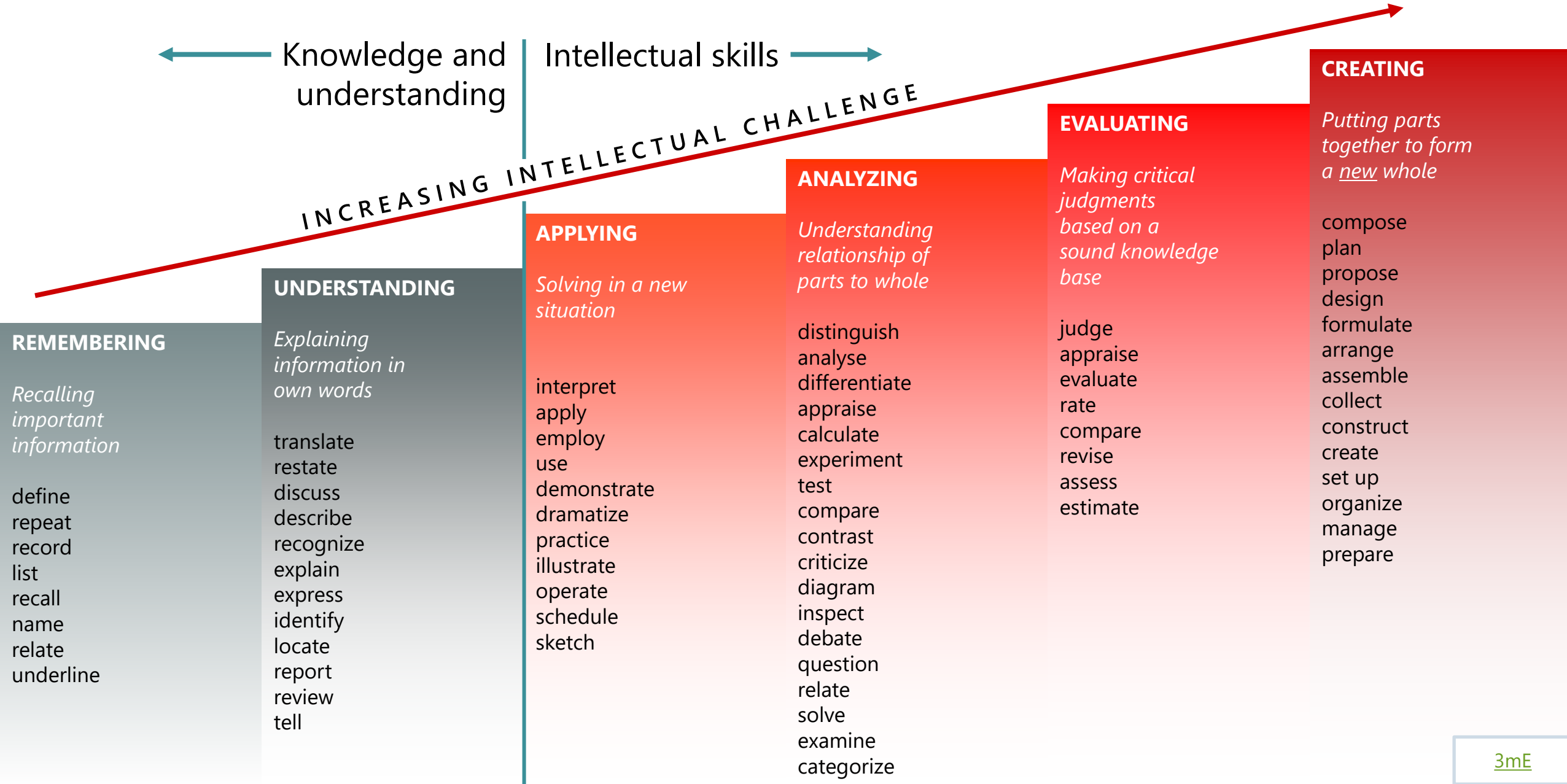


Step one:  
Identify ONE learning outcome



What do you want your students to be able **to do** by the end of the course or program?

# On successful completion of this course, you will have:

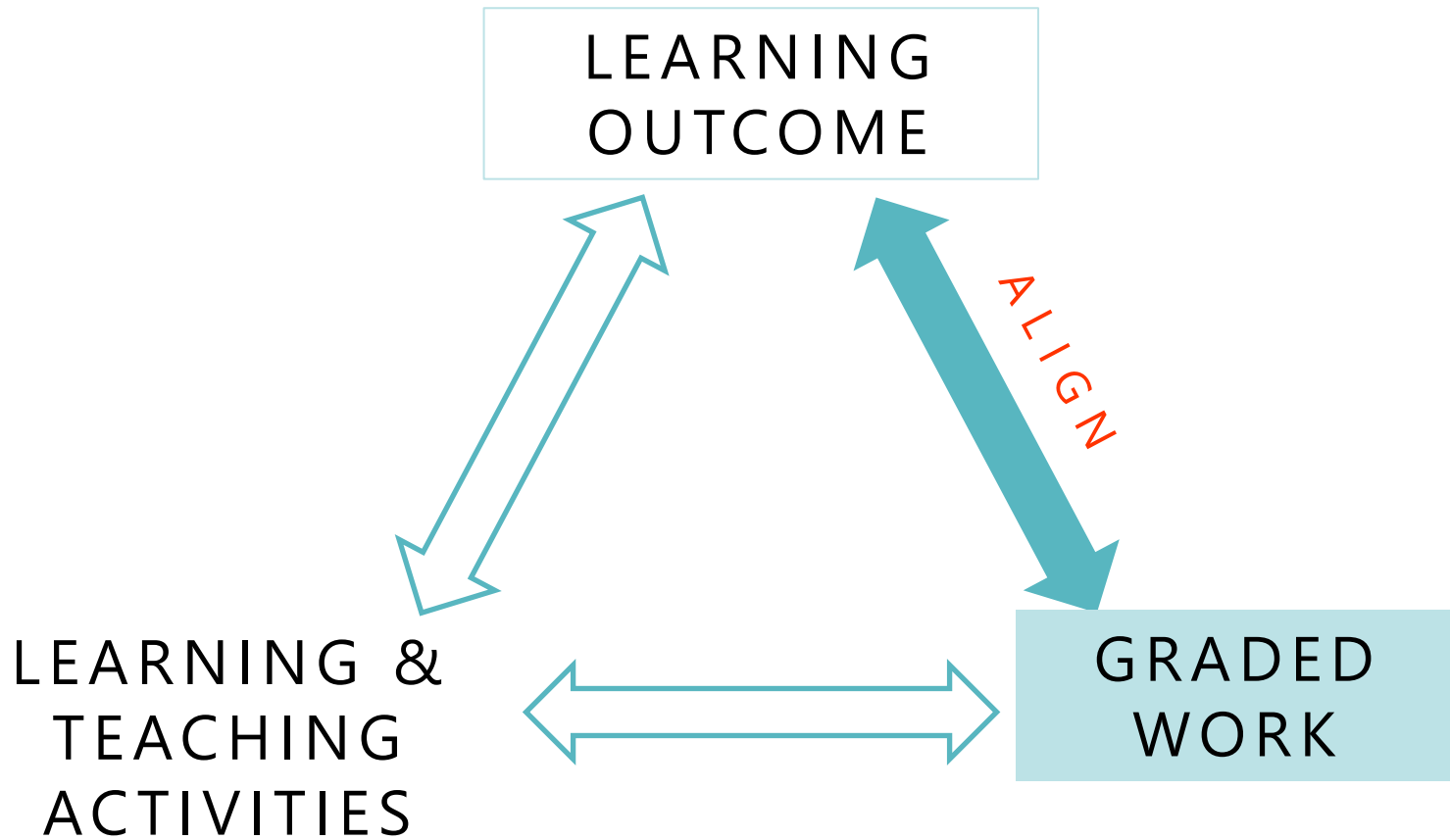


# Example: 1st-year course on national identity

On successful completion of this course (i.e. by *passing* the course), you will be able to:

- Present key aspects of a participating Eurovision country using appropriate library research skills.
- Evaluate a country's perceived national identity in contrast with its Others.
- Engage carefully and analytically with texts, including performances, primary, and secondary sources, using a range of methods from humanities disciplines.
- Evaluate a country's attitude toward Eurovision and/or nation branding.
- Express yourself – both in speech and writing – clearly and succinctly using formal language for specific purposes and audiences

# Step two: Identify graded work



What graded assignment would enable your students to demonstrate they had met your outcome?

What graded assignment would enable students to demonstrate they had met your outcome? *Examples:*

Research paper

Discussion post

Comic strip

Wikipedia entry

Reflection paper

Lab report

Meme

Lightning talk

Response paper

Studio work

Concept map

Zine

Project portfolio

Exams

Infographic

Pecha kucha

Short essay

Presentation

Simulation

Literature review

Podcast

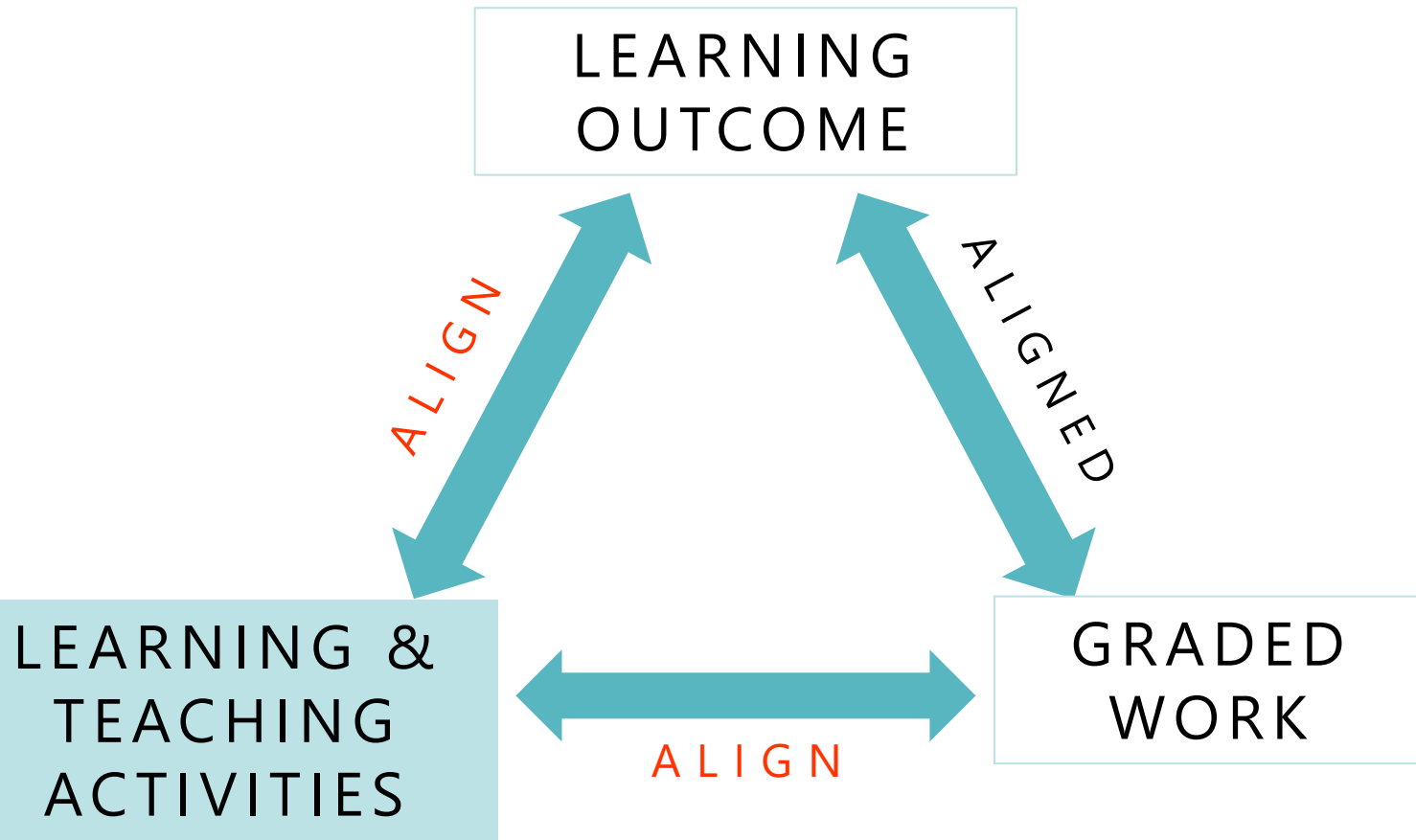
Case study

# Example: 1st-year course on national identity

Value	Assignment	Learning outcomes	Due date
10%	<b>CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION IN CLASS</b> A rubric later in the syllabus explains how you earn this grade.	5, 1, 2, 3, 4	Ongoing
15%	<b>NARRATED BRIEFING: THREE-MINUTE NATION</b> In line with Eurovision rules, you will record a three-minute presentation on your Eurovision nation.	1, 5	Jan 22
20%	<b>BLOG POST 1: THE NATIONAL SELF (AND THE OTHER)</b> You will use a range of sources to establish your chosen nation's core "national identity."	2, 3, 5	Jan 29 Optional revision Feb 7
25%	<b>BLOG POST 2: THE NATION ON STAGE</b> You will analyze two consecutive Eurovision performances by your country, focusing on literary, visual, and (optionally) musical devices.	2, 3, 5	Feb 19 Optional revision Feb 28
30%	<b>BLOG POST 3: CRITIQUING THE NATIONAL BRAND</b> You will examine how well the information from your past assignments aligns, and thereby draw conclusions about Eurovision as a tool for nation branding.	2, 3, 4, 5	Mar 21 (exam session)

Step three:

Identify learning & teaching activities



What learning and teaching activities (LTAs) will let your students practice the skills and knowledge they need for your graded assignment (so that they meet your learning outcome)?



# What LTAs will let your students practice skills and knowledge they need for your graded assignment?

## *Examples*

Problem-based learning

Just-in-time teaching

Reflective learning journal

Inquiry-based learning

Debate

Lab work

Case studies

One-minute paper

Studio work

Structured discussion

Project work

Practice tests or quizzes

Peer-to-peer feedback

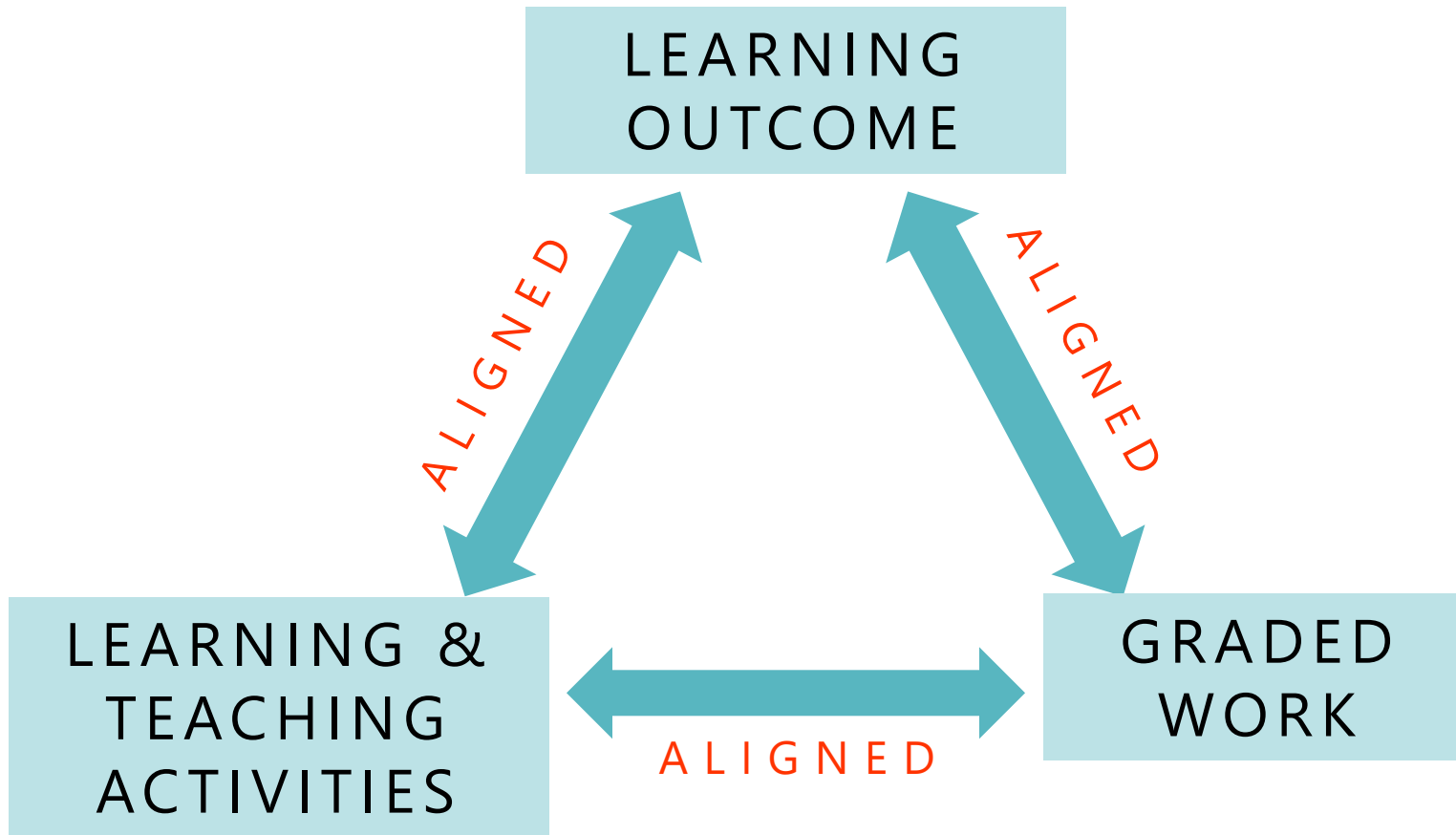
Service learning

One-sentence summary

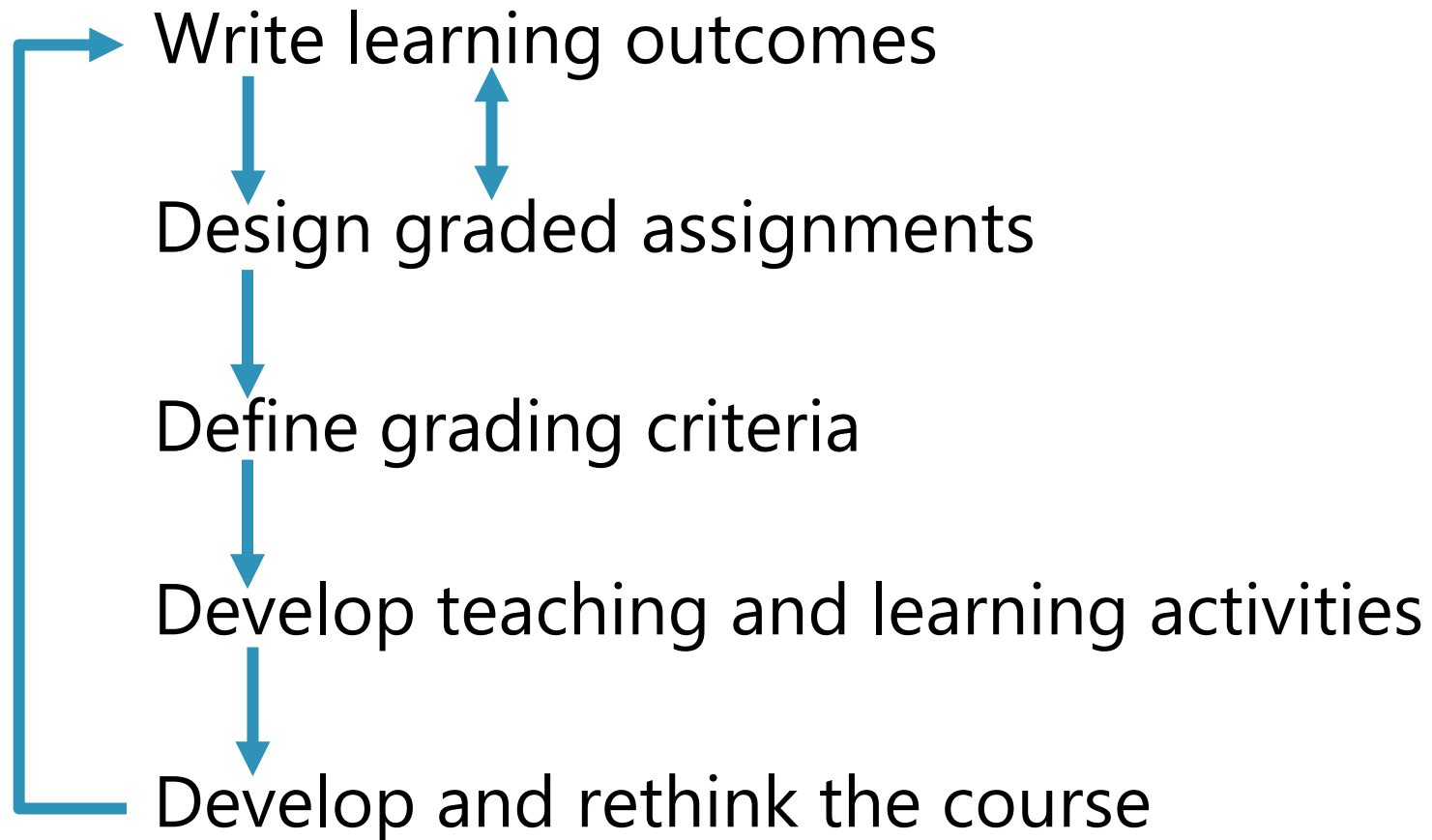
# Example: 1st-year course on national identity

- Readings > Just-in-Time Teaching
- Video case studies
- Case study analysis using different active learning techniques (e.g., Line-up > Fishbowl, Send-a-Problem, Cross-over)

# Constructively aligned!



# Constructive alignment is iterative



# Next steps?

- Continue with other outcomes for your course
- Ensure all course outcomes are being assessed
- Ensure the really important things are assessed
- Work out what space there is for the “should knows” and the “could knows”



Questions?

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