

# Intellectual Discourse

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# *Intellectual Discourse*

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## Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

## Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اَو	aw
اُو	ū		اَي	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اَي	iyy, ī (in final position)

*Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>*



# Mapping Outcome-Based Education Principles to Qur’anic Guidance for Islamic Higher Education

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**Nurul Nuha Abdul Molok\*\*\***

**Khadijah Khalilah Abdul Rashid\*\*\*\***

**Hamwira Yaacob\*\*\*\*\***

**Abstract:** This study evaluates Outcome-Based Education (OBE) through a Qur’anic lens by mapping six principles: clarity of focus, backward design, high expectations for all, expanded opportunity, constructive alignment, and continuous improvement, to relevant Qur’anic concepts and verses, corroborated by classical *tafsīr* sources. Using a thematic *tafsīr* method combined with the OBE literature, the analysis distils principle statements and specifies nonoverlapping implementation artefacts at programme and

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course levels. Findings indicate strong convergence between OBE logics and Qur'anic emphases on purposive ends, clarified criteria, equitable facilitation, curricular coherence, and evidence-guided review. The article proposes a synthesis that affirms theological compatibility and translates it into practical tools, including threshold tables, assessment blueprints, proficiency rubrics with feedback policy, equivalency matrices, programme alignment maps, and assurance-of-learning (AoL) cycles. The contribution is intended to support policy acceptance and implementation quality in Islamic higher education. Future work should pilot these instruments and evaluate impacts on attainment and quality assurance.

**Keywords:** Outcome-Based Education, constructive alignment, thematic *tafsīr*, Islamic higher education, quality assurance.

**Abstrak:** Kajian ini menilai Pendidikan Berasaskan Hasil (OBE) melalui lensa al-Qur'an dengan memetakan enam prinsip: kejelasan fokus, reka bentuk ke belakang, harapan tinggi untuk semua, peluang yang diperluas, penjajaran konstruktif, dan peningkatan berterusan; kepada konsep dan ayat al-Qur'an yang relevan, disokong oleh sumber tafsir klasik. Manggabungkan kaedah tafsir bertema dengan literatur OBE, analisis ini merumuskan pernyataan prinsip dan menetapkan artifak pelaksanaan yang tidak bertindih pada peringkat program dan kursus. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan penumpuan yang kuat antara logik OBE dan penekanan al-Qur'an terhadap matlamat yang bertujuan, kriteria yang dijelaskan, kemudahan yang saksama, kesepaduan kurikulum, dan tinjauan berpandukan bukti. Makalah ini mengusulkan satu sintesis yang mengesahkan keserasian teologi dan menterjemahkannya ke dalam alat praktikal termasuk jadual ambang (*threshold tables*), rangka tindakan penilaian (*assessment blueprints*), rubrik kecekapan dengan dasar maklum balas, matriks kesetaraan, peta penjajaran program, dan kitaran jaminan pembelajaran (*AoL*). Sumbangan ini bertujuan untuk menyokong penerimaan dasar dan kualiti pelaksanaan dalam pendidikan tinggi Islam. Kajian masa depan harus memandu uji instrumen ini dan menilai kesannya terhadap pencapaian dan jaminan kualiti.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Berasaskan Hasil; penjajaran konstruktif; tafsir bertema; pendidikan tinggi Islam; jaminan kualiti

## Introduction

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is widely adopted in higher education as an approach that organises curriculum, teaching, and assessment around clearly stated learning outcomes that students

must demonstrate by graduation (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996). In this approach, outcomes guide curriculum and assessment decisions, while constructive alignment links intended learning outcomes with teaching activities and assessment criteria (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Accreditation frameworks operationalise these ideas through programme educational objectives (PEOs), student or graduate outcomes, and documented evidence of attainment within continuous improvement cycles (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2019).

Building on this foundation, outcome-based approaches have become mainstream across higher education. In engineering education, accreditation frameworks place student outcomes at the core, and multi-region reviews document the global diffusion of OBE practices (Mahrishi et al., 2025). In medical education, the outcomes movement is now institutionalised: competency-based medical education evolved from OBE and is widely implemented across jurisdictions, while outcome-based medical education has reframed curricular design and assessment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Frank et al., 2010; Gruppen, 2012). In the social sciences, business and management programmes embed outcomes through assurance-of-learning requirements in international accreditation standards (AACSB, 2023). Legal education likewise reports OBE adoption at course and programme levels, with documented learning-outcomes frameworks and faculty engagement (Chan, 2023; Hamilton & Organ, 2024). Taken together, these sources indicate that OBE principles are embedded across disciplines through curriculum design, assessment practice, and continuous quality assurance.

In Malaysia, OBE is embedded across higher education via the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2.0 (2024) and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency's (MQA) *Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation* (COPPA). MQF 2.0 (2024) defines levels, generic learning outcomes, and credits as the backbone for programme design, while COPPA requires programmes to state clear intended learning outcomes and to evidence constructive alignment between curriculum, teaching, and assessment, supported by moderation and continuous-improvement processes. These requirements apply to all higher-education providers, including Islamic universities and colleges.

Although OBE is widely implemented, including in Islamic higher education institutions (HEIs), most practice documents and studies do not evaluate OBE principles through a Qur'anic lens. As a result, claims of alignment with Islamic aims remain implicit, and scriptural references are often illustrative rather than systematic, which can limit stakeholder confidence and weaken assurance that OBE authentically supports Islamic educational purposes.

To address this gap and move beyond implicit normative alignment, this study evaluates OBE through a Qur'anic lens by systematically mapping six core OBE principles to relevant Qur'anic concepts, verses, and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. The novelty of this research lies in its theoretical and practical contribution: positioning the proposed OBE-Islamic Assurance Cycle as a conceptual bridge between thematic *tafsīr* and contemporary quality-assurance scholarship. By translating these theological alignments into a concrete implementation architecture: assigning specific, non-overlapping administrative artefacts such as threshold tables, assessment blueprints, and assurance-of-learning calendars to each mapped principle; the study provides a rigorous, evidence-informed framework. The aim is to equip Islamic HEIs with an evidence-informed rationale that strengthens institutional assurance, policy acceptance, and the capacity to execute OBE with both educational rigour and spiritual integrity.

## Literature Review

### *OBE Core Principles*

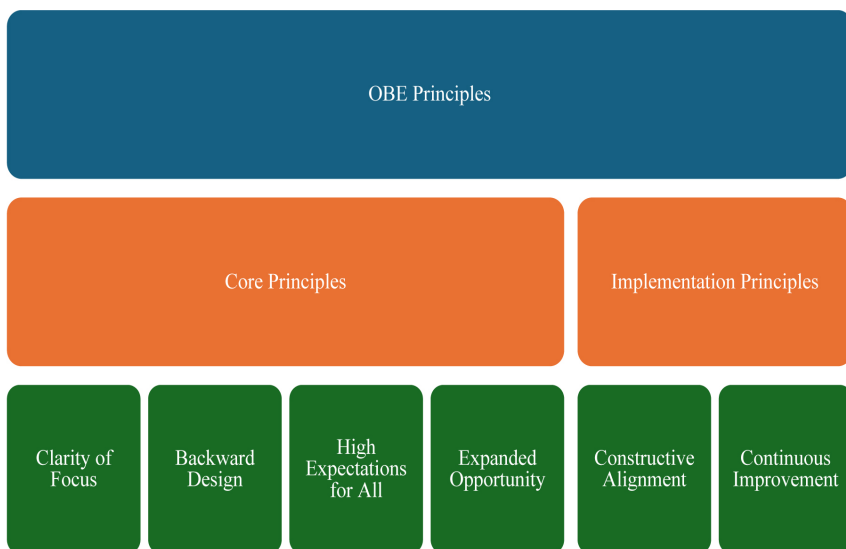
OBE is a design philosophy that begins by specifying what learners should demonstrably know and do and then organises curriculum and assessment so that every graduate attains those ends (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). In Spady's (1994) account, four core principles shape this philosophy. Clarity of focus requires a small set of significant outcomes that render educational intent explicit and assessable. Backward design or design down directs planners to begin with culminating outcomes and then derive course outcomes, learning activities, and assessments from the declared ends. High expectations for all assert that rigorous performance standards apply to every learner, with success judged against explicit criteria. Expanded opportunity maintains the standard while allowing varied pathways and sufficient time for learners to demonstrate attainment.

### *OBE Implementation Principles*

Subsequent scholarship complements these foundations with implementation principles that operationalise coherence among outcomes, teaching, and assessment. Constructive alignment links intended learning outcomes to teaching-learning activities and to assessment tasks and criteria, ensuring that the evidence gathered is valid for the stated outcomes and that judgments flow transparently from published standards (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Recent work characterises constructive alignment as an effective tool for aligning curricula, pedagogy, and assessments to make curriculum intent explicit, while noting that “fracture points” can persist between module- and programme-level outcomes and proposing a comprehensive mapping framework to address them (Frost & Ackrill, 2025). Related analyses frame alignment as the selection of teaching models and assessment methods in direct response to intended outcomes, thereby integrating curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment into a single outcomes-driven process (Noushad, 2024).

**Figure 1**

*Core and Implementation Principles of OBE*



*Source.* Adopted from Spady (1994), Biggs (1996), Biggs and Tang (2011), with modifications.

Continuous improvement extends alignment into a cyclical, evidence-informed process in which attainment data and exemplars are used to review design decisions, calibrate standards, and enact changes that progressively enhance the match between intended outcomes and realised learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Taken together, these six principles offer a theoretically integrated account of outcomes, means, criteria, and quality enhancement that has shaped contemporary discourse on curriculum and assessment design. In practice, OBE operates as a system that links explicit outcomes, assessment, and continuous quality improvement (Sun & Lee, 2020), and recent syntheses echo this integrated view by connecting graduate profiles and PLO-CLO formulation to constructive alignment, authentic and formative assessment, and accountability for quality enhancement (Ali & Jamin, 2025; Hristov, Nakov, & Miočinović, 2023). Figure 1 illustrates the four core and two implementation principles that structure the analysis.

## Methodology

### *Thematic tafsir approach*

This study employs a conceptual and hermeneutic design anchored in *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* (thematic tafsir) to evaluate OBE principles through a Qurʾanic lens. Thematic tafsir is an interpretive approach that examines the Qurʾan by gathering and analysing verses related to a specific theme or topic (*mawḍūʿ*) as the focal point to derive the Qurʾan's perspective on that subject (El-Mesawi, 2005). In this study, the focal topic is OBE, operationalised as six thematic pillars to derive a holistic Qurʾanic perspective on these educational constructs.

First, a theme definition is drafted for each OBE pillar by distilling its core constructs from the OBE literature and stating them in one sentence. Next, operative keys are prepared through a targeted lexicon-to-text workflow: key constructs are converted into Arabic lexical fields and roots and traced across the Qurʾan using *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li-Alfāz al-Qurʾān* (ʿAbd Al-Bāqī, 1996) for concordance-based retrieval, while *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qurʾān* (Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, 2006) is consulted to establish semantic range, nuances, and contrasts for each key term. These candidates are then cross-checked against usage in classical *tafsīr* to confirm semantic fit and contextual relevance. Finally,

a synthesis step integrates the collected evidence into a concise pillar statement that captures the Qur'anic thrust without over-specification.

A thematic *tafsīr* design is adopted because OBE requires principle-level synthesis across the Qur'anic corpus rather than verse-by-verse commentary. Compared with sequential (*taḥlīlī*) or comparative (*muqāran*) *tafsīr*, a thematic procedure better supports the derivation of portable educational principles by aggregating recurring lexical fields and patterns linked to purposiveness, clarification, facilitation, coherence, and evidence-guided review. To preserve exegetical integrity, the study constrains retrieval through concordance and lexicon analysis, verifies context and scope in classical *tafsīr* sources, and applies inclusion boundaries that privilege principle-level guidance while excluding narrow legal contingencies.

### ***Interpretive Limits of Thematic Tafsir***

It is important to acknowledge the interpretive limits of the thematic *tafsīr* approach employed in this study. The mapping of Qur'anic verses to OBE principles is strictly intended as a heuristic for educational design, rather than a basis for juridical derivation. While this method effectively supports the derivation of portable educational principles by aggregating recurring lexical patterns, it does not attempt to extract formal legal rulings (*aḥkām*). To preserve exegetical integrity and respect these interpretive boundaries, the verse selection process deliberately excludes texts whose interpretations depend on narrow legal contingencies, case-specific dispensations, or contested historical debates. Instead, by corroborating meanings with classical exegetical sources, the methodology ensures that the derived concepts remain conceptually robust as general, principle-level guidance for curriculum and assessment design.

### ***Verse Selection***

Verses are retained when they satisfy four conditions: conceptual relevance to the pillar's underlying idea; corroboration by at least one classical *tafsīr*; semantic clarity adequate for a stable principle statement; and transferability to a general educational principle rather than a case-specific rule.

To avoid methodological ambiguity, the study distinguishes corroboration from triangulation in describing how verse meanings

are verified. The choice of using the term corroboration rather than triangulation reflects the conceptual nature of this inquiry. While triangulation typically applies to empirical validation across data types, corroboration here denotes the interpretive verification of Qur'anic meanings through cross-reference to authoritative exegetical sources such as Al-Ṭabarī (2001), Ibn Kathīr (1999), and Al-Qurṭubī (2006). This phrasing better conveys the hermeneutic integrity of the thematic *tafsīr* process.

### **Mapping to OBE constructs**

In parallel, canonical OBE sources (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011; MQA, 2019) are used to operationalise each pillar as an educational construct. The thematic-*tafsīr* outputs are then aligned to these constructs to produce, for each pillar: (i) Qur'anic anchors with brief *tafsīr* cues, (ii) a one-sentence principle emerging from the mapping, and (iii) design implications indicating how the principle could guide programme learning outcomes (PLOs), course learning outcomes (CLOs), assessment criteria and tasks, and assurance-of-learning (AoL) routines. Figure 2 illustrates the thematic *tafsīr* analytical process used in this paper.

### **Figure 2**

#### *Thematic Tafsīr Analytical Process for OBE Mapping*



*Source.* Authors' own summary of the methodology.

### **Result and Discussion**

This section presents a Qur'an-anchored mapping of six OBE pillars and examines implications for Islamic higher-education practice. To streamline the presentation of the thematic *tafsīr* process and foreground the study's interpretive insights, Table 1 synthesises the lexicon workflows, core constructs, operative keys, and thematic boundaries

for all six principles. By establishing these methodological parameters upfront, the subsequent subsections proceed directly to outline the pillar's intent in the OBE literature, identify primary Qur'anic anchors with brief *tafsīr* cues, and formulate a concise emergent principle. Practical design implications are then indicated for programme learning outcomes (PLOs), course learning outcomes (CLOs), assessment criteria, and assurance-of-learning (AoL) routines. Considered collectively, the six mappings show where Islamic foundations affirm core OBE logics and where careful implementation is required to avoid reductionism.

**Table 1**

*Lexicon Workflow and Thematic Boundaries for OBE Principles*

OBE Principle	Theme Definition	Core Constructs	Operative Keys and Roots	Selection Boundary
Clarity of Focus	Educational aims are explicitly stated, meaningful, and oriented to virtuous ends, with learning judged by the quality of deeds and sincerity of intention	Purpose, intention, telos, meaningful ends, visibility of deeds	الغاية، المقاصد، النية، العمل الصالح، الإحسان، الجزاء، الحساب؛ غ-ي-ا (غاية)، ق-ص-د (قصد/ مقاصد)، ن-و-ي (نية)، ع-م-ل (عمل)، ح-س-ب (حساب)، ج-ز-ي (جزاء)	Prefer verses that frame ultimate purpose and evaluation of deeds rather than narrow legal rulings
Backward Design	Outcomes guide design choices, with proportion, measure, and guidance indicating ordered planning from ends to means	Measure, proportion, decree, guidance, wise ordering	القدر، التقدير، الميزان، الهدى، الحكمة، التبيين؛ ق-د-ر (قدر)، ز-ن- ن/و-ز-ن (ميزان)، ه-د-ي (هدى)، ح-ك-م (حكمة)، ب-ي-ن (بيان/تبيان)	Emphasise verses that signal principled ordering and clarity, not deterministic debates about <i>qadar</i>

OBE Principle	Theme Definition	Core Constructs	Operative Keys and Roots	Selection Boundary
High Expectations for All	Standards are demanding yet fair, coupling the call to strive and excel with recognition of human capacity	Striving, excellence, elevation in ranks, ability and burden	الجهاد/الجهاد، الإحسان/الإتقان، الدرجات، الاستطاعة، لا يكلف الله نفساً إلا وسعها؛ ج-ه-د (جهد/جهاد)، ح-س-ن (إحسان)، د-ر-ج (درجات)، ط-و-ع (استطاعة)، ك-ل-ف (تكليف)	Select texts linking effort to guidance or rank and pair rigour with capacity
Expanded Opportunity	Learners are given accessible paths and reasonable accommodations to evidence the same outcomes without diluting standards	Ease, removal of hardship, facilitation, alternative paths	اليسر، رفع الحرج، التيسير، التخفيف؛ ي-س-ر (يسر)، ح-ر-ج (حرج)، خ-ف-ف (تخفيف)، س-ه-ل (سهل/ تسهيل)	Focus on general principles of ease and facilitation, not case-specific dispensations
Constructive Alignment	Means are coherently aligned to ends, with guidance and clarification providing shared criteria that bind components together	Guidance to the straight path, clarification, unity and coherence, holding fast together	الهُدَى، الصراط المستقيم، البيان/ التبيان، الاعتصام، عدم التفرق؛ ه-د-ي (هدى)، س-ط-ر/س-ر-ط (صراط)، ب-ي-ن (بيان/تبيان)، ع-ص-م (اعتصام)، ف-ر-ق (تفرق)	Prefer verses that speak to coherence and shared standards rather than purely devotional adherence
Continuous Improvement	Communities regularly examine evidence of deeds, consult, and enact changes that move practice toward better alignment with stated aims	Self-audit, accountability, change through action, consultation leading to decisive implementation	المحاسبة/الحساب، الكتاب/سجل الأعمال، التغيير، الشورى، العمل؛ ح-س-ب (حساب/ محاسبة)، ك-ت-ب (كتاب/كتب)، غ-ي-ر (تغيير)، ش-و-ر (شورى)، ع-م-ل (عمل)	Target verses that link review to action and improvement, not only eschatological judgment scenes

### *Clarity of Focus*

Clarity of focus in OBE calls for programmes to name a small set of significant learning outcomes and to organise curriculum, teaching, and assessment so that every graduate can demonstrate them to an agreed standard (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

A Qur'anic rationale for this emphasis emerges from verses that frame human action in purposive and assessable terms. The telos-setting statement “I did not create jinn and humankind except to worship” situates all activity within a clear end, and classical exegetes treat this as an orientation of intention and purpose across domains, which parallels the requirement to declare purposive programme learning outcomes (Q 51:56; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). Another anchor is the description of “who is best in deed,” read in *tafsīr* as privileging the quality and sincerity of deeds rather than their sheer quantity; this supports the use of criterion-referenced rubrics that weight quality of evidence and integrity rather than task completion alone (Q 67:2; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, 2006; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Further, the sequence “that a person has only what he strives for” and “his striving will be shown” underscores demonstrability and record, which aligns with OBE's insistence on observable performances, transparent documentation, and verifiable evidence such as portfolios and capstones (Q 53:39-41; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Biggs, 1996). Finally, rejection of purposeless creation and anticipation of accountability provides warrant for auditable ends and scheduled reviews of attainment against declared outcomes in programme quality systems (Q 23:115; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; MQA, 2019). This Qur'anic framing also resonates with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which emphasise purposeful action, intellectual clarity, and moral accountability as foundations of learning and human development (Auda, 2008; Rahman, 2009). Taken together, these anchors legitimise purposive outcomes, explicit quality criteria, the requirement for tangible student work, and accountable record-keeping that makes attainment visible and reviewable.

From this mapping, a practical principle follows: educational ends should be stated clearly, oriented to meaningful goods, and evidenced by demonstrable student performance that reflects quality and integrity.

Implementation begins by specifying the “what.” Ali and Jamin (2025) identify, as a first step, the formulation of *graduate profiles* and

*learning outcomes*, emphasising explicit and measurable outcomes at programme and course levels. Programmes should publish a concise set of PLOs together with a threshold rubric that states the minimum acceptable level of performance for each outcome, including value-infused competencies. The threshold table serves as the authoritative reference for judgments of attainment and communicates expectations to staff, students, and external reviewers (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996). These thresholds are recorded in programme quality documents and used consistently. The way in which learning activities and assessments align to these outcomes is treated in the principle of constructive alignment, while the review of evidence against thresholds is conducted within the continuous improvement cycle (Biggs & Tang, 2011; MQA 2019).

At course level, CLOs should be expressed in assessable language and mapped to the relevant PLOs in the course file, including the specific assessment tasks that will evidence achievement (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). In assessment, criterion-referenced rubrics should emphasise the quality and integrity of student work and require authentic artefacts that permit direct judgment against outcomes.

### ***Backward Design***

Backward design is an outcomes-first logic where culminating learning outcomes guide the derivation of programme and course outcomes, learning activities, and assessment decisions to ensure coherence across all levels (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

A Qur’anic rationale appears in verses that depict an intentional sequence from measure to guidance and from purpose to means. “He created, then proportioned; He determined, then guided” is read by classical exegetes as ordered arrangement followed by direction, which mirrors backward design’s framing of means after ends are specified (Q 87:2–3; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). Likewise, “everything We created with measure” is explained as purposive apportioning and precise proportion, a cue for measured criteria, explicit weightings, and planned structure in assessment blueprints (Q 54:49; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). Descriptions of the Qur’an as *tibyān* and *hudā* supply notions of clarification and guidance, which align with constructive-alignment practices that publish standards and make the pathway to achievement transparent (Q 16:89; Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, 2006; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Calls to reflect on the patterned order of

creation encourage purposive reasoning from declared outcomes toward coherent teaching and assessment (Q 3:190–191; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). These anchors commend starting from explicit ends, specifying measures, and providing clarified guidance so that the route to attainment is intentionally ordered.

The resulting principle is that educational design should begin with clearly stated culminating outcomes and then proportion means to ends through measured criteria and clarified guidance, ensuring that teaching, tasks, and standards coherently serve the outcomes.

Planning now turns to the “how.” Implementation proceeds by declaring a concise set of culminating courses that attain PLOs with milestone indicators; deriving CLOs directly from their parent outcomes; and documenting the chain from outcome to learning activity to rubric criterion in syllabi and course files (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Each course should prepare an assessment blueprint that shows, in prose or tabular form, how the CLOs are supported by specified assessment tasks, the criteria by which those tasks will be judged, and the relative weight assigned to each criterion (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Sun & Lee, 2020). Lesson-level method and assessment selection should be driven by intended outcomes, a point emphasised in Islamic-education design guidance that explicitly adopts constructive alignment (Kamalludeen, 2022). By declaring evidence types, timings, and grading rules in advance, the blueprint reduces drift between intended outcomes and assessed performances and enables transparent communication to learners (Spady, 1994; Frost & Ackrill, 2025). Publication and coherence checks are addressed within the constructive alignment principle; analysis of attainment against the declared measures is reserved for the continuous improvement cycle (MQA, 2019).

### ***High Expectations for All***

High expectations for all couple demanding performance standards with equitable support so that every learner can attain mastery of an agreed criterion (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

A Qur'anic rationale rests on verses that pair effort with guidance and excellence with merited elevation. One anchor is the assurance that “those who strive in Our cause, We will surely guide them to Our

paths,” which exegetes interpret as facilitation that follows sustained effort; this maps naturally onto mastery learning cycles where formative practice and feedback lead toward the standard (Q 29:69; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Biggs & Tang, 2011). “Allah raises in ranks those granted knowledge” is treated as advancement tied to learning and refinement, which supports transparent proficiency bands and criteria for progression rather than norm-referenced comparison (Q 58:11; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). The pair “be mindful as much as you are able” and “Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity” is read to affirm rigour moderated by recognition of human capacity; in OBE terms, the criterion remains constant while supports, time, and modes of demonstration may adapt to legitimate constraints (Q 64:16; Q 2:286; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). Taken as a set, these anchors commend explicit, high standards linked to knowledge, structured opportunities for effortful improvement, and equitable accommodation that respects capacity without diluting the benchmark.

The emergent principle is to maintain demanding, clearly described standards for every learner while providing fair supports and flexible routes that enable attainment of the same criterion.

In practice, programmes should publish proficiency thresholds for each PLO, describe the “ranks” or performance bands with exemplars, and monitor equity of attainment across student groups (Spady, 1994; MQA, 2019). Course teams can calibrate rubrics, build formative checkpoints that require evidence of improvement across attempts, and allow alternative demonstrations of the same CLO under a common rubric to respect capacity while holding the line on quality (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Within constructive alignment, formative and summative methods are coordinated to guide students toward stated criteria, providing a basis for feedback practices that support movement across proficiency bands without lowering standards (Hristov, Nakov, & Miočinović, 2023). Findings in Islamic Religious Education associate structured formative assessment with improved movement toward criteria, reinforcing feedback-and-revision policies (Yusoff, 2025). Assessment moderation helps keep judgments consistent, and AoL reports should disaggregate results, record targeted supports where gaps appear, and review whether those supports move learners toward the declared benchmark in subsequent cycles (MQA, 2019).

### *Expanded Opportunity*

Expanded opportunity provides learners with multiple pathways, timeframes, and methods to demonstrate intended outcomes without diluting established performance standards (Spady, 1994; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

A Qur'anic case emerges from texts that frame divine intention as ease and those legitimate proportionate accommodations. “Allah intends for you ease and does not intend hardship for you” is read as a general principle of facilitation in duty, which parallels allowing different but equivalent assessment formats under one rubric so that the criterion remains intact while access improves (Q 2:185; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). “Allah wishes to lighten for you” is taken to mean removal or reduction of undue burden, a cue for revision windows, equitable extensions, and scaffolds that help learners reach the same standard rather than a lesser one (Q 4:28; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Commentators also highlight “He has not placed upon you in the religion any hardship,” which supports structured flexibility in how obligations are fulfilled; in OBE terms, course teams can vary tasks or timing while preserving the learning outcome and its performance descriptors (Q 22:78; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, 2006). Read together, these anchors commend principled facilitation: ease where possible, lightening of undue constraint, and removal of unnecessary obstacle, all without compromising the stated end.

The emergent principle is to preserve high, explicit standards while designing accessible and equitable routes for demonstrating the same outcome.

In practice, programmes should specify at the PLO level where equivalent demonstrations are acceptable and publish rules for equivalency so that stakeholders know how different modes are judged against the same criterion (Spady, 1994; MQA, 2019). Course teams can provide a limited menu of task types mapped to one CLO and assess with a single criterion-referenced rubric, schedule staged milestones to distribute cognitive load, and allow justified extensions or reattempts that focus on improved evidence of learning rather than mere completion (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Because different teaching models can validly support the same outcome when alignment is explicit, equivalent task options may be offered without compromising the common criterion

(Noushad, 2024). Assessment moderation should verify that alternative formats yield comparable judgments, and AoL cycles should track whether flexibility closes attainment gaps without eroding the threshold standard, with actions recorded where inequities persist (Biggs, 1996; MQA, 2019). Alignment principles also require that any alternative task remains appropriate in workload and demonstrably linked to the same outcomes and criteria, ensuring equivalency in evidencing the CLO (Hristov, Nakov, & Miočinović, 2023).

### ***Constructive Alignment***

Constructive alignment ensures the coherent linking of intended learning outcomes to teaching activities, assessment tasks, and criteria, so that judgments of performance flow directly from the declared ends (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

A Qur’anic case draws on verses that foreground upright guidance, clarified criteria, and communal unity. “This Qur’an guides to what is most upright” is taken as direction toward the soundest path, a cue for aligning means with clear ends rather than allowing drift between intention and method (Q 17:9; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Passages describing the Qur’an as *tibyān* and *hudā* stress clarification and guidance, resonating with the provision of published standards and rubrics before assessment takes place (Q 16:89; Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, 2006; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). The call to “hold fast together to the rope of Allah and do not be divided” highlights unity around a shared reference point, mapping onto programmes coordinating PLOs, CLOs, tasks, and criteria so the learner’s path avoids fragmentation (Q 3:103; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Collectively, these anchors commend a design stance in which guidance to the most upright path is operationalised through clarified standards and communal coherence.

The emergent principle is to align teaching activities and assessment instruments explicitly with stated outcomes under shared, published criteria so that the path to achievement is coherent for learners and transparent for evaluators.

In practice, coherence is made transparent through a programme alignment map and published rubrics. The map describes how programme educational objectives (PEOs) are served by PLOs, how those outcomes are distributed across courses as CLOs, and which signature assessment

tasks provide principal evidence for each outcome (Ali & Jamin, 2025; Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Publishing this map alongside the rubrics enables students and evaluators to see how learning activities rehearse the very performances that assessments judge (MQA, 2019; Frost & Ackrill, 2025). The map itself is not a review tool; it is inspected within the continuous improvement cycle.

### ***Continuous Improvement***

Continuous improvement is the systematic use of evidence on outcome attainment to review programmes, enact targeted changes, and monitor their effects in recurring enhancement cycles (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2011; MQA, 2019).

A sustained scriptural basis appears in verses that join self-audit, accountability, consultation, and purposeful change. “Let every soul look to what it has sent ahead for tomorrow” is read as a demand for reflective stock-taking in view of consequences, which parallels scheduled reviews against programme thresholds and curated evidence archives (Q 59:18; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006; MQA, 2019). The directive “work, and Allah will see your work” highlights the visibility and accountability of deeds; in OBE terms, this warrants transparent assessment records, moderated samples, and documented decisions grounded in evidence rather than impressions (Q 9:105; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Change is principled rather than cosmetic, since “Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves” is taken to affirm efficacious action that follows reflection; this supports recording concrete pedagogic or assessment adjustments when attainment falls short (Q 13:11; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). The call to “consult them in the matter, then when you have resolved, rely on Allah” links *shūrā* with decisive implementation and aligns with programme committees that deliberate on evidence, decide actions, assign owners, and schedule follow-up (Q 3:159; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Read together, these anchors commend a loop of review, consultation, action, and reliance that closely matches assurance-of-learning practice.

The resulting principle is that evidence of learning should be gathered, reviewed, and acted upon through consultative cycles that document specific improvements and verify their effects on outcome attainment.

Improvement implementation is structured through a calendar of evidence-informed meetings and documented actions. Each cycle aggregates attainment against the PLO thresholds, checks compliance with assessment blueprints, examines rubric-band distributions, and inspects alignment evidence (Sun & Lee, 2020; MQA, 2019). Minutes and action logs must record decisions, named owners, timelines, and specific changes to pedagogy or assessment, followed by verification in the next cycle of whether the actions improved student attainment (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Biggs, 1996).

### *Integrative Overview of the Six OBE Principles*

Table 2 below synthesises the six OBE principles alongside their primary Qur’anic anchors, key *tafsīr* cues, the emergent principle distilled from the mapping, and a single non-overlapping implementation artefact assigned to programme or course level.

**Table 2**

#### *Synthesis of Pillars, Scriptural Anchors, and Implementation*

No	Pillar	OBE Intent	Primary Qur’anic Anchors	Tafsīr Cues	Emergent Principle	Implementation Artefact (Owner)
1.	Clarity of Focus	Name a small set of significant outcomes; judge learning by demonstrable performance.	Q 51:56; Q 67:2; Q 53:39–41; Q 23:115	<i>niyyah, ghāyah, maqāsid, ihsān, hisāb, kitāb</i>	State purposive outcomes and require high-quality, visible evidence	PLO Threshold Table (Programme)
2.	Backward Design	Start from culminating outcomes; proportion means to ends with measured criteria.	Q 87:2–3; Q 54:49; Q 16:89; Q 3:190–191	<i>qadar, taqdīr, mīzān, tibyān, hudā</i>	Plan teaching and assessment backward from ends with clarified measures	Assessment Blueprint (Course)

No	Pillar	OBE Intent	Primary Qur'anic Anchors	Tafsīr Cues	Emergent Principle	Implementation Artefact (Owner)
3.	High Expectations for All	Hold fixed standards; provide equitable support so all can reach mastery.	Q 29:69; Q 58:11; Q 64:16; Q 2:286	<i>juhd, jihād, darajāt, istita'ah, taklīf-wus'</i>	Keep standards high and explicit; scaffold effort and feedback fairly	Proficiency Rubrics + Feedback Policy (Course)
4.	Expanded Opportunity	Offer equivalent routes and timing to evidence the same outcomes.	Q 2:185; Q 4:28; Q 22:78	<i>yusr, takhīf, raf' al-haraj</i>	Preserve the benchmark while widening accessible demonstrations	Equivalency Matrix (Course/ Programme)
5.	Constructive Alignment	Align outcomes, teaching, and assessment under shared criteria.	Q 17:9; Q 16:89; Q 3:103	<i>hudā, širāṭ mustaqīm, tibyān, bayān, i'tiṣām</i>	Make the path to attainment coherent and criteria transparent	Programme Alignment Map + Public Rubrics (Programme)
6.	Continuous Improvement	Use evidence cyclically to review, act, and verify impact.	Q 59:18; Q 9:105; Q 13:11; Q 3:159	<i>muḥāsabah, hisāb, kitab, shahādah, taghyīr, shūrā</i>	Gather, review, and act on evidence in documented cycles	AoL Calendar + Dashboard + Action Log (Programme)

The information provided in Table 2 functions as a navigational aid: it makes the logic from scriptural warrant to educational design transparent, and it clarifies “ownership” of each operational instrument to minimise redundancy across pillars. Verse references are kept concise to preserve readability. Collectively, the summary provides reviewers and practitioners a quick audit trail from outcomes theory to actionable quality-assurance practice.

The six OBE principles discussed in this study can be seen as practical expressions of the higher objectives of Islamic law, or

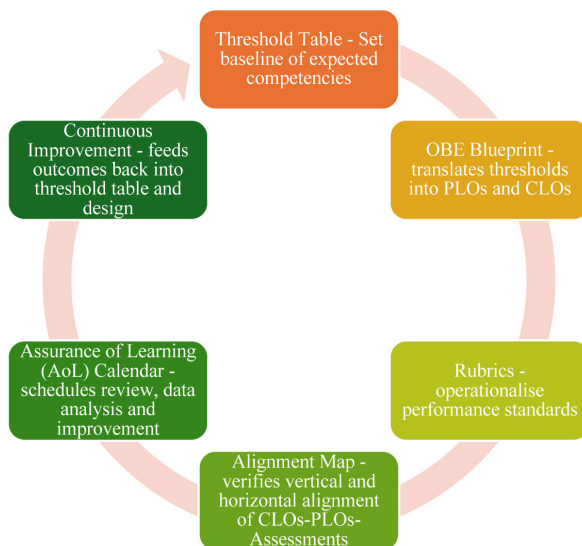
*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. These objectives aim to protect and develop the essential aspects of human life and learning, namely the intellect ('*aql*), the self (*nafs*), and faith (*dīn*). The principles of clarity of focus and backward design help safeguard the intellect by encouraging purposeful thinking, reasoned planning, and learning that is clearly directed towards meaningful ends. High expectations for all and expanded opportunity support the well-being of the self by recognising individual capacity and promoting fairness and perseverance in the learning process. Meanwhile, constructive alignment and continuous improvement uphold faith by linking effort to accountability, sincerity, and the pursuit of excellence (*ihsān*). Together, these principles illustrate that OBE is not merely an administrative model for measuring outcomes but a framework that can embody Qur'anic and *maqāṣid*-based values in action. This integrated perspective parallels Auda's (2008) systems-based interpretation of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which views purposeful design and continuous improvement as dynamic, interrelated processes within a moral system, and Rahman's (2009) articulation of purposive coherence in Qur'anic thought. In this sense, the Qur'an-anchored OBE model proposed here provides both a moral compass and a practical roadmap for nurturing quality and integrity in Islamic higher education.

To translate this integration into institutional practice, the proposed six artefacts, namely Threshold Table, OBE Blueprint, Rubrics, Equivalency Matrix, Alignment Map, and Assurance of Learning (AoL) Calendar, can be represented as a continuous quality-assurance system termed the OBE-Islamic Assurance Cycle. This cycle illustrates how each artefact functions as part of a coherent feedback loop: the Threshold Table establishes expected competencies; the OBE Blueprint translates these into programme and course outcomes; Rubrics make the standards measurable; the Equivalency Matrix maintains coherence across assessments; the Alignment Map ensures vertical and horizontal integration; and the AoL Calendar governs systematic review and enhancement. Together, these artefacts embody Qur'anic values of clarity (*bayān*), justice ('*adl*), and accountability (*muḥāsabah*), reinforcing that excellence in education must be both ethically anchored and evidentially verifiable.

Figure 3 conceptualises this process as an interlinked cycle of design, implementation, review, and improvement, illustrating how Qur'anic guidance can inform the full spectrum of educational governance, from purpose formulation to continuous enhancement.

**Figure 3**

*Integrative OBE-Islamic Assurance Cycle Model*



*Source.* Authors' own illustration.

## Conclusion

Having demonstrated how each OBE pillar is grounded in Qur'anic concepts and applied in educational contexts, this conclusion brings together the key alignments and explains their relevance for teaching practice and future research.

This study evaluated core and implementation principles of OBE through a Qur'anic lens and produced a coherent mapping between six pillars of OBE and Qur'anic anchors supported by classical exegesis. The analysis shows strong conceptual convergence: clarity of focus is warranted by purposive and accountable ends; backward design aligns with scriptural patterns of proportion and guidance; high expectations for all is affirmed through the pairing of striving with guidance and elevation in rank; expanded opportunity is grounded in principles of ease

and the lightening of undue burden; constructive alignment is mirrored in guidance, clarification, and communal coherence; and continuous improvement resonates with self-audit, accountability, consultation, and decisive action. Read as a set, these linkages provide a theologically grounded rationale for the central logics of OBE and justify the use of explicit outcomes, transparent criteria, observable evidence, and cyclical review in Islamic higher education.

Beyond conceptual affirmation, the study contributes a practical implementation architecture based on the six OBE pillars. Each pillar owns a distinct operational instrument: outcome thresholds, assessment blueprints, proficiency bands with feedback policy, an equivalency matrix, a programme alignment map with public rubrics, and an AoL cycle with governance artefacts. Assigning clear ownership to these instruments helps faculties translate Qur'anic guidance into auditable practices while maintaining coherence across curriculum design, assessment, and quality assurance.

For institutions, the mapping and the accompanying instruments provide an evidence-informed basis to integrate spiritual aims with demonstrable learning. Policy makers can reference the pillar-specific artefacts in programme standards and accreditation handbooks. Programme leaders can use the alignment map and threshold tables to communicate expectations, the equivalency matrix to widen access without lowering standards, and the assurance cycle to document improvement actions and their impact. Collectively, these steps can increase stakeholder confidence that OBE practice is congruent with Islamic aims and can strengthen acceptance and consistency in implementation.

Future research could also empirically validate the integrative model visualised in Figure 3 previously through pilot implementation in Islamic higher-education institutions such as IIUM. An action-research approach may be employed to examine how the artefacts function in authentic curriculum-review settings, providing data on effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and the sustainability of Qur'an-based assurance systems. Such validation would bridge the gap between theological insight and institutional performance, demonstrating that *maqāṣid*-driven OBE can serve as both an epistemic framework and a measurable pathway toward educational *falāḥ* (holistic success).

The study is limited to thematic *tafsīr* mapping and principle statements. Subsequent work should pilot the instruments in live courses, examine rubric reliability and attainment trajectories, and test whether the proposed assurance cycles lead to measurable gains in learning quality. Comparative studies across disciplines and institutional types would also be valuable to explore boundary conditions and to refine the instruments for different programme contexts.

A Qur'an-anchored reading of OBE does not merely tolerate outcomes-based practice; it offers principled reasons to adopt it and practical guidance for doing so with integrity. By tying outcomes, evidence, and improvement to scriptural anchors, Islamic higher education can pursue excellence in ways that are both educationally robust and spiritually coherent.

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(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

*The glorious Qur'ān*. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

## **Ḥadīth**

In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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