Assessment Planning and Learning Outcome Design

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Objectives for Workshop

- Introduce attendants to issues surrounding outcomes-based curricula
- Discuss common assessment strategies
- Help prepare attendants for academic job market
State higher education systems and regional and national accreditors have increasingly asked for evidence of:

- successful “outcomes” of alumni (job placement, advancement to graduate/professional school)
- learning gains for current students (quantitative measurement of student performance over university career)
- common general education curricula across schools and state systems
Curricular Design

• In recent years, university curricula have evolved from courses/credits to competencies- and outcomes-based programs of study

• Students demonstrate knowledge and skills across curricula (e.g., written communication, critical thinking)

• Curricula are designed to measure this knowledge and skills at key points throughout a student’s time-to-degree

• Responsibility on faculty and administrators to convey what (and to what extent) students are learning
Institutional Learning Outcomes (Gen Ed)

Degree Program Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Aligning Student Learning across the Institution
Student Learning Outcomes

• The building blocks of institutional and major education:
  • a statement of **what students will be able to demonstrate at a predetermined point** (often the end) of a course or curriculum

• General education outcomes are prevalent throughout university curriculum (e.g., communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking)

• Program outcomes can be both major-specific and relevant to general education and usually explain the knowledge/skills that a graduate will be able to demonstrate to any number of audiences
The Role of the Individual Course

Traditional components:
• Course description
• Course objectives (what faculty will impart to students)
• Reading list
• Assignments and quantitative grading scale

More recent requirements:
• Student learning outcomes (SLOs): what students will be expected to demonstrate to faculty
• Articulation of how SLOs align with/support program learning outcomes (and possibly general education)
• Qualitative criteria for how student learning will be measured
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<th>Aligned Course SLOs</th>
<th>Program SLOs</th>
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<td><strong>Introductory:</strong> Students will be able to critically read and interpret texts and articulate ideas in analytical papers.</td>
<td>Students will be able to (1) write literary analyses and critical arguments based on close reading, using academic citation forms when appropriate and (2) demonstrate the relationships between authors, texts, and readers.</td>
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<td><strong>Mid-curricular:</strong> (1) Students will be able to (1) analyze language and apply tools and theories for analyzing text, (2) analyze literature in historical context, (3) apply a range of critical theories and cultural/social/historical concepts related to literary analysis.</td>
<td>Students will be able to (1) recall a range of critical theories about literature and the various approaches by which it can be analyzed and (2) demonstrate the importance of culture, race, gender, and class in literary analysis.</td>
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<td><strong>Senior:</strong> (1) Students will be able to synthesize historical, critical, and theoretical contexts and (2) assess relationship between language and culture of origin to a series of works or body of literature.</td>
<td>Students will be able to analyze the development of different genres from the medieval period to the present and explain their distinctive features.</td>
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<td><strong>Introductory:</strong> Students will be able to recognize and discuss ethical arguments related to science.</td>
<td>Students will be able to demonstrate a strong fundamental knowledge of biochemistry and molecular biology.</td>
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<td><strong>Mid-curricular:</strong> (1) Students will be able to apply their cumulative theoretical and practical knowledge related to biochemistry and molecular biology to address a real world research question and (2) design a research project that includes a testable hypothesis and appropriate experimental objectives.</td>
<td>Students will be able to present clear scientific talks and demonstrate sound, scientific writing.</td>
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<td><strong>Senior:</strong> Students will be able to articulate the significance of and the rationale for their specific independent research project in written and oral form to peer and lay audiences.</td>
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Assessment Method #1: Common Questions

- **Introductory:** Knowledge of key theories and concepts assessed by common questions in a course or across sections
  - (e.g., WMST 101 instructors asked students to distinguish the terms “sex” and “gender”)
- Strictly quantitative and anonymous and can be implemented via Learning Management System, clickers, examinations
- A related strategy is the “minute paper”: ask students what they found most interesting/confusing/helpful in a given class meeting
Assessment Method #2: Rubrics

• **Mid-curriculum and Senior**: Build rubrics based on skills that faculty have identified as high priority for students:
  – to the extent possible, **tailor them to courses and curricula and their SLOs**
  – rely on **faculty consensus** on what majors should be able to do/standardize rubrics across department
  – if using a portfolio approach, can track student performance over time and assignments
Assessment Method #3: Pre- and Post-Surveys

• **Administer before and after a class**, sequence of classes, or declaration of major and application to graduate

• One department asked students to rate their ability and the importance of:
  – critically reading texts and engaging with their arguments
  – distinguishing ethical dilemmas from factual issues
  – engaging with the opinions of others
  – understanding relevance of discipline to real-world issues
Group Conversation

• Have a 5-minute group conversation on:
  – your experiences teaching
  – how you have designed student learning outcomes and assessments of student learning
  – your questions/concerns/challenges in doing so

• Nominate a spokesperson to report to the other groups (2 minutes each)
Resources

• National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/)
• The Degree Qualifications Profile (https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf)
• American Associations of Colleges and Universities (https://www.aacu.org/leap)
• www.unr.edu/assessment