A Quick Guide to Conducting Program-Level Assessment

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1. **<u>Identify program-level student learning outcomes</u>**

   a. **What are program-level student learning outcomes?**

   Specific statements describing the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes that students will acquire as a result of experiencing the program.

   b. **Why create program-level student learning outcomes?**

   They clarify a program's expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and prospective employers. They also ensure that program courses are aligned with program-level goals.

   c. **What are the key features of effective program-level student learning outcomes?**

   Program-level student learning outcomes should be:
      i. Student-centered

      ii. Observable/measurable

      iii. Specific to acquisition of one type of knowledge, skill, or attitude

      iv. Aligned with program's mission and course-level and institutional-level goals

   d. **What are some tips for writing program-level outcomes?**

      i. They should be a collaborative process involving all program faculty.

      ii. Ideas for generating program-level outcomes may be derived from reviewing course-level outcomes, relevant professional organization goals, complimentary program outcomes at the same institution or other institutions, etc.

iii. Use terminology from Bloom's Taxonomy to specify desired levels of performance.

iv. Phrase outcomes as follows: "Students will be able to… [complete the statement]"

2. **Create a curriculum map**

a. **What is a curriculum map?**

A grid that maps program-level courses onto program-level outcomes

b. **Why create a curriculum map?**

To ensure and verify that the program courses and experiences meet program-level outcomes

c. **How should the map be used to inform curriculum design or revision**?

Ensure that there is at least one program course or experience offered to meet a program-level outcome.

d. **Template Curriculum Map:** *Note --* Instead of X's, you can indicate where each learning outcome is Introduced ("I"), Reinforced ("R") and Mastered ("M"). That way you can track the progression of student mastery of each outcome in program-level courses and experiences.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Experience 1
PLO 1:	X		X	X
PLO 2:		X	X	
PLO 3:		X		

3. **Assess program-level student learning outcomes with at least *two direct* assessments**

   a. **What is a direct assessment?**

      A method of collecting evidence based on directly examining and measuring students' performance (e.g., exams, projects, papers, portfolio assignments, oral presentations, fieldwork observations).

   b. **Why use at least two assessments?**

      More assessments = more evidence = more proof of student learning. *Remember* that assessment is a process of evidence gathering.

   c. **What are some examples of direct assessments?**

      i. **Key assessments:** course assignments or exams that are directly aligned with program-level outcomes that are used to directly measure those outcomes.

      ii. **Portfolios:** an archive of student work samples from various points throughout a program. They can be used to show the progression of mastery of particular outcomes from the beginning of a program to the end.

      iii. **Capstone projects:** final projects or exams from capstone courses, which are courses taken at the culmination of a program.

4. **Evaluate assessments with a scoring rubric:**

   a. **What is a rubric?**

      A scoring tool that describes a students' level of performance on an assessment. Rubrics include rating criteria for important dimensions of performance, and standards of attainment for those criteria.

   b. **Why use rubrics?**

      i. **To enhance reliability of ratings:** Helps to ensure consistency in your scoring of students' work.

ii. **To facilitate valid judgments of performance assessments:** Helps to ensure that you are measuring what you purport to be measuring, and that you are drawing accurate conclusions based on assessment results.

iii. **To promote learning and improve instruction:**

1. Makes expectations and scoring transparent for you and the students.

2. Provides specific concrete feedback for the instructor and the learner.

3. Enhances intentional teaching, and students' motivation and self-regulated learning.

c. **How should a rubric be constructed?**

i. Examine an assignment or task and list the critical criteria or desired outcomes of the assignment or task that will be evaluated (must be objective and measurable).

ii. Create a scale of performance-quality levels (typically 3-5 levels of performance are used) and assign each level a numerical value.

iii. Provide a description or example of each dimension at each level of performance (sample students work to provide examples of each level of performance for the different dimensions).

d. **Template Rubric:**

Criteria (outcomes)	Scale level 1 (e.g., excellent; exceeds expectations)	Scale level 2 (e.g., satisfactory; meets expectations)	Scale level 3 (e.g., poor; below expectations)
1.	descriptor	descriptor	descriptor
2.	descriptor	descriptor	descriptor
3.	descriptor	descriptor	descriptor

5. **Close the loop & take action!**

   a. **What does it mean to "close the loop"?**

      It means to take action by using assessment results to make program-level improvements or decisions. This might include:

      i. Revising your program-level outcomes

      ii. Changing curricula by adding or removing courses or program experiences, requiring prerequisite courses, changing instructional methods or assignments within courses, etc.

      iii. Creating or modifying assessments

      iv. Creating or modifying rubrics

      v. Using assessment results to support current program practices or to make other program policies or decisions

   b. **How should we communicate and document each step of the assessment process?**

      Use the end-of-semester **Learning Assessment Activity Reports** to document each step of the process. Also be sure to communicate assessment components and findings to program faculty, administrators, and other key stakeholders.

      Transparency is key! Transparency showcases evidence of student learning from program experiences. It also enables you to reflect on program practices and effectiveness for meeting student outcomes.