

Defining, Assessing, and Documenting Student Learning Outcomes at Senior Institutions

Dr. Susan L. Bosworth , Associate Provost
Institutional Analysis & Effectiveness

College of William & Mary

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What we will do in this breakout group

- Establish a framework for assessing student learning
- Discuss how to structure assessments to monitor curricula and enhance student learning
- Evaluate sources of evidence/measures
- Consider how assessments of student learning can inform decisions at all levels.
- Explore options for documenting institutional effectiveness in educational programs

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Key considerations when assessing student learning outcomes

- Culture of your institution
- Structure of your institution
- Who to involve (the willing and the skeptics)
- Intentional outcomes of assessment for students, faculty, administrators
- External reporting requirements

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The primary SACS connection

SACS' Principles of Accreditation (2012 Edition):

CS 3.3.1: The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (**Institutional effectiveness**):

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

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Framework for assessing student learning



- A clearly stated **PURPOSE** that links department or program to institutional mission
- Clearly stated **FACULTY EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING**
- Clear descriptions of **EXPERIENCES** associated with learning expectations
- **ASSESSMENTS/EVALUATIONS** of student learning
- **EVIDENCE BASED DECISION-MAKING & PLANNING**: Descriptions of how information from evaluations informs decisions at all levels of the university

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Current local practices: Who is doing what?

- Conduct inventory of assessment activities
 - Institutional assessment program
 - School, college, division assessment programs
 - Department, program assessments
- What is being done?
- What internal examples of best practices can be adopted and/or adapted?
- Centralize where feasible
- Collaborate where practical

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Structuring assessments to monitor a curriculum and enhance student learning

- Step 1: Intentionally design a learning-centered curriculum
- Step 2: Align curricular experiences with assessment initiatives
- Step 3: Use assessment results to inform decisions

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1: Establish a learning-centered curriculum

- Are curricular goals stated explicitly?
- Do the goals define what the faculty expects students to learn?

Learning expectations for a curriculum should be:

- Mission driven
- Oriented toward actions and/or behaviors
- Measurable
- Collectively owned

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Identify (co) curricular experiences associated with learning expectations

(see Appendix, pp.1-6)

- Curricular level map:
shows how requirements (including electives) articulate learning expectations
- Course level map:
shows how course introduces and reinforces learning expectations

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Curricular map ~ Program level

Level: I=Introduced, R=Reinforced; Emphasis: High, medium, low

SLOs → Courses ↓	Think conceptually	Think empirically	Draw inferences
Soc 201	I, Low, assessed	I, Low, assessed	
Criminology	R, Med., assessed	R, Med., assessed	
Demography	R, Med., assessed	R, High, assessed	
Soc. Theory	R, High, assessed		
Honors	R, High, assessed	R, High, assessed	I, High, assessed

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Curricular map ~ Program level

Adapted from: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/mapping.htm> (see Appendix, p. 1)

Key: "I"=Introduced; "R"=reinforced and opportunity to practice;
"M"=mastery at the senior or exit level; "A"=assessment evidence collected

SLOs → Courses ↓	Apply the scientific method	Develop laboratory techniques	Diagram and explain major cellular processes
BIOL 101	I	I	
BIOL 202	R	R	I
BIOL 303	R	M, A	R
BIOL 404	M, A		M, A

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2: Align curricular experiences with assessment initiatives

- How do you know the curriculum is working?
- What "evidence" do you need?
- How will assessment results be used to:
 - enhance student learning?
 - inform resource allocation decisions?
 - address accountability requirements?

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Sources of "Evidence"

Direct measures

- Quizzes, tests, inventories
- Team/group projects
- Standardized tests
- Licensure exams
- Oral presentations
- Internships
- Service learning projects
- Case studies
- Simulations
- Portfolios

Indirect measures

- Quantitative data (e.g., enrollment numbers)
- Questionnaires
- Honors, awards, scholarships
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Employer satisfaction studies
- Retention/graduation rates
- Job/graduate school placement data

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Assessing measures:

Evidence is "good" when ...

- it addresses your questions
- it is valid and reliable
- you/others have confidence in it
- you/others understand it
- it is useful
 - Informs decisions
 - Leads to enhanced student learning
 - Provides information for accountability
- it is worth the costs (\$, time, opportunity ...)
- ...

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Brief look at externally developed standardized tools

Examples: Voluntary System of Accountability

- **Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)** – two modules: critical thinking and writing essay
- **Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)** – complete test including performance tasks, analytic writing tasks
- **Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)** – two sub scores of the test: critical thinking and written communication

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Brief look at externally developed standardized tools (continued)

Examples: Rubrics

- AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP): VALUE Rubrics (see Appendix, pp. 7-9)
- University of Hawai'i – Manoa Creating and Using Rubrics (see Resources)

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Pros & cons of different indicators/ measures of student learning

- National standardized tests
- National licensure exams
- Locally developed standardized tests
- Capstone projects/papers
- Course specific assignments/tests
- Self-report survey instruments
- Course portfolios
- Student portfolios
- ...

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Coursework as a source of "evidence": Integrating coursework into broader assessments of student learning

- Course embedded approach
 - Faculty members include common assignments/tests
- Course portfolio approach
 - Faculty members collect assignments/tests for broader assessment

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Coursework as a source of “evidence”: Course portfolios

- Narrative describing how course experiences align with learning expectations
- Course syllabus, course material
- Examples of student work (full range)
 - ✓ Excellent
 - ✓ Marginal
- Survey Responses

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Use of assessment results

What we do well, what needs to be improved:

- Course level
- Program level
- School level
- University level

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Document, document, document ... Institutional effectiveness: educational programs

- What needs to be documented and why?
 - Learning expectations (SLOs)
 - Assessment process (all campuses, all delivery modes)
 - Improvements based on assessment results
- What will meet your needs?
- What will meet your budget?

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**Document, document, document ...
Software and other options**

- TracDat, OATS, WEAVEonline, PRISM, UAOPS, AIMS, Tk20, True Outcomes, TaskStream, LiveText, Angel, Strategic Planning Online, etc.
- Local alternatives
- ...

**Questions?
Comments?**

Thank you!
