

WORKSHOP HANDOUTS: *Facilitating Program Assessment Decision-Making*

10/2013

Curriculum Map Facilitation Activity

Process and outcome. Faculty use sticky-notes to create a curriculum map in order to help the program visualize program coherence, identify any gaps in the curriculum, and suggest changes.

Needed

1. Blank, over-sized curriculum map grid with degree requirements and (abbreviated) student learning outcomes. "Pick one of many" degree requirements appear together on the grid—to aid analysis, draw a colored box around the grouping or print the grouping on same-colored paper.
2. Example of a completed curriculum map and list of guiding questions for discussion
3. List of program student learning outcomes
4. Sticky-notes, markers, tape
5. Large flip chart paper (or computer+projector)
6. Faculty group, facilitator, note-taker

Time:

:03 Welcome participants and describe the activity.

"I'm glad to see you here today for the department meeting. Thank you for coming. The department approved the curriculum committee's proposed student learning outcomes at the last meeting. The next step is to see where in the curriculum that students are significantly exposed to the outcomes and determine if we provide enough learning opportunities. We'll do that using what's called a curriculum map which is a simple matrix with degree requirements in rows in the first column and student learning outcomes across the top.

Here's an example of a curriculum map from Biology. A filled-in cell indicates that the course significantly emphasizes an outcome. A blank cell means no significant emphasis. The content or skill may exist in the course, but it's not directly emphasized. On this map, the asterisks indicate that student projects are collected for program-level assessment purposes.

The activity today involves you using sticky-notes to indicate whether the courses you teach directly address the SLOs and devote time to help students achieve the SLO. For those of you who teach the same course, please discuss and decide on what's appropriate.

This map will represent our curriculum NOW. After we've finished, we'll analyze it and discuss changes that might be considered.

There are sticky-note and markers on your table for you to use. Place an "X" on the note and add to the map. Use an asterisk if student projects or tests can be collected for program assessment from the course. Any questions before we get started?"

ALTERNATIVE #1:

Faculty put "1," "2," or "3" on the sticky-note to indicate some emphasis (1), moderate emphasis (2), significant emphasis (3), or no emphasis (blank).

ALTERNATIVE #2:

Faculty put "I," "R," "M," and "A," on the sticky-notes to indicate Introduce, Reinforce, Master, and Assess for program-level assessment ("M & A" is allowed on a single sticky-note).

Facilitation tip. Dealing with an objection to already-made decisions (e.g., the SLOs):

Jon: “The student learning outcomes don’t include social justice. That should be added.”

Facilitator: “Okay, Jon, the curriculum committee used a collaborative process to develop the SLOs and the department approved the SLOs at the last department meeting, so we’re not going to take time to discuss adding outcomes at this time. Or, do you have a different concern?”

:10 The faculty members stand up and add their sticky-notes to the giant curriculum map. They discuss, as needed, among themselves to reach consensus on classes that several people teach.

:30 The facilitator leads a discussion about program coherence and ways to improve coherence.

to Below are guiding questions the facilitator and faculty colleagues can use to analyze the

:45 curriculum map.

Another person (or the facilitator if no one can help) records the gist of the ideas and suggestions using a marker+flip chart paper or with a computer+wall projector.

Facilitation tip. When using a flip chart and markers, alternate between two different colored markers such as blue and green for each idea. Do not use red except as a highlight color.

Response 1 in blue

Response 2 in green

Response 3 in blue

Coherence Questions

A. **Does each course (and required experience) contribute to the program SLOs?** [pause for answer, record answers, ask for suggestions]

Jenn: “CRS 310 has no Xs.”

Facilitator: “Okay, so CRS 310 doesn’t seem to contribute, does anyone have a suggestion?”

Jon: “We haven’t offered that course since Mary retired. Maybe we should remove it from the curriculum or revise it.”

Facilitator: “Other ideas?”

B. **Do we offer students enough learning opportunities for each outcome?**

Mel: “Students have learning opportunities for outcomes 5 and 6 in the 100-level class and not again until their 400-level project course. Let’s add assignments for #5 and #6 to the 300-level courses.”

C. **Does any course try to do too much?** Is it possible for a single course to help students make significant improvement on all of the SLOs? What’s appropriate?

Chris: “The intro research methods course includes learning about major theories. I’m not sure it can cover that plus teach design, proposal writing, giving a presentation, and ethics.”

D. *For programs that allow students to choose courses from a group of program electives:* Is it possible for students to choose certain program electives and then not be exposed sufficiently to an outcome? If yes, what suggestions do you have?

Assessment Planning Questions

- E. *For undergraduate programs: Which senior-level courses already use assignments that align with program outcomes?* Can we gather evidence of student learning from those courses? [mark these courses on the curriculum map with an “A” or asterisks]
- F. *For graduate programs: Where in the curriculum can we evaluate for mastery of the outcomes? What does evidence already exist?* [E.g., theses, oral defense.]

For each question about coherence and planning, the facilitator allows the conversation to continue until saturation and then asks the group to consider a decision,

“It sounds like we’ve listed the possible ideas. Unless someone has a new idea, let’s see if we can select one or more of these actions for the curriculum committee to help implement.”

Voting options: dot voting, show of hands, secret ballot, email poll after meeting ends, etc.

Continue until the curriculum has been analyzed, suggestions made, and courses or locations in the curriculum have been selected from which to collect evidence.

Always leave 5 minutes for wrap up.

:05 Facilitator wraps up the discussion: summarizes, praises accomplishments, and gives next steps.

“I’ve learned a lot about our curriculum today and while we do have more to discuss, we’re out of time today. We have two items that we agreed upon. We agreed to remove 310 and to add writing case studies in the 250 course and in all 300-level electives. I’ll type these notes and email them along with the curriculum map. I’ll put the issue of collecting evidence from 414 and 489 on our next meeting agenda. Thanks again for your work and thoughts today.”

Curriculum Map Example: Excerpt from Biology

Requirements	Student Learning Outcomes			
	Apply the scientific method	Develop laboratory techniques	Diagram and explain major cellular processes	Awareness of careers and job opportunities in biological sciences
BIOL 101	X	X		X
BIOL 202	X	X	X	
BIOL 303	X	X**	X	
BIOL 404	X**		X**	X
Exit interview				X**

** = collect evidence for program-level assessment from students in this course

Hypothetical Psychology Program Student Learning Outcomes and Requirements

- #1. Compare and contrast major concepts and themes in psychology
- #2. Interpret, design, and conduct basic psychological research
- #3. Apply ethical standards to evaluate psychological science and practice
- #4. Craft clear and concise written communication to address specific audiences (lay, peer, professional); deliver complex oral presentations and answer questions about psychological content
- #5. Interact effectively with others by deploying psychological concepts to facilitate effective interactions with people of diverse backgrounds

Psych 101: Intro to Psychology

- Gateway course that introduces students to the major perspectives in psychology.
- Emphasis on the broad scope of modern-day scientific psychology
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams

Psych 209: Fundamentals of Psychological Research

- Psychological research methodology and techniques.
- Ethical issues in psychological research
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams

Psych 303: Theories of Personality

- Survey of major perspectives, scientific issues, applications, and research finding in the area of personality
- Emphasis on hands-on research
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams; research report in APA style

Psych 345: Experimental Psychology

- Focus on experimental research designs used in psychological research
- Topics include research design and statistical analysis
- Emphasis on appropriate designs for different research questions
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams

Psych 356: Psychobiology

- Behavior from a natural science viewpoint
- Topics include evolution, behavior genetics, neural mechanisms, drugs and behaviors, neural bases of memory and cognition
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams; analysis papers

Psych 367: Social Psychology

- Cognitive, behavioral, and emotional effects of people
- Topics include interpersonal relations, attribution, attitudes, group behavior, stereotypes, social roles
- Evaluation = multiple-choice exams

Psych 414: Cognitive Development

- Overview of theoretical perspectives concerning development of children's thinking from birth through the early school years.
- Emphasis on how researchers design experiments to assess cognition in children
- Evaluation = analysis papers; research proposal in APA style

Psych 489: Senior Seminar in Psychology

- Capstone experience
- Students participates in supervised research or fieldwork
- Evaluation = research proposal; research report in APA style; oral presentation

Photo of the completed curriculum map after the initial part of the role-playing activity. Participants used "X" to indicate that a course directly and substantially addresses the student learning outcome.

2"x3" sticky-notes were used on a 2 feet by 3 feet sheet.

Note: typical programs have more course requirements and require additional sheets. Course numbers are usually sufficient and recommended (for this activity, course numbers plus descriptions were used).

Curriculum Map	Learning Outcome #1 Compare and contrast major concepts and themes in psychology	Learning Outcome #2 Interpret, design, and conduct basic psychological research	Learning Outcome #3 Apply ethical standards to evaluate psychological science and practice	Learning Outcome #4 Craft clear and concise written communication to address specific audiences (lay, peer, professional), deliver complex oral presentations and answer questions about psychological content	Learning Outcome #5 Interact effectively with others by displaying psychological concepts to facilitate effective interactions with people of diverse backgrounds
Psych 101: Intro to Psychology • Gateway course that introduces students to the major perspectives in psychology. • Emphasis on the broad scope of modern-day scientific psychology • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams	X				
Psych 209: Fundamentals of Psychological Research • Psychological research methodology and techniques. • Ethical issues in psychological research • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams		X	X*		
Psych 303: Theories of Personality • Survey of major perspectives, scientific issues, applications, and research finding in the area of personality • Emphasis on hands-on research • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams, research report in APA style	X	X	X	X	
Psych 345: Experimental Psychology • Focus on experimental research designs used in psychological research • Topics include research design and statistical analysis • Emphasis on appropriate designs for different research questions • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams		X			
Psych 356: Psychobiology • Behavior from a natural science viewpoint • Topics include evolution, behavior genetics, neural mechanisms, drugs and behavior, neural bases of memory and cognition • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams, analysis papers	X			X _W	
Psych 367: Social Psychology • Cognitive, behavioral, and emotional effects of people • Topics include interpersonal relations, attraction, attitudes, group behavior, stereotypes, social roles • Evaluation = multiple-choice exams	X				
Psych 414: Cognitive Development • Overview of theoretical perspectives concerning development of children's thinking from birth through the early school years. • Emphasis on how researchers design experiments to assess cognition in children. • Evaluation = analysis papers; research proposal in APA style		X*		X _W	
Psych 409: Senior Seminar in Psychology • Capstone experience • Students participate in supervised research for 100 hours • Evaluation = research proposal, research report in APA style, oral presentation		X _W	X _W	X _W	

Facilitating Program Assessment Decision-making

Monica's Top Tips

1. Prepare an agenda to share and a script for yourself

2. Have a desired outcome and process (place both on agenda and be ready to modify if needed)

Desired Outcome		Process
final student learning outcomes list	by	evaluating draft student learning outcomes
narrow a list of commercial tests to best option	by	evaluating alternatives and dot voting
understand curriculum coherence and identify gaps	by	creating a curriculum map
ways to use assessment results	by	brainstorming a list of possible actions
improve the program using assessment results	by	prioritizing a list of actions

3. Use redirection (after validation)

a. Bring up previous decision or idea

"Melanie, you're bringing up the idea of an alumni survey. The committee already decided not to do an alumni survey in fall so we will not discuss that anymore. Do you have another suggestion?"

"Jonathan, here [point to statement] on the notes for today we've recorded your suggestion to change admissions standards. Is this recorded correctly?"

b. Too much detail

"It seems like we're focusing on too many details right now—like how student names will be redacted from the samples. Can we move back to the larger question at hand?"

c. Unconnected idea

"Ryan, I hear you saying that the rubric needs to be changed. Can you help me understand how what you're saying is connected to what we are talking about—the distribution of results?"

d. Tangential idea

"Christie, sampling seems very important and tangential to this meeting's focus. Can we put that in the minutes as something to discuss at a future meeting?"

4. Make contributions visible: Record ideas using markers + flip chart paper or computer + wall projector.

5. Decide how to decide. Options:

- a. *Consensus*: consensus has been reached when everyone agrees the process has been fair, transparent, people feel heard, good information was used to reach a final decision, and people are willing to support—but not necessarily agree with—the final decision.

When deciding by consensus, the goal is support, not 100% agreement. *Consensus* is not majority rule. It's not compromise until the proposal is too watered-down or lacks substance. A consensus decision is one that everyone can support because a collaborative, respectful process occurred. The decision may be, but is not necessarily, the alternative most preferred by all members. Consider framing the question as, *"Is this proposal something you can live with?"*

- b. *85/15 rule*: 85% agreement is enough to pass.

- c. *Super majority*: 67% agreement is enough to pass.

- d. *Simple majority*: 51% agreement is enough to pass. [Not recommended because a 51/49 vote typically hinders implementation.]

6. Reserve the last 5-10 minutes to summarize, communicate praise for accomplishments, and state commitments/actions/next steps.

More Facilitation Tips

1. Know desired outcomes upfront; have a product in mind before starting
2. Get clarity about expectations by making sure everyone is comfortable with the agenda
3. If you are a facilitator and part of the group, make it clear when you are facilitating and when you are speaking as part of the group. One method: physically re-position your body so your role is clearer. When speaking as a group member, preface your comment with, *“As a member of this department.”*
4. Ask only those questions you want the group to focus on
5. Role model the behavior you want to see
6. Use active listening techniques to listen as an ally, legitimize immediately and often, and validate every voice: nod, open posture, don't interrupt, paraphrase what was said (record paraphrase on visible minutes) and get confirmation you understood
7. Provide a safe space for everyone's contributions so that participants can see their self-interests in the context of others' interests
8. Get everyone to contribute to the final outcome
9. Be comfortable in chaos
10. Redirect inappropriate responses (especially premature solutions)
11. Invite differing opinions
12. Maintain eye contact with everyone
13. Differentiate content/outcome from process
14. Hold people to speaking for themselves. Encourage “I” messages rather than “we” or “they” messages. For example, when someone says, *“Some people say. . .”*, simply state *“Please let us know what you think of the proposal”* and not record the “some people” idea in the notes.
15. Attend to volume/loudness. Loudness typically signals conflict emerging and people not feeling heard. Simply stating, *“I notice that we are speaking loudly to each other”* is usually sufficient to create awareness and reduce the volume. Don't diagnose, just state the observation.
16. Attend to the number of interruptions. Calling attention to the issue usually settles it. *“We are interrupting each other and our meeting ground rules state that one person at a time should talk.”* Don't diagnose, just state the observation.
17. Embrace one minute of silence. If things are moving too fast, not fast enough, if volume or interruptions are increasing, ask people to spend one minute silently thinking about what is being discussed (or one minute jotting down ideas).

Sources consulted:

- Brilhard, J.K. & Galanes, G.J. (1989). *Effective Group Discussion*. 6th Ed. Dubuque, IA: Brown.
- Ching, D.R. (2010). *Facilitative Skills for Collaborative Leaders*. Honolulu: Pacific Center for Collaboration.
- Sanaghan, P. & Gabriel, P.A. (2011). *Collaborative Leadership in Action: A Field Guide for Creating Meetings That Make a Difference*. Amherst: HRD Press.