Instructions for a Curriculum Map

Why do this? To bring a multi-course curriculum into coherence to support student learning that lasts. A curriculum map allows you to understand what is taught and when, to reveal gaps in curriculum coherence and to aid assessment to understand and support student learning.

What do faculty get out of it? Improved communication about teaching and learning expectations, improved curriculum coherence, increased likelihood that students achieve outcomes.

• Program learning goals or outcomes (PLOs) are in the header of each column; courses are in each row. For courses, indicate which courses are required of all students and which are electives. If students have guided electives, group those courses in a single area and evaluate the contribution of each course in that group to the PLOs.

Template: fill in the degree program, PLOs and courses in the table below. You may want to list the PLOs above the table, and refer to them by number in the table to conserve space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>PLO 1</th>
<th>PLO 2</th>
<th>PLO 3</th>
<th>PLO 4</th>
<th>PLO 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>course 1</td>
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<td>course 4</td>
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</table>

• Decide if and how you want to communicate the level of learning associate with a PLO for a particular course. It is a best practice to indicate where learning is introduced, developed or mastered in a given course.
  • Are introduced, developed and mastered the appropriate terms to use? Alternative terms used for developed include reinforced or practiced. Mastered or achieved often express the level of achievement expected at graduation.
  • Faculty may want to bring their syllabus, examples of lectures, assignments or exams to help them decide if their courses identify the level at which their course addresses a given PLO.

• For the courses they teach only, invite all faculty and lecturers to indicate on the grid the PLO their course significantly supports and the level of support (I, D, M, for example) provided.
  • Significant support: Does the course provide significant direct attention to the learning outcome, with progression of student learning of that outcome in the course? If so, then the course contributes to that PLO. A course can provide more than one level of support, for example, I and D or D and M.
  • The curriculum map can be done as a google doc online with filling in the grid on their own time in preparation of a faculty discussion about the map.

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1 Assessment 101: Meaningful Assessment for Student Learning, WASC Educational Programs, October 2017.
• The map can be done in person with a big whiteboard grid and sticky notes for each course that people put up on the grid to indicate how their course maps to the PLO.

• Discuss the map collectively to address the following questions:
  • Does each course contribute to the PLOs? If not, what’s the recommendation? Every course should contribute to at least one PLO.
  • Does any course try to do too much? If yes, what’s the recommendation? A single course should typically contribute to 1 – 3 PLOs with the exception of a capstone or culminating experience course.
  • Is there too much emphasis across the curriculum on some PLOs and not enough for others? What’s the recommendation for either case? The amount of support needed for any one PLO depends on the expectations. Achievement of higher level skills would require more opportunity to practice over the curriculum than lower level skills. If students are underprepared in an area, then perhaps more exposure to that outcome needs to be built into the curriculum.
  • Are all PLOs supported by required courses in the curriculum? Required courses are the only place you can guarantee the learning outcomes for students. If students have a lot of elective choices, those electives should be grouped carefully to ensure that no matter what a student takes, they will get adequate exposure to all PLOs.
  • If the program allows students to select courses from a group (choose 2 of 4 courses), is it possible for a student to make a selection that results in insufficient exposure to an outcome? If yes, what’s the recommendation?
  • Where might learning evidence be collected for program-level assessment and decision making? What recommendations do you have?