

## **Step 2. Assessing a PLO**

**The assessment plan is in place, the rubric has been developed, the student work has been collected. Now it's time for the assessment team to do the assessment.**

The team should set aside a block of time to do this work and not try to fit this work around normal activities. The number of artifacts and size of the committee should be optimized to allow the work to be done in 1 to 2 days. The time between the rubric calibration process and the assessment of the PLO should be minimized. The requirements of the assignment, and any information given to students about the assignment should be available for the assessment committee.

**Rubric Calibration:** The assessment team should spend some time practicing using the rubric on some representative assignments before doing the full assessment. If possible, identify an assignment that the instructor thinks demonstrates high achievement of the PLO, one that demonstrates intermediate achievement, and one that demonstrates low achievement. If not already done when the rubric was first developed, review and discuss the rubric, identifying and clarifying any ambiguous or subjective language. Then have the entire group read the same articles and apply the rubric, keeping the following in mind:

- This is not grading. The assignment is being evaluated against the dimensions of the rubric, not against other assignments. The assignment is not being evaluated as a whole or holistically, but is being evaluated against specific dimensions of skills and knowledge that contribute to the PLO.
- Do not add the scores given in each dimension of the rubric together to get a total score, and do not average the scores given in each dimension. Each dimension of the rubric, representing a different aspect of the skills and knowledge needed to demonstrate the PLO, should be evaluated independently.
- Do not give half scores.

After the group has assessed one assignment, discuss the results:

- Tabulate the score for each dimension of the rubric for each evaluator.
- Share and discuss the results as a group.
- Share the thinking that led to different scores in the same area.
- Clarify and modify the rubric to contribute to a better consensus interpretation.
- Do not force consensus – it is acceptable for scores to be within 1 point of each other. But if there are scores that are 2 or more points off (e.g. scores of 1 and 3), further discussion is needed to come to a more common agreement of a consistent interpretation and application of the rubric.

Repeat the group assessment with another piece of work. If all scores are within 1 point of each other, then assessment can begin. If not, continue the discussion.

**Decide on benchmarks of achievement.** What level of achievement do you want students to demonstrate for each dimension of the rubric?

- Do you want 80% of the students to achieve the highest score for a particular dimension of the rubric and no one to achieve anything below the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest score? Or do you want 80% of the students to score 3s and 4s, with no one scoring less than a 2?
- Is the level of achievement the same for each of the dimensions of the rubric or will it be different?

**Assess the assignments.** Assign two evaluators to each sample of work.

- **Review.** Each evaluator reviews the work and applies the rubric. Record scores and comments on the **Individual Rating Sheet** (available on the resource page where this document was found).
- **Conference.** Compare your ratings with your partner's ratings for each paper. You can do this for each paper as you finish them, or after the full set is done, whichever the two reviewers prefer. There is an

**Agreement Worksheet** to facilitate the conference. The goal of the conference to determine if inter-rater reliability suggests that the assessment is reasonably consistent or if reconciliation is needed.

- Inter-rater reliability is a measure of the consistency of ratings across multiple evaluators. Minimal agreement is needed on 75% of the dimensions of a rubric, which means the individual scores can be accepted as given with no discussion or reconciliation needed.
  - The goal for inter-rater reliability is to have each dimension rated within one point of each other by the two evaluators for 75% of the dimensions (e.g. on 3 of the 4 dimensions).
  - If there is more than one dimension in which there is no agreement within one point, then a discussion of how the rubric was applied is needed to see if reconciliation can be reached. If one or the other person is comfortable, upon discussion and review, to modify their rating to bring the two ratings within one point of each other, then modify that rating and report the modified scores on the final rating sheet. If reconciliation is not possible, report the scores and provide information about why reconciliation was not possible.
- **Transfer** scores to the **Final Rating Sheet** and share copies with all members of the assessment team.

**Interpret the evidence.** This discussion can be done by the assessment team before a meeting with all faculty to share the results, with the faculty as a whole, or in whatever combination of participants makes the most sense. The end result, however, is to discuss the results with the faculty, identify and celebrate good outcomes, make recommendations to address any challenges identified, and plan the implementation of those recommendations.

Are students meeting the benchmarks decided upon and demonstrating the expected level of learning?

- Determine if the benchmark is being met for each element of the rubric on the **Benchmark Worksheet**.
- What student learning can you celebrate and why?
- What challenges to student learning were identified? What are the possible origins of those challenges?
  - Discuss the benchmarks. Are the benchmarks reasonable or too ambitious?
  - Discuss the alignment between the work evaluated and the PLO. Are changes needed in the assignment for better alignment? Does the PLO clearly articulate the intended outcome or does it need to be revised?
  - Discuss any deficiencies in the rubric used for the assessment. How can the rubric be improved?
  - Discuss how the curriculum supports student learning of the dimensions of the PLO. Is sufficient time devoted to the introduction and development of the PLO across the curriculum (the curriculum map can help with this analysis)?
  - Discuss the placement of the course within the curriculum and the expected roadmap students follow to get this course. Is the pathway defined so that students take courses in the best sequence with minimal gaps between sequenced courses and no concurrent enrollment in courses that should be taken sequentially?
  - Discuss the content and approach taken in the course. Are students where they need to be to demonstrate the PLO? Is the course either assuming too little or too much of the students? Is better alignment possible through intermediate assignments, additional opportunities for practice, refinement of the work being assessed?
- What are some solutions to the challenges identified? How can these solutions be implemented?
- What adjustments are needed to the assessment plan or process? How can assessment work more smoothly next year?
- What are the recommendations for closing the loop on this assessment?
- What are the recommendations for the next PLO to assess?

*Next Step: Sharing Results and Closing the Loop.*