Guide to Program-Level Assessment
University of Wisconsin–Superior

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This document is work in progress, and your questions and comments will be invaluable. Please feel free to direct them to Assessment Coordinator Eri Fujieda (efujieda@uwsuper.edu; x8292).

1. Complete a draft of 5-6 student learning outcomes and send them to the Assessment Coordinator by 3/11/2011 (Feedback provided by 3/25/2011)
   - Student learning outcomes are statements that describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the skills, competencies, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that students acquire by the time of graduation.
   - Student learning outcomes should match the overall mission and goals of the program.
   - Develop student learning outcomes with input from all constituencies for the program.
   - Student learning outcomes should be reviewed and updated regularly (e.g., every 3-5 years).

2. Align the curriculum and supporting practices (such as advising) to the learning outcomes through curricular mapping (by 10/14/2011, along with measurable performance criteria).
   - Curricular mapping is a table or matrix that shows all the learning outcomes on one axis, and all the required learning experiences in the program (such as courses, advising, co-curricular activities, etc.) on the other axis. In the cells, note where skills for each outcome are introduced (I), reinforced (R), and demonstrated/integrated (D/I). (The handout “Sample Curricular Mapping Matrix” has an example.)
   - Be sure to identify specific learning experiences that will achieve each measurable performance criterion and each learning outcome.
   - If any improvement of the current curriculum is instigated by completing curricular mapping, document it and include it into the student learning outcome assessment report.

3. Develop measurable performance criteria for each outcome (by 10/14/2011, along with a curricular map).
   - A performance criterion is a specific statement that describes a measurable aspect of performance that is required to meet the corresponding outcome. Each performance criterion must also specifically describe an acceptable level of measurable performance.
   - There should be a limited number of performance criteria for each outcome.
   - Each measurable performance criterion is most useful when written with action verbs. (Action verbs are listed in the document Bloom’s Taxonomy.)

Step 1.

Specify **assessment methods** of measuring each performance criterion. While we would like to answer the question “How well is this performance criterion being met?” our focus here is to figure out how to answer this question with valid measures and data or evidence.

**Methodological details include:**

- **Appropriate measures of the criterion**
  - **Direct measures** (or direct assessments) are preferred. Students’ written, oral, visual, or auditory works are examples of direct measures.
  - For performance criteria that are not directly assessable, **indirect measures** of the performance may be identified. Students’ self-assessment and standardized test results are examples of indirect measures.

- **Appropriate samples of students**
  - Determine a body of students whose learning outcomes if assessed would help capture what students are able to accomplish throughout the program.
  - Consider, for example, that novices, or students who have just started with the program in introductory courses, would help the program to establish the benchmark, while seniors, or students who are about to complete the program, would show if milestones are being achieved.

- **Appropriate type of data**
  - Determine whether appropriate data given a particular outcome should be qualitative or quantitative.
  - An example of quantitative data would be the number of right answers that students produce.
  - An example of qualitative data would be how well students adjust the writing to the context.

Step 2.

Establish a feasible schedule for conducting the assessments and responsibilities for administering the assessments.

Step 3.

Establish a feasible schedule for analyzing and reporting on each assessment method. Assign responsibilities.

Step 4.

Select or develop the specified assessments (scoring rubrics, focus group questions, surveys, etc.).

Step 5.

Specify evaluation methods. Evaluation is using the evidence from the assessment measures to determine how well the outcomes are achieved. Establish a process for evaluation, including the following details:
• Who will assemble the various assessment reports? On what schedule (when and how often)?
• Who will use the assessment data to evaluate, criterion-by-criterion, how well the program is achieving the learning outcomes? On what schedule?
• How will the data be used to inform hypotheses for the causes of student weaknesses?
• In what format will the evaluation be reported? For example, will criteria that have been met be listed as successes to celebrate, while criteria that have not been met be listed as opportunities for improvement?

5. Collect evidence according to the plan. (Spring 2012)

6. Discuss evidence, infer strengths and weaknesses of the current program, and determine specific actions that will improve the weak areas of the program. (During the “welcome week” in every Fall)

7. Report the assessment process, evidence, and implications on the WEAVEOnline. (Complete by the first week of Fall semesters)