Assessment for Busy People
A workshop on assessment of student learning outcomes

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Introductions

- Name
- Department/program
- Your role with assessment
- What would you like to learn today
What are we doing and why are we doing it?
Developing program student learning outcomes
Selecting appropriate measures
I have some data—now what?
Tk20 demonstration and practice
Questions and work time
What are we doing and why are we doing it?

Institutional effectiveness and assessment
What is institutional effectiveness?

- When an institution has earned accreditation by the Commission on Colleges, it signifies that it has “a purpose appropriate to higher education and has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that purpose.”

- The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing: 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance.

- The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.
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:

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 academic and student support services
- 3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

Why do we do assessment?

- Assessment is the continuous process of collecting, evaluating, and using information to determine if and how well performance matches learning or service expectations.

- The purpose of assessment is to use the results to inform meaningful dialogue about how services can be modified to support student success and institutional effectiveness.
What do you want them to learn?

Determining a program’s student learning outcomes
What is a student learning outcome?

SLO: A concise written statement of knowledge, skills, or values students will acquire upon completing the course or degree program. It is an explicit statement of what students should know or be able to do.

For Mason’s degree programs, student learning outcomes should reflect opportunities that are available to all students in the program.
Characteristics of Program SLOs

- Describe what students learn, rather than what faculty will do or “cover”
- Framed in terms of the program and not individual courses
- Important and meaningful
- Course SLOs align with program SLOs
- Rely on verbs that specify definite, observable behaviors
- Focus on the central abilities of the discipline: Incorporate or adapt professional organizations' outcome statements when they exist.
- Collaboratively authored and collectively accepted
Learning outcome statements may be broken down into 3 main components:

- A *verb* that identifies the performance to be demonstrated
- A *learning statement* that specifies what learning will be demonstrated in the performance
- A broad statement of the *criterion* or standard for acceptable performance
Natural Sciences

- Students can apply the scientific methodology in a research proposal.
- Students can evaluate the validity and limitations of theories and scientific claims in experimental results.
- Students can assess the relevance and application of science in everyday life.
Examples

Psychology

- Graduates can write research papers in APA (American Psychological Association) style.
- Graduates can analyze experimental results and draw reasonable conclusions from them.
- Graduates can recognize and articulate the foundational assumptions, central ideas, and dominant criticisms of the psychoanalytic, behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive approaches to psychology.
American History

- Students can list major events in American history.
- Students can describe major events and trends in American history.
- Students can apply their knowledge of American history to examine contemporary American issues.
Good Practice:
- Focus on the student
- SLO should be measurable
- State SLO so that it can be measured by more than one assessment method

Avoid:
- Listing the learning activities
- Putting multiple outcomes into one statement
- Expecting unreasonable results
Mason Expectations for Degree Programs

All Programs

- 5-7 student learning outcomes

Undergraduate programs

- One outcome for written communication
- Undergraduate research outcome, as applicable
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Creating student learning outcomes
Best Practices for Programs

- Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes
- Outcomes are appropriately integrated with one another
- Outcomes articulate with the university’s mission
- Outcomes are congruent with the relevant discipline
- Outcomes are expected of all the program’s graduates
Selecting Appropriate Measures
<table>
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<th>SLO</th>
<th>COUR 300</th>
<th>COUR 432</th>
<th>COUR 499</th>
<th>Internship</th>
<th>Capstone Project</th>
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<td>Reinforced</td>
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</tbody>
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* Level at which the learning experience addresses the outcome:
  “Introduced” indicates that students are introduced to the concept.
  “Reinforced” indicates that students have some experience with the concept and have opportunities to practice.
  “Emphasized” indicates that students have had sufficient practice and can now demonstrate mastery.
Measuring Student Learning Outcomes

- Measures provide direct or indirect evidence of learning.
- Use your curriculum map to identify what evidence of student learning and perceptions about the program already exist.
- Select measures that are:
  - authentic
  - imbedded in courses and learning activities
  - matched to the learning outcome
- Choose methods that are feasible given your program's resources, money, and the amount of time faculty are willing to devote to assessment activities.
Direct measures evaluate actual performance

- Capstone experiences, theses, and dissertations
- Final projects, performances, or presentations for courses or programs
- Tests and exams: standardized or discipline-specific; locally produced, course-embedded
- Portfolios of student work can demonstrate learning over time
Indirect measures evaluate the perceived performance

Indirect measures can be used, but be careful about what they measure

- Surveys can measure student experience, satisfaction, and their perception of their own learning

- Post-graduation outcomes can be used as proxy evidence for student learning, but do not actually measure learning
Grades serve an important purpose, but they are unacceptable measures of learning outcomes

- Grades are often based on more than learning outcomes
  - Grading criteria often include behaviors or activities that are not measures of learning outcomes, such as attendance, participation, improvement, or effort

- One grade can encompass multiple outcomes

- Assessment of learning should related to grades, and grades should correlate to learning outcomes
Assessment Measures Good Practice

- Measure matches the outcome it is trying to measure
- Uses multiple, direct measures of learning, both quantitative and qualitative
- Measure is integrated into regular practice
- Informs continuous improvement
- Maximizes existing data and information
- Process can be repeated by other reviewers, and in the future to produce consistent results
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Making a measurement plan
Best Practices for Programs

- A systematic, well-documented assessment process
- Assessment is integrated into regular practice
- All faculty participate in assessment
- Results are used to make continuous improvement
- Document assessment practice
- Use assessment to move from individual learning to understanding and improving the program
I have some data—now what?

- Involve relevant faculty and students
- Review the results
  - What did you find out? What are the answer(s) to the assessment question?
  - Critically examine the results and determine what actions should be taken
- Compare to performance expectations
  - Did you meet the pre-established criteria for success?
- Results should be meaningful demonstrations of student learning
  - How do the data or evidence support those findings?
Focus is Continuous Improvement

Although programs report on progress toward goals once a year, learning outcomes should be continuously used, updated, and discussed.
Tk20 demonstration and practice
APR and Annual Assessment (Tk20)

- Academic Program Review (APR) and annual assessment are complementary processes. Programs should use the same learning outcomes, measures, and findings for each process.

- APR is a 7-year cycle that requires a comprehensive assessment of an academic program.

- Annual assessment follows a program’s learning outcomes only. SLOs, assessment measures, findings, and action plans are entered into the Tk20 assessment management system every year.
Annual Assessment and Tk20

All degree programs must enter the following into Tk20 by **June 15, 2016**: 

- Fill out the Findings and Actions for the SLO assessed in 2015-2016 (this is the SLO for which planned Measures were entered in 2014-2015)

- Updates to the mission statement, SLOs and curriculum map, if necessary

- Identify one SLO to be assessed in 2016-2017; fill out the planned Measure(s) for that outcome
Questions and Work Time

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