

Establishing Timelines and Responsibilities -An Example-

In program assessment planning, it is important to let common sense prevail. You can't do everything. Processes must be established that capitalize on what is already being done and complement the work of the faculty. Decisions will need to be made. Just as faculty cannot teach the universe of all concepts and skills related to a single course, programs cannot assess everything that they believe students should know or be able to do. As decisions are made and as assessment and evaluation process are developed, think systematically and for the long term. Identify where you want to be at some time in the future and work backwards.

The timeline illustrated in Table 1 demonstrates a three year cycle where each outcome is assessed every three years. Because there are only six outcomes, this means that the data collection process takes place on only two outcomes per year. The timeline provides for two cycles of data collection every six years.

Learning Outcomes (each with measurable performance criteria):	'04-5	'05-6	'06-7	'07-8	'08-9	'09-10
A recognition of ethical and professional responsibilities	●			●		
An understanding of how contemporary issues shape and are shaped by mathematics, science, & engineering		●			●	
An ability to recognize the role of professionals in the global society			●			●
An understanding of diverse cultural and humanistic traditions	●			●		
An ability to work effectively in teams		●			●	
An ability to communicate effectively in oral, written, graphical, and visual forms			●			●

Table 1. Data collection cycle for six learning outcomes

The table above can be misleading in that during the year where data collection is taking place on some of the outcomes, activities are taking place related to other outcomes. Table 2 below represents an assessment and evaluation timeline for multiple processes for a single outcome.

Outcome: An ability to recognize the role of professionals in the global society

Assessment and Evaluation Activity	'04-5	'05-6	'06-7	'07-8	'08-9	'09-10
Review of performance criteria that define the outcome	●			●		
Map educational strategies related to performance criteria		●			●	
Review mapping and identify where data will be collected		●			●	
Develop and/or review assessment methods used to assess performance criteria		●			●	
Collect data			●			●
Evaluate assessment data including processes				●		
Report findings				●		
Take action where necessary				●		

Table 2. Assessment and evaluation activity timeline for a single outcome

To get a general view of what one cycle of an assessment program might look like, Table 3 represents three academic years of activity for six learning outcomes by assessment and evaluation activities.

Activities	'04-5					'05-6					'06-7							
	Ethics	Contemporary Issues	Global	Cultural	Teams	Communication	Ethics	Contemporary Issues	Global	Cultural	Teams	Communication	Ethics	Contemporary Issues	Global	Cultural	Teams	Communication
Review of performance criteria defining that outcome			●			●	●			●			●				●	
Map educational strategies related to performance criteria		●			●				●			●	●			●		
Review mapping and identify where data will be collected		●			●				●			●	●			●		
Develop or review assessment methods related to outcome		●			●				●			●	●			●		
Collect and analyze data	●			●			●			●					●			●
Evaluate assessment data including processes			●			●	●			●				●			●	
Report findings			●			●	●			●				●			●	
Take action where necessary			●			●	●			●				●			●	

Table 3. Three-year cycle of assessment and evaluation activity

Although this appears to require considerable effort, not all assessment activities need to be done by the same person or group. Table 4 suggests that there are multiple parties involved in the assessment and evaluation cycle. It is important to plan strategically and systematically so that the workload is reasonable and appropriately distributed.

Assessment and Evaluation Activity	Responsibility for activity
Review of performance criteria that define the outcome	Faculty Assessment Team
Map educational strategies related to performance criteria	All Faculty
Review mapping and identify where data will be collected	Program Faculty
Develop and/or review assessment methods used to assess performance criteria	Faculty Assessment Team w/Assessment Resource
Collect and analyze data	Faculty Assessment Team w/Assessment Resource
Evaluate assessment data including processes	Program Faculty
Report findings	Program Faculty
Take action where necessary	Program Faculty

Table 4. Parties responsible for the assessment and evaluation processes

These tables are for illustrative purposes only. In order to close the loop on the assessment and evaluation process, it is important to plan with the end in mind. Creating a multi-year timeline will help to shape thinking about the activities involved in program assessment. It will also help to avoid taking on too much in the beginning and encourage systematic planning over time.

Creating these types of tables should only be seen as tools to assist in administering and communicating the process. At any time it is found that the processes need to be altered, the information in the tables should change. For example, it may be found after multiple data collection and analysis processes that one or more of the outcomes are consistently of high quality whereas there are other outcomes where the program cannot demonstrate adequate achievement. This could lead to more frequent data collection and evaluation process for some outcomes and less for others. The overall process needs to be designed to answer questions that are of interest to the program. "Systematic" does not mean "etched in stone." If you need to change your processes and/or cycles of activity, then it should be done.