

Eastern Kentucky University

Assessment of Student Learning in Academic Programs: A snapshot of the process

Assessment of student learning in the academic program is ultimately intended to assist faculty and staff in making decisions about the program of study: what and how to teach in the classroom, what courses to include in the curriculum, how to sequence the curriculum and what student experiences to include in and out of the classroom, etc.

Responsibility for the assessment of program-specific student learning objectives lies with the individual department. Some of a department's objectives are expected to align with the QEP and general education strategic directions, while others will be unique to the department.

Assessing student learning begins with the articulation of what it is that students should know, think, feel or be able to do by the end of their time in the program of study. Stating these items in terms of student learning objectives is the first step in the assessment process. Faculty then identify what program experiences (courses, seminars, research, etc.) help students achieve the desired objectives, identify the methods with which to assess the student learning objectives, the timeline for data collection, the parties responsible for the data collection, analysis, and reporting, and the anticipated use of the analysis.

Step 1: Student Learning Objectives. Program faculty and staff articulate intended, end-of-program student learning objectives. Student learning objectives are measurable, actionable, and focus on student behavior.

- *What are our program's student learning goals and objectives?*
- *For each of our stated goals, what are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities that would tell us this goal is being achieved?*
- *What will students be able to know, think, do or feel as a result of this program of study/ educational experience?*
- *Describe our ideal student in terms of strengths, skills, knowledge and values, and identify which of these characteristics are the result of the program experience.*

Step 2: Curriculum Map. Program faculty and staff create a Curriculum Map by mapping the student learning objectives to the program

- *In which courses do students achieve learning of each student learning objective?*
- *From which learning experiences do students develop knowledge and skills stated in each student learning objective?*

Step 3: Assessment Methods. Program faculty agree upon the actual student performance that will be evaluated and on the assessment instruments and processes that will provide clear and useful information regarding student performance. Most assessment methods are embedded in academic programs and/or classes. Both direct and indirect methods are used. Departments can draw on assessment data collected through institutional sources (e.g., findings regarding general education, from institution-level surveys, from co-curricular, extra-curricular, student services, or residential programs) where relevant.

- *What does it look like when a student can ____?*
- *How do we know when students are 'getting it'?*
- *What assessment methods will we use to collect data about what our students have learned?*
- *What are our criteria for success?*
- *How will we know the objectives have been met?*
- *What level of performance meets each objective?*
- *How will we interpret and evaluate the data?*

Step 4: Data Collection and Analysis. Program faculty collect and analyze data. Additional outside data may be used for supplemental analysis. Data and analyses are presented to faculty and staff for evaluation and consideration of implications. Departments use findings for internal decision-making.

- *How will the results of assessment be used?*
- *Who needs to know the results?*
- *How can we improve our program and assessment process?*
- *What do these data tell us?*
- *What is working well and should be continued or expanded?*
- *Where are our students' performance below expectations?*

Step 5: Closing the Loop. Decisions made based upon data analysis put into action. Changes to the program are implemented and assessed for effectiveness.

Step 6: Processes and Procedures. Articulate the process, procedures, responsibilities and schedules for the entire assessment plan. Departments develop their own timetables for data collection, analysis, and use. Each department's chair is responsible for overseeing the development of that unit's plan for assessing student learning. In many cases, assessment committees are selected to carry out that work.

- *When will we collect the data?*
- *How often?*
- *Who will be responsible for collecting, interpreting, and reporting the results?*
- *When are activities occurring?*