

Developing Senior-Level Assessment Methods

Student work produced at the senior level provides the best information about what students know/are able to do right before graduation from the program. Gathering information about program-level student learning outcomes can be accomplished by evaluating one or more student work products produced in a required senior-level course.

The following can steps can assist in identifying/creating a suitable senior-level assessment method:

- 1) Discuss whether there is a senior-level class in which a student work product (such as a paper, presentation, or skills demonstration) is already a part of the course. Could this work product be used to evaluate some of your most important program-level student learning outcomes, especially those outcomes focused on critical thinking and communication?
 - A senior-level course is necessary to determine what students know/are able to do right before graduation from the program
 - The senior-level course must be required for all students in the program
 - If students have a choice of several senior-level courses, consider whether a common assignment could be created for all these courses.
- 2) If appropriate senior-level course is not feasible, discuss whether creating a “capstone” course is appropriate for your program.
- 3) If capstone course is not feasible, discuss alternative procedures for obtaining student work, e.g., faculty-created common senior exam/paper.
- 4) Using the University Critical/Creative Thinking Rubric, and the Written Communication Rubric as a starting point, discuss the criteria you could use to evaluate students’ work. Customize the rubrics as needed to better fit your program’s needs. Choose the criteria from the rubrics that best fit your outcomes. Not all criteria are useful to all programs.
- 5) Identify where in the student work product you would find the best evidence for each criterion.
 - For example, a literature review section might provide the best evidence for students’ ability to analyze previous research, whereas a “program plan” might provide the best evidence of synthesis of theories.
 - The goal is to find specific places in the student work where faculty can evaluate students’ knowledge and skills. Faculty should agree that they will look at those specific sections for evidence of the knowledge/skill.
- 6) After agreeing on the criteria and the sections of the work that will be used to evaluate those criteria, review the instructions that will be given to students in order for them to create this assignment. Make the instructions as clear and detailed as possible in order to ensure that students provide the information faculty need.
 - Consider writing instructions that provide detailed information about both the format and content of the assignment. *For example, let’s say that you will evaluate students’ ability to synthesize theories based on a program plan that they develop. Consider instructing students to have a paper section labeled “program plan,” to address multiple theories that apply to the situation, and to discuss the plan that they create to address the situation.*
 - By providing detailed instructions you will get better work products from students, and your evaluation task will be easier because faculty will know exactly where to look for the information.

- 7) Score a sample of student work as a test of the rubric, and to further refine the instructions.
- 8) Develop processes for the evaluation of future student work: Who is responsible for collecting student papers? Who will be involved in scoring sessions (more than one faculty should score.)? When will scoring be done?
- 9) Develop plan to share outcomes with all faculty.