Ideas for Making the Best Use of
Assurance of Learning Day
September 26, 2012

Assurance of Learning Day is an opportunity for faculty to take some time from their busy schedules, step back from the details of teaching individual courses, and evaluate their program as a whole.

Assurance of Learning is the process that allows faculty to be confident in their programs, and ensures that students meet faculty’s expectations. There are four primary steps in the process, and different programs are at different points in the process. Regardless of where a program is currently, faculty can use Assurance of Learning Day to move it forward.

An overview of the Assurance of Learning steps is below. Details about the steps and using them to guide activities on Assurance of Learning Day follow.

Step 1. Develop student learning outcomes at the programmatic level. Faculty in programs at this step could spend time discussing what they want students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from the program.

Step 2. Identify student work to evaluate outcomes. Faculty at this step could spend time discussing existing senior-level student work that could be used to evaluate outcomes, and/or identify senior-level work that could be useful but does not yet exist.

Step 3. Develop processes & criteria to evaluate student work. Faculty at this step could spend time discussing how to evaluate student work based on the program outcomes.

Step 4. Discuss outcomes and strategies to improve student learning. Faculty at this step could spend time
A. discussing what their existing data mean, and
B. reviewing their curriculum map to ensure that essential outcomes are emphasized in appropriate courses and sequence, and
C. revising curriculum and/or emphases of courses, and
D. discussing effective instructional strategies, and
E. identifying changes as needed for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Using the Assurance of Learning Steps to Guide the Day’s Activities
Identify where your program is in the process above and then consider the following suggested activities.

Step 1. Program-level student learning outcomes
• Discuss the important learning outcomes for students in your program. What do you want students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from the program?
• Focus on 3—5 of the most important program-level student learning outcomes.
• Be sure that at least one outcome focuses on critical/creative thinking and at least one focuses on written or oral communication.
• Develop/refine curriculum map for program. (See Guidance on Curriculum Mapping resource document)
  o Discuss whether curriculum sufficiently addresses the outcomes
  o Discuss potential modifications to curriculum as needed

Step 2. Identify student work to evaluate outcomes
• Identify student work that could be used to evaluate your program-level student learning outcomes including the required critical thinking and communication student learning outcomes. (see Guidance on Developing Senior-Level Assessment resource document)

Step 3. Processes & criteria to evaluate student work
• Discuss and agree on the nature and structure of the assignment used to create the student work product. (see Guidance on Developing Senior-Level Assessment resource document)
• Create and agree on a scoring process to evaluate the student work.
• Review existing rubrics for suitability for use with student work product.
• Create identical instructions for the assignment so that all students, regardless of instructor, receive the same assignment and instructions.

Step 4. Discuss outcomes and strategies for continual improvement of student learning
• Score student work.
• Discuss what the outcomes suggest about student learning in your program.
  o What are students’ strengths and weaknesses?
  o Modify rubric, student instructions, and/or assignment as needed to better evaluate outcomes.
• Review curriculum map: Are essential outcomes emphasized in appropriate courses and in an appropriate sequence? Is there consistency among faculty when teaching important concepts, e.g., shared language and shared understanding of meaning of concepts/terms? Where could weak areas be further addressed in curriculum?
  o Discuss potential revisions in curriculum and/or emphases of courses
• Share instructional strategies that various faculty have found to be effective.
• Develop plan for faculty to attend Teaching & Learning Center workshops and process for sharing information with other faculty

RESOURCES PROVIDED FOR ASSURANCE OF LEARNING DAY
➢ HOTLINE: Assurance of Learning Day hotline phone number for questions that arise during meetings and discussions 622-6764 or 622-6765 (Rose Perrine) and 622-2364 (Stacey Street)

See Assurance of Learning Day Resources on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website for
➢ Guidance on Curriculum Mapping
➢ Guidance on Developing Senior-Level Assessment Methods
➢ Guidance on Rubric Development
➢ Guidance on Digging Deeper into Data
Additional Ideas for Faculty Discussion in Department/Program Meetings

Lay the Ground Work

- Refine programmatic student learning outcomes (SLOs)
- Select/create measures for SLOs
- Curriculum Mapping-create/review map of programmatic SLOs to courses
- Develop capstone course with course SLOs and direct measures
- Set schedule for assessment process

Refine Assessment Methods

- Develop rubric for scoring student work at programmatic level
- Modify scoring rubric based upon feedback from previous use
- Develop survey and survey process schedule and responsibilities
- Evaluate effectiveness of assessment methods and revise if necessary or schedule time to revise
- Calibrate rubric using programmatic student work
- Review direct measures for
  - Face validity
  - Depth of scoring…scoring for assessment methods should be ‘deep’ and specific enough to point to actions to be taken (provide direction for use)
    - For example, scoring should be at the level of rubric domains or item analysis of exams.

Score, Evaluate, Interpret

- Score student work
- Review and interpret data set

Refine the Process

- Review assessment plan, measures and collection schedule

Dig Deeper

- Conduct ‘item analysis’ or other deeper level analysis of previously reviewed data set
- Examine all ‘no change needed’ results and associated student learning outcomes for potential for deeper analysis. If deeper analysis is not warranted then place on assessment rotation and bring in another student learning outcome on which to focus.

Use the Results

- Establish recommended actions or changes in response to interpretation of data

Accreditation

- Prepare for programmatic accreditation