Department of Institutional Effectiveness and Research

Curriculum Mapping for Academic Programs
What is a curriculum map?

A curriculum map is a visual representation of a guided learning pathway

Curriculum maps—

- utilize a matrix format to visually represent the alignment between program student learning outcomes and required courses or learning experiences
- are commonly used as a tool for curriculum planning and for program assessment
  - For planning purposes: use curriculum maps to analyze the effectiveness of the designed learning pathway and to determine whether all targeted learning outcomes are delivered through the program curriculum
  - For assessment purposes: use curriculum maps to identify where learning can be assessed throughout the curriculum and where modifications to curriculum and pedagogy will have the opportunity to most positively impact student learning

Mapping the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enter your program-level student learning outcomes into the Y axis of the matrix&lt;br&gt;Ask, what are students able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitude upon completion of the program?</td>
<td>Enter your required program courses or learning experiences into the X axis of the matrix&lt;br&gt;Ask, what instructional activities in which courses will deliver which outcomes and what level of knowledge or skill is delivered to students?</td>
<td>Identify where each outcome will be assessed&lt;br&gt;Ask, how will students demonstrate what they have learned?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is what the students will learn (outcomes)<br>This is where students will learn it (courses and learning experiences)<br>This is how students will demonstrate they learned it (paper, project, presentation)
Characteristics of an Effective Curriculum

- Treats a learning goal as a promise
- Responsive to the needs of students, employers, and society
- Greater than the sum of its parts - A collection of courses is not a program
- Gives students ample and diverse opportunities to achieve key program learning goals
- Has appropriate, progressive rigor
- Is focused and simple
- Uses research-informed strategies to help students learn and succeed
- Is consistent across venues and modalities

(Linda Suskie, 2017, slides 3-12)

Benefits to Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum mapping can be most beneficial when developed through collaborative reflection and dialogue with a representative grouping of program faculty. Determine what learning experiences are common to all students in the program and should therefore be included (required courses or experiential learning, etc.) vs. what learning experiences are optional and should therefore not be solely counted on to deliver program-level learning outcomes. Use the curriculum map to enhance alignment across the curriculum and ensure that all students are given an opportunity to learn what the program has identified as key knowledge and skills.
Once the curriculum map has been completed, use the map to analyze the program curriculum and assessment plan. Revisit the map each annual assessment cycle to inform interpretation and use of assessment results for improvement.

**Curriculum Design**
- Is every program learning outcome taught in one or more core course?
- Are students offered multiple opportunities and methods by which to gain key knowledge or skills?
- How does course sequencing contribute to the development of each learning outcome?
- Are outcomes which are covered in multiple courses delivered at varying proficiency levels across the curriculum?
- Are there any redundant courses or learning experiences?
- Are there any core courses or learning experiences that do not deliver program-level learning outcomes?

**Assessment Planning**
- In what courses are assessments embedded?
- Are students given multiple opportunities and methods through which they can demonstrate what they have learned?
- At what level of proficiency are students expected to demonstrate the learning outcome?
- Have students been given an opportunity to learn the knowledge/skill they are being assessed on?

**Assessment Results**
- What linkages exist between student performance at the assessment stage and student performance at developmental stages across the curriculum?
- In what courses or learning experiences along the learning pathway might factors have influenced student achievement of program-level learning outcomes upon graduation?
- In what courses or learning experiences might modifications to curriculum or pedagogy lead to the most gains in student learning?
Resources and References

Resources available on the IER webpage

Curriculum Mapping Template – Basic
Curriculum Mapping Template – Advanced
Curriculum Mapping Template Instructions

References consulted

