

AoL at NMU

AY 2023-24

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Support

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**INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS**

“Terrible Tedium”

Discussion: Was what the author described problematic?

Assuming yes, that way of operating is truly terrible: **How do we make sure that’s not what AoL at NMU is like?**



Assessment Goals

1. Document successes
2. Identify opportunities for improvement

AoL Committee Values

1. Flexibility
2. Usefulness



Criteria for Accreditation

4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.



Criteria for Accreditation

4.A. The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.

ADR or APR resembles program learning outcomes assessment, but:

AoL

Focuses on the learning outcomes students acquire by completion of an academic program

ADR / APR

Focuses on the functions, processes, and services offered by the unit

Nichols, K. W. & J. O. Nichols. *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units*. New York: Agathon Press, 2000.



Precursor Work

Two foundational pieces are needed before effective assessment work can start:

- Clearly articulated program learning outcomes (PLOs).
- A curriculum map.

How do you want to think about your program?

Course
Course
Course
Course
Course
Course
+ Course
Degree

How do you want to think about your program?

Course
Course
Course
Course
Course
Course
Course
+ Course
Degree

Outcome (competency)
Outcome (competency)
Outcome (competency)

+ Outcome (competency)
What I can do



How can AoL Committee help?

1. Restate what you understand the program's objectives to be so they can see if they are communicating what they wish to articulate.
2. Help them focus on big, broad "star student" outcomes.
3. Direct department to resources on Bloom's Taxonomy, but don't nitpick the verbs.
4. Don't sweat the small stuff – when they work on their curriculum map refinement of PLOs will happen naturally.

As they work on the map, remind them they can tweak or even revise their PLOs.



Chart out in a matrix:

Where are the PLOs intentionally taught in the program's curriculum?

We suggest thinking in 3 levels. Label as you see fit, perhaps:

1. Introduced
2. Developed (or Reinforced)
3. Mastered (for degree level)

(These don't work well for the department? Use designations that do.)



Program Curriculum Map

Major:

One sentence program summary (could be Bulletin copy).

Outcomes Rubric:

I if the outcome is *introduced*

D if the outcome is *developed*

M if the outcome is *mastered*

Blank if outcome is not covered

[illegible]

Major:

One-sentence program summary (could be Bulletin copy).

Outcome 1 Outcome 2 Outcome 3 Outcome 4 Outcome 5 Outcome 6 Outcome 7

Replace with course name & number or program requirement.

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Table 1 Core curriculum linkages to program outcomes

		Outcomes										
Semester	Course	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
Freshmen: Fall	Eng 100							3	2			2
	Math 241	3										2
	Chem 161 & 161L	3	2									
	FG Global and Multicultural Perspectives								3			
	Math 242	3										2
Freshmen: Spring	Phys 170 & 170L	3	3									2
	Chem 162	3										1
	EE 160 or ICS 111	3		1			1					3
	CEE 270	3				3	1		1	1	1	3
Sophomore Fall	Math 243	3										2
	Phys 272 & 272L	3	3	1								2
	FG Global and Multicultural Perspectives								3			
	DH Hum. Div. Req. or DL Lit. Div. Req.								3			



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EXAMPLE FROM A PROGRAM WITH MULTIPLE PATHS TO DEGREE

Requirements: Track 1	Requirements: Track 2	Requirements: Track 3	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3	SLO 4	SLO 5
Core: CRS 255 (3 credits)			I	I	I	I	I
Core: Three theory courses (9 credits)				I	I		
Core: Writing (3 credits)			I			I	I
Core: Design (3 credits)				I		I	
CRS 310, 312, 350				R		R	
CRS 325			R	R			
CRS 355				R	R		
CRS 405						R	R
CRS 410					R		
CRS 450				R	R		
CRS 455			R				R
CRS 495			A	A	A	A	A
	CRS 215, 315				R	R	R
	CRS 316			R		R	
	CRS 318		R		R	R	
	CRS 320, 415			R		R	
	CRS 420				R	R	R
	CRS 495		A	A	A	A	A
		CRS 352	R				R

Flexible to Format

Those were a few views of different ways the map can be set up.

No right or wrong format – **fit for department** is what matters.

Templates in MS Excel and Word are shared under “Resources” at <https://nmu.edu/IE/assessment>.

AoL Committee Can Help:

- Suggest alternative level designations if dept. is struggling with I, D, M.
- Suggest possible next levels of complexity (e.g., combining with degree map).
- Explain: “Reading your map, I understand your program to be _____. Does that accurately reflect what you are trying to communicate?”
- Ask questions like: “Will students better understand the program if you show them this map?” “Will any new adjuncts see how their course fits in the full program from this map?”
- Resist “grading;” rather ask challenging questions (next 2 slides).

What is it for?

After drafting the matrix, look for gaps or jumps:

1. Are any outcomes not taught?
2. Are any outcomes not appropriately built over time as students progress through the curriculum?
3. Do any courses not contribute to the program's outcomes?

AoL Committee can help departments by asking questions like these. Resist giving feedback on the work, but instead consider asking questions.

Solutions to misalignments:

- Do PLOs need to be revisited?
- Does curriculum map need to be revised?
- Fix or justify all apparent gaps?

AoL Committee can also help departments by asking long-range questions like these.

Precursors to Assessment

- First the department determines or articulates what the program does (PLOs).
- Then they map where intended learning outcomes are intentionally embedded in the curriculum (curriculum map).

...Now what?



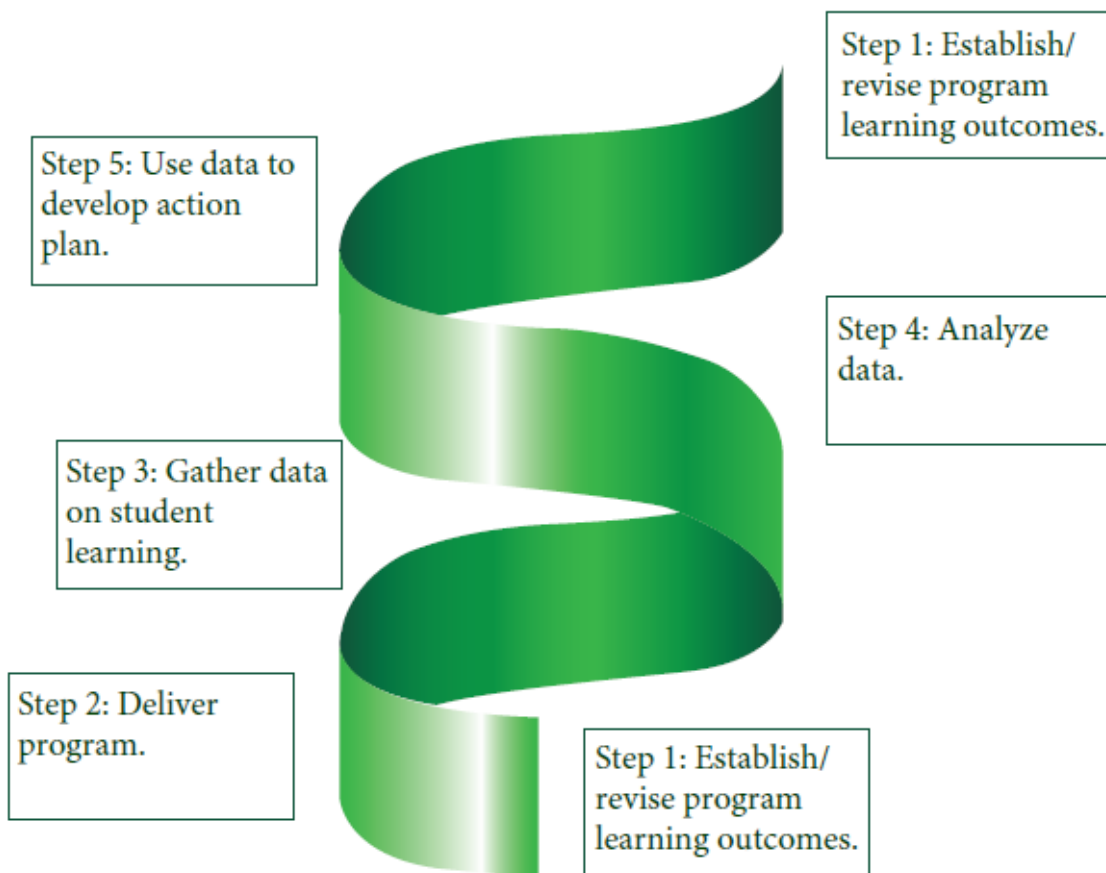
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Primary Objective: **Assess**



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The Assessment Helix



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General Objective of Assessment:

Document success and identify opportunities for improvement of student learning.



Assessment Plans

- Program-level assessment of learning is best done strategically and systematically.
- Don't start by doing "the things that are done with assessment." (E.g., don't start with "we need artifacts.")

If a department starts talking evidence too early, ask "What are you trying to learn? What evidence will help you answer that question?"



Start with a Question

Assessment of learning across an academic program is an evaluative research problem. When you do research, where do you start?

Research Question – **Must** come first.

This is an opportunity for the AoL Committee to add value. Help give fresh perspectives on questions, clarity, alignment, etc.

Often the advice that's most needed: Keep it simple.



Evaluative Research

1. What do you want to know about your program?

E.g.: How are students mastering __X__?

2. Have you operationalized competency X? How will you observe:

What does a successful student look like?

What do successful students do that they didn't do earlier?



Let's Think Through a Few Examples

How could the following questions be improved?

1. Our program is designed to instill value of lifelong learning; we will investigate whether graduates embody that value in their lives and work.
2. Do students understand the foundational principles of our field?
3. Can students effectively communicate messages to diverse audiences?
4. Successful graduates are strong critical thinkers.



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Evaluative Research Practice Activity

Our program is designed to instill value of lifelong learning; we will investigate whether graduates embody that value in their lives and work.



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Evaluative Research Practice Activity

Do students understand the foundational principles of our field?



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Evaluative Research Practice Activity

Can students effectively communicate messages to diverse audiences?



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Evaluative Research Practice Activity

Successful graduates are strong critical thinkers.

How Can AoL Committee Help?

Again, you're not "grading" the assessment question. But you can ask the department to think deeper about what they're trying to learn:

- Alignment between the PLO statement, the exploratory question, and the proposed evidence?
- Construct validity of operationalization of the key outcome concept?
- Could tightening the focus increase likelihood of learning something actionable?
- What observable outcome could the department measure while students are with them that would help them understand student learning?



Help the department answer:

What information can you gather to systematically determine across your program how your students are performing relative to your intended PLOs?

Faculty Work

AoL Committee and department assessment liaisons are faculty.

IE is available to support faculty work in assessment of learning.



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Resources

Walkthrough:

nmu.edu/ie/assessment

What else do you need?

Summary Points

- ❖ Focusing on usefulness and flexibility, assessment of learning will look different across campus.
 - AoL Committee work is to provide helpful feedback and questions, not to approve or grade other departments' assessment reports.
 - Departments' work is to focus on their own evaluative research questions about improvement of student learning.



Reflective Practice

How do we avoid “The Terrible Tedium of ‘Learning Outcomes’”?

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience” (Dewey, 1933, p. 78).

How do we make sure NMU’s AoL work is a reflective practice leading to improvement, not bureaucratic reporting interfering with the work we care about?