

Program Planning in a Time of COVID-19

Students had already completed a fall term and part of the spring when campuses switched to remove instruction in response to coronavirus, or COVID-19. For those students graduating, they had been refining and practicing various institutional and programmatic courses over the entirety of their degree path. For those still on the leading edge of their educational journey, one principle of learning rings very true: that the learning we most desire for our students cannot be acquired in a single class or single experience. Students must run into it over and over again, in different classes, in different ways. Thus, as we look to planning a possibly virtual Fall learning experience for students, faculty and staff need to come together and explore curriculum plans in relation to learning outcomes and assignments. In other words, it is a great time to dust off curriculum maps and use them to engage in future planning for students.

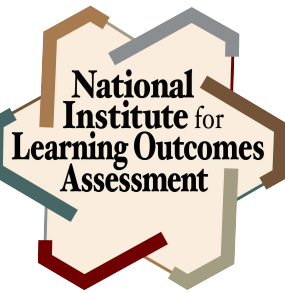
These conversations are not about updating a curriculum map document or starting into a rigorous process of mapping curriculum. Instead, assessment professionals can offer several questions to guide faculty discussions in planning for the summer and fall.

- When our campus made the shift to remote instruction, what learning outcomes had we addressed, and which were left to cover? Basically, what learning outcomes will students need additional application or review in follow-on courses?
- Are the courses planned for next term already addressing those outcomes, or do they need to be modified? How might I rethink my course(s) and assignment(s)?
- How is my course setting students up for learning success in future courses?

Now's the time to return to the basics of assessment and instructional design. Consider discussing the following questions:

- Why does this course even exist?
- What are the learning outcomes that students need from this course that they will apply elsewhere?
- How can we think about learning from a program perspective? Where does this fit into overall curriculum?
- Can we consider this a flipped semester or a flipped summer – where students learn about a concept over the summer and then apply and practice it when they return?

Feel free to pull from this list of questions to assist in conversations on learning in the upcoming sessions/semesters/terms. In addition, ask the students what learning outcomes they think they have acquired and/or where they think they need additional work. This is also an opportunity to



actively involved your students in planning discussions as well as assessment conversations as they have interesting ideas to bring to the table.

Virtual Discussions for Future Planning

When undertaking programmatic planning conversations based on mapped and aligned curriculum, please consider current virtual constraints. Questions to consider include whether the discussion should be conducted synchronously or asynchronously? What technology should be used?

Given the differences in the lived experience of faculty and staff as well as differences in current ability to offer chunks of undistributed time to a task, virtual discussions of mapping learning may need to be flexible in different ways. For instance, one model may be that faculty come together in a Zoom meeting and discuss learning in specific courses at the same time. However, synchronous sessions may limit faculty involvement due to timing, Internet requirements, and ability to focus. Another model might entail a mapping exercise that is shared in a Google doc, grouped by courses, programs, etc., and made available to faculty over the span of a week or other set amount of time, with questions to guide their engagement with materials. Faculty are then able to add their course/program learning outcomes information and comment as they have time. A further option is a modified course evaluation or survey to faculty, staff, and students to capture what learning students think they have met thus far and what learning they think they need to continue to work on in future terms. It might even be that the best path forward is a combination of various approaches mentioned.

Resources

For additional mapping considerations and ideas, you can access the [NILOA Mapping webinar recording](#) which is part of the [NILOA webinar series in response to COVID-19](#) (coronavirus) situations. You can also access the [Mapping Learning toolkit](#) for information on what curriculum mapping entails, how to go about doing it, sample maps, and examples from other institutions.

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