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ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES  
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Higher Education  
Quality Council  
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*Ontario College Quality Assurance Service*  
*Service de l'assurance de la qualité des*  
*collèges de l'Ontario*

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES  
COUNCIL ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

# Symposium on Learning Outcomes Assessment: A Practical Guide

**April 12 – 13, 2012**  
**Delta Chelsea Hotel**  
**Toronto, Ontario**

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## Thursday, April 12, 2012

### Registration and Breakfast

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Churchill Court

### Welcome and Introductions

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Churchill Ballroom

- **Maureen Mancuso**, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), University of Guelph, and Chair, Ontario Council of Academic-Vice Presidents Task Force on Teaching and Learning
- **Harvey Weingarten**, President and CEO, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

### Plenary: Quality Assurance in Ontario's Post-Secondary Education

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Ron Bond**, Chair of the Campus Alberta Quality Council

### Assessment and the Quality Assurance Framework

**Speaker:** **Donna Woolcott**, Executive Director Quality Assurance, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

The recently adopted Quality Assurance Framework (QAF, 2010) for Ontario's publicly assisted universities has put significant focus on learning outcomes and reinforced the importance of developing and reviewing programs consistent with OCAV's Degree Level Expectations. Very specific evaluation criteria are applied by external arm's-length reviewers and by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council) to assess the appropriateness of learning outcomes for all new programs proposed at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Similar evaluation occurs at the cyclical program review phase undertaken by each university at least every eight years for all programs. We are early in the implementation phase for the new QAF but the first submissions to the Quality Council indicate that most universities are well underway in articulating learning outcomes at least for new programs. Donna's presentation will explore some of the ways in which this is being done, as well as provide some context for quality assurance processes for Ontario's universities.

### Assessment in the College Sector

**Speaker:** **André Diez de Aux**, Quality Assurance Associate, Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

Assessment has long been a focus of accrediting bodies for professional programs and for college programs. Hundreds of faculty members, professional staff in teaching support units, and institutional research offices, have collected data and measures at the course, program, and institutional level. Yet most of this work is not apparent to decision-makers, students and their families. With increasing calls for accountability and transparency we need to do a better job providing the evidence in support of answering the basic question of how do we know our students are learning what we say they are. To what degree are Quality Assurance processes part of the solution?

## Concurrent Workshops

### Workshop A: Program Outcomes – The Dawning of a New Era for Higher Education

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** Gary Boire, Provost & Vice President Academic, Trent University

**Speakers:** Peter Wolf, Director, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph and Warren Stiver, Professor and NSERC Chair in Design Engineering, School of Engineering, University of Guelph

Program Outcomes (University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations, competencies, graduate attributes, etc.) require a transformation in educational orientation from an inputs- to an outcomes-based approach. At their core, they systemically explore actual and intended student learning at the program-level. This transformation offers disciplines amazing opportunities for innovation while also posing real transition challenges. Currently, engineering schools across Canada are engaged in this endeavour. Warren and Peter will share experiences at the University of Guelph in developing a learning outcomes culture among students, staff and faculty with the School of Engineering. We will discuss necessary ingredients, curriculum development processes, outcomes mapping approaches and assessment approaches including portfolios.

### Workshop B: Learning Outcomes and Effective Teaching

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Rosetti Room

**Chair:** Gregory Finn, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Academic, Brock University

**Speaker:** Richard S. Ascough, Associate Professor, School of Religion, Queen's University

Writing clear learning outcomes has a number of benefits for course design that go beyond program assessment. A brief presentation will help clarify some key terminology by distinguishing “outcomes,” “outputs,” and “objectives.” We will then explore how course design is an integrated whole, and how using the learning outcomes conveys to students the links among the parts of the course, including the assessment they receive on their assignments. Undertaking this process not only meets institutional assessment demands, it also improves overall teaching effectiveness.

### Workshop C: Curriculum is Messy: A Practical Approach to Creating and Maintaining Outcomes-Based Assessment and Evaluation for New and Existing Programs

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Wren Room

**Chair:** **Moira McPherson**, Deputy Provost, Lakehead University

**Speakers:** **Sandy Ordowski**, Curriculum Specialist and **Jacqueline Towell**, Curriculum Specialist, Durham College

The Aligning and Building Curriculum Framework and the New Program Curriculum Development processes used by Durham College help guide new and existing programs in the development and renewal of an integrated approach to teaching, learning, and assessment. These processes focus on the use of best practice, evidenced based decision making, alignment, documentation, and collaboration. Sandy and Jacqueline will present and engage participants in discussing the challenges, opportunities and resources used with new and existing programs to develop outcome and performance-based assessments evaluations and provide examples of how teams can maintain and monitor ongoing changes to assessment and evaluation alignment.

#### Coffee Break

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Churchill Court

### Plenary: Taking Stock of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Peter Ricketts**, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Carleton University

**Speaker:** **George Kuh**, Director, National Institute Learning Outcomes Assessment, Champaign, IL

Quality assurance and transparency are prominent on the agendas of government agencies and higher education policy makers in North America as well as in many other corners of the world. In the last decade, organizations focused on learning outcome assessment have emerged, the volume of assessment literature has expanded, and the number and impact of transparency initiatives have grown. For the past three years, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment has been monitoring and documenting these activities and trends. In this session, I will summarize the current state of the art of assessment in the US, drawing on key findings from NILOA's national surveys, interviews with thought leaders, policy makers, faculty and staff, web scans, and an array of commissioned papers by experts to describe the state of the art and discern what must happen next to advance the assessment agenda in meaningful, actionable manner. Three questions frame these reflections:

1. What are the bright spots in the assessment movement that should give us hope and on which we can build?
2. What are the challenges that collectively we must address?
3. What has to happen to move the learning outcomes agenda forward?

## Lunch

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Churchill Court

Lunch will be provided and there will be the opportunity for table discussion with colleagues on topics of interest.

## Workshop: Using NSSE Data for Assessment

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Karen Menard**, Associate Vice-President, McMaster University

**Speaker:** **Jillian Kinzie**, Associate Director, NSSE Institute, Bloomington, IN

Nearly 30 postsecondary institutions in Ontario have NSSE results revealing students' exposure to and participation in a range of educationally purposeful activities. Results provide educators a valuable tool to assess the quality of undergraduate education, and to do so in a way that focuses attention on opportunities for improvement. NSSE provides participating institutions with diagnostic, actionable information that can catalyze vital, sometimes challenging conversations about the quality of undergraduate education on a given campus. How closely does the experience of our students align with our assumptions, assertions, and aspirations? What standard of performance should we strive for, and how will we know when we achieve it? Who are our least engaged students, and how can we improve their experience? What can administrative offices, academic units, and student affairs departments do to promote effective educational practices and a climate that supports student success? This session will highlight NSSE use for improving the conditions for learning and encourage educators consideration of data about deep approaches to learning and other high-impact practice results that make significant differences for student learning and success.

## Workshop: The Collegiate Learning Assessment: Aligning Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Alan Harrison**, Provost and Vice-Principal Academic, Queen's University

**Speakers:** **Chris Jackson**, Director of Business Development and **Julie Patterson**, Measurement Scientist, Council for Aid to Education, New York, NY

Chris Jackson and Dr. Julie Patterson from the CLA will discuss the importance of effectively and authentically aligning teaching, learning, and assessment using a problem based approach. In so doing, they will speak directly to the construction of the CLA (including the metrics it provides), as well as discuss supportive faculty development tools.

## Coffee Break

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Churchill Court

## Workshop: Tuning: Identifying and Measuring Sector-Based Learning Outcomes in Ontario

3:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Anthony Clarke**, Assistant Vice-President (Program Quality Assurance), University of Guelph

**Speakers:** **Mary Catharine Lennon**, Senior Research Analyst, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; **Rhonda Lenton**, Vice-Provost Academic, York University; **Brian Frank**, Director (Program Development), Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, Queen's University; and **Joy Warkentin**, Chair, Management Board, Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

The Ontario Tuning project has brought members from various disciplines together into sector groups of Social Sciences, Physical Sciences and Life and Health Sciences to identify learning outcomes across diploma, degree and master's levels. These panels, made up of Ontario college and university faculty members, students and employers, have been working to establish learning outcomes and create implementation and evaluation plans. This presentation will provide an overview of the Tuning process, discuss the three Tuning panels' activities and work to date, and share next steps.

## Reception

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Churchill Court

**Reception Sponsor:** **Canadian Publishers' Council**



CANADIAN PUBLISHERS' COUNCIL

## Friday, 13 April, 2012

### Registration and Breakfast

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Churchill Court

### Plenary: Measuring Student Learning for Policy and Planning

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **George Kuh**, Director, National Institute Learning Outcomes Assessment, Champaign, IL

**Speaker:** **Hamish Coates**, Foundation Director of Higher Education Research at the Australian Council for Higher Education Research (ACER), Program Director with LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne

This plenary session will focus on issues of learning outcomes and assessment and measurement internationally and specifically in the Australian PSE system, including relationships between stakeholders (i.e. institutions, governments, and NGO's) and specific assessment techniques currently being utilized.

### Concurrent Workshops

#### Workshop A: Alignment, Engagement and Outcomes

10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** **Sarah McKinnon**, Vice-President Academic, OCAD University

**Speaker:** **Pauline Smiley**, Curriculum Consultant, Centre for Learning and Teaching, Fleming College

Learning outcomes are statements that describe significant and essential learning that students have achieved, and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a course or program. Spady (1994), an educational researcher who spearheaded the development of outcomes based education, suggests that the ability to *demonstrate* learning is the key point. This demonstration of learning involves a performance of some kind in order to show *significant* learning, or learning that matters. The design of significant learning experiences requires:

- the creation of outcomes that focus on the student's application and integration of knowledge, abilities and attitudes,
- the alignment of learning outcomes with authentic assessments, and the engagement of the student via learner-centered activities.

### Workshop B: Measuring Outcomes with Co-op Job Performance Evaluations

10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

Wren Room

**Chair:** Pam McLaughlin, Dean Faculty Health Science & Human Services, Fanshawe College

**Speaker:** Wayne Parker, Associate Dean, Faculty of Engineering, University of Waterloo

The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Waterloo is preparing to employ outcomes-based assessments to inform program improvement as required by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) and the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). Engineering at Waterloo requires all students to complete five 4-month work terms to graduate; a model of Co-operative education that involves a sequence of alternating work and academic terms. Upon completion of each work term employers complete a Student Performance Evaluation (SPE) that provides students with feedback on their work term and is employed to assign a grade to the student for the term. This presentation will describe an innovative use of SPE information for outcomes-assessment to inform program enhancement.

### Workshop C: Are You Evaluating What You Think You Are?

10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

Rosetti Room

**Chair:** Carol Rolheiser, Director for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto

**Speaker:** Beverley Davies, Faculty Consultant and Professor, Niagara College

Let's examine the what, why, and how of the evaluation process, with a focus on aligning evaluation with course outcomes and teaching/learning activities. Clearly written course outcomes articulate the levels of performance expected by a student. Effective evaluation tools measure student performance at the same level. Learn how program mapping can track the development of student performance throughout a program. Explore evaluation design resources that can be used to create a variety of evaluation methods applicable for "low-tech" and "high-tech" pedagogies.

### Coffee Break

11:10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Churchill Court



## Closing Plenary: The Proof is in the Portfolio

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Churchill Ballroom

**Chair:** Sam Scully, Chair, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

**Speaker:** Terrel Rhodes, Vice-President for Quality, Curriculum and Assessment, American Association of Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC

Assessing student learning is something faculty members have done forever; helping students understand their learning strengths and weaknesses through demonstration of their learning in multiple ways has not been the focus of higher education. E-Portfolios have emerged as a key framework and medium for gathering the authentic work of students through the curriculum and co-curriculum, for comparing student performance to standards or expectations for learning; and for developing abilities in students to assess their own learning that will sustain them after they leave our institutions for the remainder of their lives as workers and citizens. Examples of e-portfolios and their uses will be featured.

## Wrap-Up

12:30 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

- Maureen Mancuso, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), University of Guelph, and Chair, Ontario Council of Academic-Vice Presidents Task Force on Teaching and Learning
- Harvey Weingarten, President and CEO, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

## Lunch

12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Churchill Court

Box lunches will be available.

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