

Developing a Culture of Learning Outcomes Assessment:

Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead

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Learning Outcomes Practically Speaking
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Fostering the Culture

- 1987 U of Guelph's 10 Learning Objectives
 - Inspirational and lofty
 - “desired characteristics of graduates”
 - Used to guide new course and new program proposals
 - Departments required to account for them during Internal Review process
 - Not transparent to students, public, government
 - Recognized need to move to “evidence-based outcomes” . . . away from objectives

Fostering a Culture

- Reimagining the undergraduate learning experience since 2005
 - 2005: Provost's White Paper
 - 2006-2007: 21st Century Curriculum Committee
 - 2006: Introduced Integrated Planning
 - 2007: Educational Developers begin shifting focus in teaching and learning support from course to program level redesign focus
 - 2008: UUDLEs & GDLES
 - 2010: IQAPs at U of G & across the province

Fostering the Culture

- First strategic steps
 - Introduced “Outcomes” as a priority for governance: Board of Undergraduate Studies and Program Committees
 - Institutional Quality Assurance – new Senate committee; assist departments in meeting requirements under IQAP
 - Engaged Associate Deans with program-level responsibility in the discussion
 - Increased staff support: more teaching & learning staff

University Learning Outcomes

- Two year process of broad consultation with faculty, staff and students
- New learning outcomes combine:



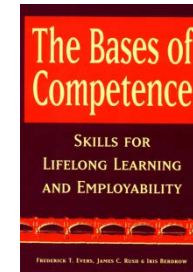
U of G's
learning
objectives
(1987)

+



LEAP

+



Bases of
Competence
(Evers, Rush &
Bedrow)

University Learning Outcomes

5 University-wide Outcomes approved by Senate

December 2012:

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Literacy
- Global Understanding
- Communicating
- Professional and Ethical Behaviour

Critical and Creative Thinking

. . . one applies logical principles . . . to solve problems with a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking and risk taking.

. . . show evidence of integrating knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. Depth and breadth of understanding of disciplines essential to this outcome.

| | Introduce | Reinforce | Mastery |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Inquiry and Analysis | | | |
| Problem Solving | | | |
| Creativity | | | |
| Depth and Breadth of Understanding | | | |

Critical and Creative Thinking

- Problem Solving
 - **Level 3:** evaluates appropriateness of different approaches; devises arguments using these methods and articulates reasons for choosing the solution

| | Introduce | Reinforce | Mastery |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Inquiry and Analysis | | | |
| Problem Solving | | | X |
| Creativity | | | |
| Depth and Breadth of Understanding | | | |

Critical and Creative Thinking

- Depth and Breadth of Understanding
 - **Level 3:** Compares the merits of alternate hypotheses in many different disciplines. Demonstrates mastery of a body of knowledge and critically evaluates the limits of their own knowledge and how these limits influence analyses.

| | Introduce | Reinforce | Mastery |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Inquiry and Analysis | | | |
| Problem Solving | | | |
| Creativity | | | |
| Depth and Breadth of Understanding | | | X |

Literacy

. . . Ability to extract information from a variety of resources, assess the quality and validity of the material, and use it to discover new knowledge.

. . . Comfort in using quantitative literacy, using technology effectively and developing visual literacy.

| | Introduce | Reinforce | Mastery |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Information Literacy | | | |
| Quantitative Literacy | | | |
| Technological Literacy | | | |
| Visual Literacy | | | |

Literacy

- **Visual Literacy**
 - **Level 2:** Evaluates images and their sources; situates images and media in cultural, social, historical and disciplinary contexts.
 - **Level 3:** Creates meaningful images and visual media, uses these effectively, and critically analyses their content. Accesses and uses visual materials ethically and legally.

| | Introduce | Reinforce | Mastery |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Information Literacy | | | |
| Quantitative Literacy | | | |
| Technological Literacy | | | |
| Visual Literacy | | X | X |

Pilot – Assessing LOs

- Collaboration with Desire2Learn to develop the assessment tools within the LMS
- Our eventual goal: an assessment method that will be used by all departments and programs
- The initial development plan engages two programs:
 - Bachelor of Arts and Science
 - Bachelor of Engineering
- Represent opposite ends of the curricular spectrum, from highly planned and accredited (B.Eng) to highly flexible (BAS)

Pilot – Assessing LOs

- Now to mid-summer, committees and educational developers mapping assessment strategy, determining which courses to target for assessment and working with D2L on software development
- Fall 2013 and Winter 2014:
test the software and assessment methods
- Pilot includes a cohort comparison study: learning outcomes achievement of newly admitted students (baseline) and students in their final year of studies
- Side project: standardized course outlines and database to support links between levels

Pilot – Assessing LOs

- Highly positive level of engagement from faculty of programs chosen for the pilot
- Software development is not the most complex aspect of the project
- Decisions re: which outcomes to assess at what point in the curriculum progression is complex
- Long term, challenge is to gain full departmental and faculty engagement but some positive signs....

Challenges: Resistance

- “Calls to reaction” (arguments for doing nothing):
 - Focus on trivia
 - “You call it a ‘White Paper’ but it’s really a ‘Green Paper’”
 - Complacency:
 - “There is no crisis; there is no urgency; why upset the status quo?”
 - Denial:
 - “We are already recognized leaders in teaching and learning excellence so what is the problem?”
 - Or: “We are good enough; we don’t need to try harder”
 - Paranoia:
 - “This isn’t about learning quality; it’s really about budget cuts...”
 - “What’s the hidden agenda?”
- Disruption is not easy, even when it is necessary
 - ... especially when it is necessary

Challenges: Friction

- Moving to a culture of evidence-based continuous improvement is hard work
 - Requires a different mindset across the institution
 - And broad agreement on strategy
 - Requires procedural infrastructure
 - To provide the evidence
 - To assess improvements
- Integrated Planning helps
 - As a process, to oversee efforts
 - As a principle, and statement about how things are done and change is managed

Lessons Learned

- Consultation is key
- Need vision *and* direction
 - Change does not emerge out of thin air
 - We would still be talking without White Paper as a catalyst to provoke action
- Transparency and Accountability:
 - Need to assess your performance and share the results of enhancements with the whole campus
- Incentives: provide investment to help get the kind of change you are looking for
- Identify your champions
 - And leverage their enthusiasm and persuasiveness

Thank You

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