

Using Curriculum Mapping for Quality Assurance and Strategic Curriculum Reform

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Overview

- Legal education in Canada
- Goals and process followed at Western Law
- Developing your curriculum map and strategies for reform

Legal Education in Canada

- Relatively static curriculum
- Focus on high-stakes examinations
- Articling crisis and changes to lawyer licensing process
- Demand for skills development and experiential education
- Faculty resistant to change

Goals and Process at Western Law

- Goal: to update curriculum to reflect changes in education, lawyer licensing and legal practice, and equip our graduates to “hit the ground running”
- Developed aspirational degree-level expectations
- Designed curriculum map to highlight areas where new content, skills and assessment methods desired
- Gathered external feedback through quality assurance process
- Used feedback to initiate curriculum reform discussions
- Ongoing curriculum reform

Example: Alternative Dispute Resolution

- Relevant degree-level expectations:
 1. Identify a range of dispute resolution formats and recommend an appropriate format for a client.
 2. Negotiate a resolution to a dispute or a transaction that is consistent with the client's goals and observes the conventions of legal ethics and civility.
- Curriculum map demonstrated that this was a major gap in our program
- Faculty will move forward with intensive ADR training in next academic year

Example: Diversifying Assessment Methods

- Faculty asked to identify how students were assessed in each course
- Curriculum map visually highlighted courses evaluated by 75% or greater final examination
- Relevant Degree Level Expectations:
 1. Draft a variety of legal documents, using language and analysis that is appropriate for the purpose of the communication and the intended audience.
 2. Work effectively with others on a problem or project.
 3. Formulate and present persuasive oral submissions.
- Ongoing discussions

Question 1

What specific curriculum reforms would you like to achieve?

Question 2

How can you frame those reforms in terms of degree- or program-level learning outcomes?

Question 3

What gaps in your existing program will this reveal? What is the best way to (visually) convey these gaps to your faculty?

Question 4

How can you move from identifying those gaps to implementing the desired reforms?

Lessons Learned

- Keep degree-level expectations at the forefront of all discussions.
- Use external perspectives to reinforce the desire to change.
- Consult with students and make use of their perspectives.
- Have faith in your faculty.



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