

Curriculum Committee Guide

Curriculum Committees are tasked with making sure a program's curriculum is as successful as it can be in helping students achieve learning outcomes. But how do we know if a curriculum is successful in this way? That is where assessment comes in. Program assessment can improve student learning and overall program effectiveness through a process of identifying goals or outcomes, mapping those to courses and assessments, reviewing the data, and then using the data to adjust curriculum and resources.

First we need to know what outcomes we want students to achieve. We can do this by defining student **learning outcomes** at the program level.



Then we want to know where in the curriculum students could be building towards these outcomes. This can be done by creating a **curriculum map**.



Then we want to know if they are, indeed, achieving these outcomes. This is where we assess the outcomes either **directly or indirectly**.



Finally we want to adjust the curriculum and resources based on our findings. This is otherwise known as **“closing the loop.”**

Now that we have laid out the overall process, let's delve deeper into each step.

➔ Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are goals related to student learning. They happen at the course, program, and institutional level. Program learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students take with them from a learning experience. For example:

Students will be able to evaluate how a text supports or defies the literary conventions of its genre.

Program-level student outcomes must:

- Describe what students should know and be able to do upon completion of the departmental requirements.
- Specify an action that faculty can both observe and measure.
- Be limited to about five per department or program.
- Be aligned with both course-level and institution-level learning outcomes.

Ideally, program-level student learning outcomes are created by all teaching faculty and support staff. You can create them by reviewing course-level student learning outcomes, suggested outcomes from professional organizations, or complimentary programs at the same or other institutions.

➔ Curriculum Maps

Aligning learning outcomes to courses within your program will help you can see what is taught when, and how. The simplest way to do this is with what is called a curriculum map.

To create a curriculum map, create a chart that lists learning outcomes in one column and then all the courses in the degree program in their own columns. Use Xs to mark the learning outcomes that each course or experience covers. Does every course address a learning outcome? Are all learning outcomes addressed in at least one course? Make sure you answer these questions.

| Program Learning Outcomes | Course 1 | Course 2 | Course 3 | Internship |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Identify theoretical foundations | X | | X | X |
| Apply research methods | | X | X | |
| Communicate through writing | | X | | |
| Discuss ethics | | | | X |

Direct and Indirect Assessment

Student learning at the program can be assessed in many ways. They can be assessed directly by:

- Key assessments: course assignments or exams that are directly aligned to program-level learning outcomes
- Portfolios: archives of an individual student's work
- Capstones: courses taken at the culmination of a program that often include a final project

Outcomes can also be assessed indirectly with alumni surveys or review of program data.

“Closing the Loop”

Now you will want to propose adjustments to the curriculum. Now that you have all of this rich assessment data, you have a better idea of where students are struggling and where they are succeeding. For example:

The department analyzes key assessments and finds that student's quantitative reasoning in the advanced courses is not at the level of mastery they expected so they decide to implement additional tutoring services throughout the major. The department then advocates for resources to build in tutoring workshops throughout the curriculum.

For more information on writing program learning outcomes, please refer to the Office of Assessment [website](#). For more examples of good program-level learning outcomes visit our [Sample Tools page](#).

For more information on creating curriculum maps, please refer to the Office of Assessment [website](#). For more examples of good curriculum maps visit our [Sample Tools page](#).

If you have any questions or would like to request more information, please contact the Office of Assessment at assessment@hunter.cuny.edu.