

MAPPING THE CURRICULUM: LEARNING OUTCOMES AND RELATED ASSIGNMENTS

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The DQP and Assessment

The DQP Asserts that *Every* Student Should Graduate with the Designated Competencies. This Means that:

- The Typical Approach of Setting Outcomes as “Aspirations” and Conducting Assessments of “Average” Student Performance is not Adequate
- Assessment as an “Add-On” to the Curriculum (e.g. via Standardized Test) is Not Appropriate
- Assessment Must Be Embedded in Regular Student Assignments and Examination Questions and Certified at Multiple Levels on the Way to Degree Completion

Some Implications

- Curricular Mapping
- Rubrics and Assignment Templates
- Documenting Learning
- Benchmarking and Comparison

Curricular Mapping

- Two-Dimensional Matrix with Courses on One Dimension and Competencies on the Other
- Entries Note Whether the Competency is Taught, Required, or Mastered at a Given Level in the Course
- Usually Done for the Highest Enrollment Courses in Both General Education and the Major
- Used to Plan Where “Signature Assignments” Should be Located

Rubrics and Assignment Templates

- Rubrics Array Multiple Criteria for Judging Student Constructed Responses (to an Assignment, Test Question, etc.) at Various Levels
- Assignment Templates Support the Development of Assignments that Unavoidably Elicit Demonstration of a Particular Competency
- Assignment Templates “Mirror” Rubrics by Noting the Central Task to be Undertaken, How the Answer Should be Communicated, and How Extensive or Evidential the Response Should Be

Points About Assignment Templates

- Basic Format: “Compare the Substance of [Argument X] with [Argument Y] by Means of a Written Essay [of Z Length] that Contains at Least Three Examples of Important Ways in Which these Arguments Differ”
- Should Address No More than Two or Three Competencies
- Should Combine DQP Competencies (which are broad and generic) with Subject Specific Competencies Tied to Course Content

AAC&U's Quality Collaboratives: DQP Work between Transfer Institutions

• **University of Massachusetts Lowell**

- *US News & World Report* (Fall 2013):
 - Top Tier “National University”
- *Forbes Magazine*:
 - #10 nationally as “Top Colleges 2013: Best Value Colleges”
- *Business Insider*:
 - #1 nationally as “Most Underrated College in America”
- *Payscale.com*:
 - #1 of all Public Research Universities in New England for Average starting salary and Average mid-career salary for the past three years;
- *AffordableCollegesOnline*:
 - #10 nationally for “Public Colleges Whose Grads Make Millions”

Middlesex Community College

- Second largest community college in MA
- UML primary transfer institution (750+ students 2013)
- Articulation agreements with University in 14 degree programs

Project Design Rationale

Lessons from our prior collaborative work:

- Use assessment criteria to design assignments
- Involve faculty designing assignments in assessment of student products generated by those assignments

Our Project Design

Discipline-based teams of faculty from the 2 and 4 year institution collaborate to design and assess results of cumulative assignments

- Assessment criteria and expectations for levels of achievement determined (DQP mapped to VALUE rubrics)
- Cumulative assignments designed, using assessment criteria formatively
- Peer feedback to assignments, using assessment criteria
- Assignments implemented
- Teams reconvene to assess student products collaboratively
- Results discussed, strategies for improvement identified
- Opportunity to revise, re-implement, re-assess – “close the loop”

Project Takeaways (“aha” moments)

- Teams merged around shared disciplines, identified relevant key concepts that students struggle with, developed plan for scaffolding competency within the discipline, reflected in assignments
- Faculty owned less-than-optimal results – “I know what I could do differently” – instead of blaming students
 - Improve assignment prompts
 - Provide more opportunities to develop competency
- Designing assignments is creative and intellectually stimulating work

Extending the Work

- Leveraging resources
 - MA Vision Project
- Integrating initiatives to avoid “initiative fatigue”
 - General Education Revision on both campuses
- Implications for transfer
 - Articulation agreements impacted indirectly, as course focus moves from content to student learning outcomes

Campus Challenges

- Sustaining the work – incentives for faculty
- Strengthening impact by expanding assignment use within the department
- Increasing the relevance of the work for faculty by tightening relationship between assessment and grading
- Addressing the tension between evaluation of faculty and assessment of student-learning

A Library of DQP Assignments: Building Capacity for a New Model of Assessment



What It Is

- An online library of high-quality peer-endorsed assignments linked to DQP outcomes.
- Designed by faculty, part of the intellectual work they already do, course embedded.
- Building on campus efforts already underway
- Assessment as integral to teaching and learning vs “exoskeleton”

Rationale

- The DQP vision of assessment
 - Faculty driven, embedded in assignments, for all students (see Ewell paper)
- Campus interest in examples of DQP-linked assignments, support for developing them
- Assignment design as intellectual work--too often invisible and unacknowledged; how can we make this work more visible and available?
- The DQP as a framework for building and sharing assignments

Challenges

- Traditionally private work
- New framework, new language
- Design issues (stories of mismatch)
- Resources, time, initiative overload

The Plan

1. Recruit faculty working on DQP-linked assignments
2 cohorts, Oct 27th (here) and March 1 (?) (Portland, OR)
2. Work collaboratively to refine, test, “peer-endorse”:
An assignment design charrette



What's a "charrette"?

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to **an intense creative effort in a limited time period.**



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2. Work collaboratively to refine, test, “peer-endorse”:
An assignment design charrette
3. Create on-line “library” from which faculty
can borrow, adapt, and to which they can contribute
4. Develop related resources: templates, links to other
collections, support for campus-based work....
5. Build a larger community of interest and expertise:
sessions, workshops, publications, connections with
scholarly societies

What We Need Your Help With

1. How to “package” assignments so they’re broadly useful
2. Priorities: are some kinds of assignments more important than others for this purpose
3. What other resources would be useful
4. How to get the word out
5. How to use the experience of “borrowers” to make ongoing improvements