Curriculum Mapping

A curriculum map is a visual representation of how courses in a degree program's curriculum teach students the program learning outcomes. Curriculum maps reveal the opportunities students have to learn, practice, and demonstrate achievement of the most important aspects of learning within a program, helping to ensure a coherent curriculum that is systematic, intentional, and organized around student learning.

Mapping the Curriculum

Excel is a useful tool for the initial mapping. When the map is finalized, it can always be copies into a Word document. Set up a spreadsheet so that columns contain the program learning outcomes. The rows list each course that is **required** for students. Electives can be included in a section below. While some elective options may all address a learning outcome no matter which course a student selects, others may be marked as "variable" (V) depending on the student's selection. An example of a completed map can be found at the end of this document.

Step 1: Map the Program-Level Learning Outcomes: Determine the level of learning for each program outcome in each course and enter an "indicator" into the map

- o Enter an "I" to indicate courses in which students are introduced to the outcome
- o Enter a "R" where learning is reinforced through practice and reinforcement
- o Enter an "M" to indicate advanced learning of an outcome, where students "master" the learning at a level appropriate for graduation. At this level, student learning is often synthesized and integrated and may be assessed.
- o Enter an "A" to indicate where the learning will be formally assessed and reported.
- o In addition to program-level learning outcomes, there may be other, more general skills or knowledge that the program would like to track. For example, a program that has not identified oral communication as a PLO may still want to track how it is taught throughout a program.

Using the Curriculum Map to Review Program Coherence: Using a curriculum map, program faculty can analyze the extent to which the program offers students the opportunity to learn, practice, and master program outcomes. For example, does the distribution of learning opportunities throughout the curriculum enable students to build on and demonstrate their learning over time? Are courses properly sequenced? Programs may find that some learning outcomes are underemphasized in the curriculum or outcomes that are not developed over time. Things to keep in mind:

- o Each learning outcome should be addressed in at least one required course at a minimum.
    - o Ideally, for each outcome, there will be at least one course where the concept or skill is introduced (I), several courses where a skill is reinforced (R), at least one course where the learning is mastered (for the degree level) (M), and at least once course where the learning is formally assessed and reported (A).
    - o Reinforcement can also be accomplished through program electives.
- o Each required course should address at least one program-learning outcome.
- o Few, if any courses, will address all learning outcomes at once, since there is a limited amount a single course can accomplish.
    - o A capstone course may serve as a place where many learning outcomes are integrated and demonstrated at an advanced level.

Completed Curriculum Map – *A Hypothetical Psychology Program*

Required Courses and Experiences	Written communication appropriate to the field of psychology, including proper documentation of references and citations in APA Style	Ability to explain and analyze the biological bases of behavior and development	Distinguish between major statistical tests and be able to choose appropriate tests for specific data sets	Evaluate real world examples in terms of course content and knowledge, applying critical thinking skills	Select methodology appropriate to a particular research question	Develop an original research question that builds on an existing body of knowledge	Ability to explain and apply the ethical principles of psychology as established by the APA
Psychology 101	I		I	I		I	I
Psychology 102	I, R	I	R	I		I, R	I, R
Psychology 201		R	R	R			
Psychology 220				R		R	R
Psychology 250	I	R		R			
Psychology 301	R, M	R		R	I		
Psychology 302		R, M, A		R	R	R	
Psychology 303			R, M	R			
Psychology 401	R			R	R		R
Psychology 402			R	R			
Psychology 435	R, M			R, M			
Psychology 495	M, A		M, A	M, A	R, M, A	M, A	M, A

Adapted from Rochester Institute of Technology