Developing Effective Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Maps for Academic Programs

Linda Suskie
Assessment & Accreditation Consultant

Website: LindaSuskie.com
E-mail: Linda@LindaSuskie.com
Twitter: @LindaSuskie

(c) Linda Suskie
We are taking our students on a journey.

**Curriculum & Learning Activities:** How will your students get there?

**Learning Outcomes:** What is their destination by the time they graduate?
What is a Program?

- More than a collection of courses
- A program has
  - Coherence
  - Depth
  - Synthesis

-[Program] outcomes should be “practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.”
- AAC&U
What is a **Program** Learning Outcome?

- The **BIG** things you want students to get out of a program
- Developed throughout the program, in at least 2 courses
- Not one faculty member’s sole responsibility
Why Are You Here?

- What do you need to learn today?
- Why?
- What do you want to be prepared to do when you get back to your office?
- How do you want to use what you’ll learn when you get back to your office?
Good Learning Goals State Outcomes

- What students should be able to do *AFTER* they pass a course or graduate

  - *Solve natural resource management & protection issues.*

  - *Develop critical and analytical thinking skills.*
Good Learning Goals are **Clear**

- Students understand them.
- Colleagues understand them.
- No fuzzy terms!

- *Improve food production in an era of global change.*
- *Communicate effectively.*
- *Be able to pursue independent research.*
Good Learning Goals are **Observable**

- Action words
- If you can see it, you can assess it.

- *Identify and analyze ethical issues in business.*
- *Find and develop their individual voices.*
Good Learning Goals Focus on **Skills**

- **Knowledge & Understanding**
- **Transferrable Skills**
- **Career Skills**
- **Attitudes & Values**
- **Habits of Mind**

- *Communicate effectively with a range of audiences.*
- *Discuss proper lab procedures.*
Good Learning Goals are Relevant

- Meet **important** student & employer needs 5-10 years from now
  - Teamwork and collaboration skills
  - Articulating ideas clearly and effectively
  - Real-world problem solving
  - Evaluating information and conclusions
  - Professionalism (habits of mind)
  - Working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds
  - Flexibility and adaptability to change
  - Creativity and innovation
  - Ethical judgment
  - Using numbers, statistics & technology
Good Learning Goals are **Rigorous Yet Realistic**

- *Identify, formulate, and solve technical problems.*

- *Be committed to professional and ethical practice, continuous improvement, and lifelong learning.*
Good Learning Goals are Neither Too Broad nor Too Specific

- Evaluate [disciplinary] problems and hypotheses.
- Prepare for employment in [discipline].
- Write a paper using [appropriate] sources to present a contextualized argument.

Use a rubric to define broad goals.

(c) Linda Suskie
Time to Talk!

- Breakout Exercise #1
Course Curriculum Mapping

Students learn what they’re graded on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is what you’ll learn to do.</th>
<th>This is what you’ll do to learn it.</th>
<th>This is how you’ll show me that you’ve learned it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is what you’ll learn to do.</td>
<td>And this will help you learn how to...</td>
<td>This is what you’ll do to learn it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>[Program outcome]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Linda Suskie
Course learning outcomes help students achieve program learning outcomes.

**Program**

Articulate one’s progress & development as a practitioner in the discipline.

**Course**

Reflect on one’s strengths and areas for improvement as a practitioner of the skills developed in this course.

(c) Linda Suskie
Program
Articulate ideas clearly & effectively.

Course
Organize research material.
Use a variety of visual tools to present information.
Present a clear argument supported by compelling evidence.

(c) Linda Suskie
Program
Use research methods in the discipline.

Course
Interpret statistical tests of research data.
Time to Talk!

▪ Breakout Exercise #2
Applying this to your program...
Thanks for Coming!

- **Linda Suskie**
  - **Website**: LindaSuskie.com
  - **E-mail**: Linda@LindaSuskie.com
  - **Twitter**: @LindaSuskie
  - **Linked In**: www.linkedin.com/in/linda-suskie-73b09727/