Ten curriculum assessment tools every dean needs. Part 3: The Curriculum Map

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Theological school deans are not just theological leaders for their institution, they must be EDUCATIONAL leaders. That is, they must implement sound educational practices related to curriculum, instruction, supervision, assessment, and administration. While faculty members can focus on course-level and individual student learning assessment, academic deans need to focus on program-level assessment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's curricular course of study. Here are ten basic curriculum assessment tools every academic dean needs:

Outcomes alignment worksheet
Syllabus assessment rubric checklist

Curriculum maps
Program-level rubrics
Alumni survey
Program retention and completion rate worksheets
Grade Distribution report
Entering student profile
Graduating class profile
Student course evaluations

In this series we review these ten assessment tools every dean needs. Last month we reviewed the syllabus assessment rubric checklist. This month:

3. Curriculum Maps

Aligning program-level outcomes with course-level learning objectives is a basic component of curriculum design; it helps ensure effectiveness in the program of study. To help Faculty make better curricular decisions, both philosophical and pragmatic, Deans need to help Faculty understand the curriculum as an integrated whole. Rather than seeing a theological curriculum as a series of topical courses, the mission of the seminary is best served when Faculty understand the academic curriculum as an integrated, goal-oriented "program of study."

A helpful tool for communicating the curriculum as a "program of study" is the curriculum map. A curriculum map is a tool for evaluating the scope of elements in the explicit curriculum. A curriculum map can depict coverage of cognates, themes, methodology, topics, or other components that are considered important enough to be explicit parts of the student's learning experience.

For example, a curriculum map can demonstrate how individual courses support and align with the degree program goals. A degree program goals curriculum map can depict how the distribution of individual courses interpret the published goals of the curricular program of study. Academic deans, or academic faculty committees, can use this kind of map to evaluate how well the distribution of individual courses carry out the intent of the program of study. Using a program goals map can help determine:

1. To what extent a course helps realize the desired, published goals of a program of study
2. To what extent does the distribution of courses overtly support the realization of the goals.
4. Where there might be "gaps" in addressing program goals throughout the curriculum.
5. To what extent there are courses that do not address goals or fail to align with goals (if a course cannot "plot" where it fits on the map, you probably should not be offering that course).
6. To what extent and at what points is there integration of addressing program goals throughout the courses offered?
7. Which courses carry primary coverage of degree program goals.

The attached sample **MDiv Degree Program Goals Map** from the mythical Central Generic Theological Seminary can be adapted to your programs of study.

Download Curriclum Map Goals 2016

Curriculum maps can be of several types. Maps can reveal strengths and emphases in the scope of the curriculum, and can depict points and degrees of integration. These maps can also reveal gaps in coverage in the scope of the curriculum. Two additional types of curriculum maps (themes and methods) can be found in the previous post, A Tool for Curriculum Integration and Assessment: Curriculum Maps.

Involving Faculty in the creation of a curriculum map helps instructors understand the curriculum as a whole, and to see where and how individual courses "fit" in the course of study. To implement this faculty development activity, create a blank curriculum map and distribute to the faculty, a faculty committee, or an academic area committee. With map in hand, faculty members can assess,

- How well do the courses in our curriculum provide "coverage" of the published goals of the program of study?
- How effectively do our courses, taken together, interpret and address the curriculum goals?
- What goals and foci do we cover most in our curriculum? Least?
- Are there "gaps" in our coverage of important curriculum goals?

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