

Curry School of Education Annual Program Assessment: 2017 Pilot Summary Report

Purpose

The purpose of this pilot was to develop a systematic process for completing, reviewing, and evaluating annual program assessment reports. The aim of the Curry Assessment Office in this process is chiefly to identify areas in which programs need additional support and resources related to program assessment and evaluation, and to engage faculty, administrators, and stakeholders in discussions about these processes in order to develop a culture of assessment and evidence that permeates the Curry community. Secondary goals include providing a systematic process for collecting and reporting evidence for programs undergoing external accreditation review, and providing information to UVa Institutional Assessment and Studies to inform regional accreditation review.

This report includes a description of the pilot assessment report methodology, results and conclusions drawn from the pilot, and general recommendations for next steps to support program assessment, evaluation, and the use of assessment results for program improvement. Ultimately, the goal is to implement a regular, annual process for assessment reporting that informs the Office of Assessment efforts to support programs in all aspects of assessment, evaluation, and improvement. Therefore, based on the results of this pilot, the Director of Assessment will develop standards and policies that guide program assessment efforts and reporting.

Method

In September 2017, the Director of Assessment developed the Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR) format using Qualtrics. Additionally, the Director developed a planning document in PDF form that allowed programs to begin gathering data and formulating responses to items within the online report survey without initiating the online survey submission process. The Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs reviewed the report format and provided feedback, as did an assessment office staff member. Additionally, the Director solicited feedback from faculty and leaders across programs and in each department prior to sending out the report.

Following the development and refinement period, the Director took the following steps to facilitate report completion by all programs within Curry, with a deadline of November 14, 2017:

1. Curry Assessment (via the Director of Assessment) sent the Annual Program Assessment Report Planning Document out to all Curry program coordinators on October 10, 2017. The purpose of this document is to provide for planning and report-writing prior to the November 14 reporting deadline. Report categories include: student learning outcomes; program assessment activities; program curriculum map; program assessment plan, including timeline, measures, and use of data for program evaluation and improvement; and faculty engagement in program assessment.
2. A program representative (e.g., program coordinator or designee) completed the Program Assessment Report via Qualtrics, with the aid of the Planning Document and the Director of Assessment, as necessary. Program representatives completed the report in Qualtrics by November 14, 2017.
3. The Director of Assessment monitored program submission and sent multiple reminders of the deadline for submission.

4. Following receipt of APARs, the Director sent a PDF of each report to the program representative for their archives. This was an important step, as an emergent theme in meetings program directors was their frustration with the lack of feedback or a resulting product from the assessment report process undertaken in past years for SACS/Institutional Compliance.
5. The Director then evaluated each report using the rubric included in the following section.

Evaluation

The overarching goal for the assessment process is to provide useful, meaningful information to programs in order to support program evaluation and improvement efforts. There are standard elements of program assessment that undergird a quality assessment process. These elements include development, implementation, and monitoring of program outcomes and student learning outcomes, development and implementation of a curriculum map, use of both direct and indirect measures, development and implementation of an assessment plan, and use of assessment data to inform program evaluation and improvement. These elements formed the basis of the method used to evaluate program assessment reports.

Annual Program Assessment Reports were evaluated based on the following criteria:

Curry Annual Program Assessment Report Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	Rubric Level			
Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Developing	Emerging	Not Observed
Program Measures	The program has explicitly linked program-level measures to program outcomes and activities. Faculty have agreed upon these measures. Thresholds for performance are identified at varying levels for each outcome. Both direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes exist and inform program improvement.	Program measures are in place and linked to program outcomes. Faculty have agreed upon these measures. The program has not identified thresholds of performance at varying levels for each outcome. The program has identified both direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes, but these may not explicitly inform program improvement.	Program measures are in place but are not linked to program outcomes. Faculty have not agreed upon these measures. The program may have identified either direct or indirect measures, but not both.	Program measures are not developed or in place.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Student learning outcomes are developed, operationalized, and explicitly linked to assessment activities and measures. Faculty are involved in SLO development and approval. Data related to SLOs are regularly analyzed and inform program improvement. Such data also inform SLO refinement, as necessary.	Student learning outcomes are developed and linked to assessment activities and measures. Faculty approve SLOs. Data related to SLOs are regularly analyzed and inform program improvement. SLOs may not be updated on an appropriately regular basis.	Student learning outcomes are developed, but links to assessment activities and measures are unclear or tangential. Faculty have not approved SLOs. Data related to SLOs are reviewed irregularly and do not regularly inform program improvement.	Student learning outcomes have not been developed.
Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria
Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion
Direct Measures	Direct measures assess outcomes related directly to the program and are not confused with indirect measures. More than one direct measure is in place, and these measures provide meaningful data on student and program outcomes. At least one summative direct measure is in place. Faculty have agreed upon and approved direct program measures.	Direct measures assess outcomes related directly to the program and are not confused with indirect measures. More than one direct measure is in place, though these measures may not provide meaningful data on student and program outcomes. The program has not identified a direct measure as a summative measure of program outcomes. Faculty have agreed upon direct program measures.	One direct measure is in place, though the measure may be only tangentially related to program outcomes, and thus serves more as an indirect measure. Faculty have not agreed upon the direct measure.	The program has not developed or implemented a direct measure of program outcomes.
Indirect measures	Indirect measures assess tangential outcomes that are	Indirect measures assess tangential outcomes that are	One indirect measure is in place, though the	The program has not developed or

	appropriately related to the targeted student learning or program outcome. More than one indirect measure is in place, and these measures provide meaningful data on student and program outcomes. Faculty have agreed upon and approved indirect program measures.	related to the targeted student learning or program outcome, but the connection between the indirect measure and targeted outcome is ambiguous or unclear. More than one direct measure is in place. Faculty have agreed upon indirect program measures.	connection between the indirect measure and the targeted outcome is unclear. Faculty have not agreed upon the indirect program measure.	implemented an indirect measure of program outcomes.
Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria
Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion
Curriculum map	The program has in place a curriculum map which links course-level curricula to program-level outcomes. If applicable, professional association standards are identified within the curriculum map and are linked to course- and program-level outcomes. The curriculum map was developed with faculty input and approved by program faculty. The map is updated as necessary, based on evidence gleaned from program assessment and evaluation.	A program-level curriculum map is in place and links course-level curricula to program-level outcomes. Professional association standards may not be identified or linked to the curriculum map. Though not developed with input from faculty, the map has been approved by program faculty. The map is sometimes updated, but program assessment and evaluation evidence is rarely considered in these updates.	A program-level curriculum map is in place, though it does not clearly link course-level curricula to program outcomes. Faculty have not approved the map. The map is rarely, if ever, updated.	The program has not developed a curriculum map.

Assessment plan: Evaluation of assessment data	The program has a defined and specific plan for reviewing assessment data. The program has identified specific times during which faculty meet to review assessment data (e.g., year-end program meeting) and document these meetings. These times are protected and rarely, if ever, used for other purposes, such as administrative tasks or updates. Assessment data are compiled into an annual report.	The program has a defined and specific plan for reviewing assessment data. The program has identified specific times during which faculty meet to review assessment data, but these times are often reallocated to other purposes.	The program has a general plan for reviewing assessment data. The program has not identified times during which faculty meet to review assessment data.	The program has no plan for reviewing assessment data. Program faculty rarely, if ever, meet to review assessment data.
Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria	Rubric Level	Criteria
Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion	Highly Developed	Description of the Evaluation Criterion
Assessment plan: Use of assessment data in program	The program routinely uses data to inform program decisions, planning, and improvement. Curricula, internship requirements, assessment	The program uses data to inform program decisions, planning, and improvement. Curricula, internship requirements, assessment	The program uses data to inform program decisions, planning, and improvement. Major program changes are made without reviewing	The program does not use assessment data to inform major program

planning and improvement	development and revision, and other major program changes are informed by assessment data and evidence. The program documents changes that are made based upon review of assessment data, and monitors the success of these changes through continued evaluation and assessment.	development and revision, and other major program are sometimes informed by assessment data and evidence, but often are not. The program monitors success of changes through continued evaluation and assessment.	relevant assessment and evaluation data. The program does not monitor the success of such changes through regular evaluation and assessment.	changes or improvements.
Faculty engagement in assessment	Faculty participate in regular (i.e., annually or more frequent) structured opportunities to review assessment data and make changes to the program, including curriculum map and program assessments. Faculty have approved all major program assessment elements, including curriculum maps, direct measures, and indirect measures.	Faculty randomly participate in opportunities to review assessment data and make changes to the program, including curriculum map and program assessments. Faculty have approved all major program assessment elements, including curriculum maps, direct measures, and indirect measures.	Faculty randomly participate in opportunities to review assessment data and make changes to the program, including curriculum map and program assessments. Faculty have not approved major program assessment elements.	Faculty do not participate in opportunities to review assessment data and make changes to the program.

Results

Key Elements for Effective Program Assessment

Key Assessment Elements: Curry Annual Program Assessment Reports 2017-2018			
	# of Reports (N = 19)	% of Reports	Mean Score*
Program Level Outcomes	14	74%	1.47
Student Learning Outcomes	18	95%	2.16
Curriculum Map	15	79%	1.47
Direct Measures	19	100%	2.53
Indirect Measures	15	79%	1.80
Assessment Plan: Evaluation	19	100%	2.21
Assessment Plan: Use	19	100%	2.05
Faculty Engagement	17	89%	2.21

*Scale = 0 (Not Observed), 1 (Emerging), 2 (Developing), 3 (Highly Developed)

Program Outcomes

Program-Level Outcomes are statements derived from program goals, but that specifically delineate programmatic student achievement and/or directly reflect a service provided by the program. Example program outcomes are:

- Within six months of graduation, M.Ed. students in program X will have secured employment in the field or will have engaged in continued graduate preparation in the field
- X program will increase its graduation rate
- X program will increase the diversity of its applicant pool

Program-Level Outcomes				
	Yes		No	
	n*	%	n*	%
Do you have program-level outcomes in place?	14	74	5	26
Were your program outcomes updated in the past year?	6	33	12	67
Are program outcomes available on your department or program's website?	10	59	7	41

*N = 19

While the majority of programs reported having program-level outcomes, many programs scored lowest in this area on the evaluation rubric. Often, program outcomes were confused with student learning outcomes. Programs that seek external accreditation generally had appropriate program outcomes in place and were able to provide data demonstrating assessment of these outcomes and progression toward identified targets. However, most programs that do not seek some type of external accreditation conflated program outcomes with student learning outcomes. Additionally, if program outcomes were in place, respondents reported that these outcomes had not been updated in the past year, nor were program outcomes publicly available, two additional indicators of quality in this assessment area.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes specify the key knowledge, skills, and abilities that students in a program should know, have, or be able to do upon program completion. These outcomes should be specific to a

particular academic degree, narrowly focused and measurable, and stated at the appropriate cognitive level for the degree. Examples of student learning outcomes are:

- Students will describe the physiology and stages of swallowing
- Students will recognize models for gifted programs and curricular frameworks
- Students will be able to identify research questions or problems pertinent to their field of study

Student Learning Outcomes				
	Yes		No	
	n*	%	n*	%
Do you have student learning outcomes in place?	18	95	1	5
Does your program have degree-specific student learning outcomes in place?	16	84	3	16
Have student learning outcomes for each degree within your program been approved by the majority of faculty who teach?	16	89	2	11

*N = 19

The majority of programs have student learning outcomes in place, including outcomes specific to each degree level within a program, which their faculty have approved. This is a strength of Curry program assessment. Additionally, the mean score for program student learning outcomes based on the evaluation rubric described in previous sections was 2.16, which indicated that most programs are at the “Developing” level for student learning outcome quality.

Curriculum Maps

Curriculum maps are documents that show the alignment between students learning outcomes and core courses at the degree level. Programs that include faculty in developing curriculum maps ensure that each instructor understands how their course is situated within the degree program and curriculum, and requires that faculty identify the essential contributions that their courses make to the program. Regular updating of the curriculum map provides opportunities for valuable discussion between faculty and program leadership regarding strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, as well as improvements to be made to the curriculum and program.

Curriculum Maps				
	Yes		No	
	n*	%	n*	%
Does your program have a curriculum map in place (at each degree level)?	15	79	4	21
Was the curriculum map for any degree within your program updated in the past year?	8	42	11	58
Have the curriculum maps for your program been approved by the majority of faculty who teach?	16	84	3	16

*N = 19

While the majority of programs had curriculum maps in place, this was another area where programs scored lower on the evaluation rubric (M = 1.47, or “Emerging”). Most curriculum maps had not been updated in the past year, though programs did report that faculty approved most curriculum maps.

Measures

A *direct measure* is a measure of student performance that demonstrates skills and knowledge. Such measures typically include projects, portfolios, course-embedded assessments, licensure assessments,

exams, and internship evaluations. Additionally, such measures can and should be used to assess program effectiveness and impact, and should inform discussions of program improvement.

An *indirect measure* is a measure associated with learning, motivation, perception, or satisfaction. Such measures include exit, alumni, and employer surveys or interviews, course evaluations, grades, advisory board feedback, and institutional data (e.g., class size, time to completion). Such measures can also be used to inform program evaluation and improvement.

Measures				
	Yes		No	
	n*	%	n*	%
Direct measures collected	19	100	0	0
Indirect measures collected	15	79	4	21
Measures approved by faculty who teach	18	95	1	5

*N = 19

Generally, programs scored higher on quality indicators related to direct measures ($M = 2.53$) than those related to indirect measures ($M = 1.80$). That is, most programs reported having more than one direct measure in place, and reported that these measures provide meaningful data on student and program outcomes. Many programs (32%) reported having more than one direct measure in place, and all but one program reported that at least one of their direct measures also served as a summative measure of student performance or competency (e.g., licensure exam, internship evaluation).

Programs scored lower on quality indicators related to indirect measures. The quality indicators include a relationship, though tangential, between the indirect measure and program-level and student learning outcomes, as well as having more than one indirect measure in place, and using data from such measures to inform program improvement. Faculty approval of these measures is also a quality indicator

Assessment Plan and Faculty Engagement in Assessment

An assessment plan is a process and timeline for collecting and analyzing assessment data. The assessment plan should demonstrate alignment between student learning outcomes, the curriculum and core courses, and measures, including targets for student performance and frequency of assessment administration. Quality indicators for assessment plans include: a defined and specific plan for reviewing assessment data, identification of specific times during which faculty meet to review assessment data (e.g., year-end program meeting) and a means for documenting such meetings and discussions, evidence of the use of data to inform program decisions, planning, and improvement, and evidence that the program monitors changes related to program improvement for success.

Assessment Plan						
	Yes		Partially		No	
	<i>n</i> *	%	<i>n</i> *	%	<i>n</i> *	%
Does your program have a current program-wide assessment plan in place?	17	90	N/A	N/A	2	11
Was your program's assessment plan updated in the past year?	8	42	N/A	N/A	11	58
Does your assessment plan include a timeline that identifies when particular measures are collected, analyzed, and shared?	7	37	10	53	2	11

*N = 19

Faculty Engagement								
	Did Not Occur in the Past Year		Once Per Year		Once per Semester		More than Once per Semester	
	<i>n</i> *	%	<i>n</i> *	%	<i>n</i> *	%	<i>n</i> *	%
Since June 1, 2016, how often have the following groups within your program discussed assessment measures, results, and/or findings?								
Program Leadership	6	32	7	37	2	11	4	21
Assessment, curriculum, or similar committee	5	31	3	19	2	13	6	38
Majority of faculty who teach	6	32	4	21	4	21	5	26

*N = 19

Most programs reported having a current assessment plan in place. However, this number may be misleading, as many programs cited past years' WEAVE reports for SACS accreditation as evidence of the assessment plan. While these plans to provide evidence that measures are aligned to courses, which are aligned to student learning outcomes, they do not necessarily provide evidence that program faculty come together to develop the assessment plan, or that the assessment plan is a formal document regularly used and updated by program faculty and leadership.

Programs generally scored higher on the aspects of the assessment plan related to the ways in which assessments are administered, linked to SLOs and curriculum, and data are collected (*Assessment Plan: Evaluation* section of the rubric; $M = 2.21$) than the way that data are used to inform program evaluation and improvement, as well as strategies for monitoring the success of program changes based on assessment data (*Assessment Plan: Use* section of the rubric; $M = 2.05$), though the difference was small. One reason for this difference may be the format in which assessment plans were submitted in the report. That is, WEAVE reports place emphasis on SLOs, related courses, and measures, rather than the use of assessment results and monitoring improvements.

When asked specifically about the engagement of faculty, leadership, and special committees in the assessment process, programs generally reported high levels of engagement. Analysis of open-ended questions related to engagement in the assessment process revealed that program leaders/directors, who generally served as the program representative for this report, aim to increase faculty engagement in the review and use of assessment data, because this job often falls to program leadership alone (although quantitative data show that program leadership and program faculty are almost equal in terms of frequency of engagement in the assessment process). Sixty-nine percent of respondents

indicated that program leadership and 68% of program faculty engaged between once per year and more than once per semester, while 26% of respondents indicated that program faculty engaged more than once per semester compared to 21% who indicated that program leadership engaged more than once per semester. It may be the perception of program leadership that the duties related to assessment and program evaluation and improvement fall mainly to program directors, though this may not be backed up by data.

Additionally, as with the results related to program measures, open-ended responses revealed that, in general, program leaders are searching for a system to facilitate the assessment process, including use of assessment data in program evaluation and improvement. Suggestions for improvement include developing a system by which faculty members could maintain data on their own students but also efficiently share those data with program directors for program evaluation purposes, as well as an electronic system for doctoral students' record of progress which students could maintain but faculty could access and populate.

Summary and Conclusions

A majority of Curry programs report having the key elements of effective program assessment in place. Areas in which programs demonstrated clear evidence of quality assessment practices include the development of student learning outcomes, use of direct measures of student learning that inform program improvement, and the existence of an assessment plan, though the quality of program assessment plans and degree to which assessment results are used to inform program improvement are questionable. Areas in which programs need additional resources, development, and support include the development of meaningful program outcomes that are distinct from student learning outcomes, development and refinement of curriculum maps, development and use of indirect measures, and the development of an assessment plan in which results are regularly used for program evaluation and improvement.

Program and Student Learning Outcomes

Based on the evaluation of student learning outcomes across programs, programs would benefit from professional development and support in the development of meaningful program outcomes and clarifying and regularly updating student learning outcomes at the degree level. Specifically, programs across Curry would benefit from support and resources targeted at developing program-level outcomes that are related to but distinct from program goals and student learning outcomes, as well as identifying appropriate assessments and using assessment data on these outcomes to inform program improvement.

Measures

An important theme emerged when analyzing responses to open-ended questions about measures: many programs are looking for a system through which they can administer assessments, collect data, and report on data in order to more efficiently and effectively use assessment information to inform program evaluation and improvement.

The Director of Assessment plans to develop and facilitate workshops on the development of indirect measures and the utility of these measures for informing program improvement. The Director has already piloted a Curry Entry survey and is in the process of collaborating with colleagues to build an exit and alumni survey, all of which could be used by programs as indirect measures of program effectiveness. The Office of Assessment website will also include resources on developing and refining

both direct and indirect measures, and the Director aims to conduct small-group meetings with individual programs to discuss the development, refinement, and use of direct and indirect measures.

Curriculum Maps

Based upon these results related to Curriculum Maps across program reports, the Director of Assessment will develop a section of the Office of Assessment website with resources and templates designed to support programs in developing and/or refining their curriculum maps. Additional recommendations include professional development sessions with experts from the Office of Assessment or the UVA Center for Teaching Excellence that would be open to all program faculty and would provide instruction and techniques in developing curriculum maps and using these maps to facilitate discussions around program and curricular improvement.

Assessment Maps and Faculty Engagement

Results related to Assessment Plans revealed that program faculty may not always participate in the development of such plans or using data to evaluate their programs and plan for improvements. The Director of Assessment plans to develop resources and provide one-on-one or small-group consultation with program faculty and leadership on the development of high-quality assessment plans, including ways to facilitate use of assessment data in program improvement, and strategies for monitoring the success of changes based on assessment data.

Limitations

Improvements to the Reporting Process

In addition to results and conclusions drawn regarding program assessment across Curry programs, this pilot also provided information on ways in which the reporting process could be improved. A major goal of this process was to streamline assessment reporting for program directors. Thus, directors or program representatives were allowed to submit previous reports, such as WEAVE reports and accreditation self-studies, in place of evidence of specific assessment system elements. For example, to provide evidence of a program assessment plan, many programs submitted past WEAVE reports. Therefore, it is highly plausible that the assessment plans included in the WEAVE reports are not truly reflective of what programs actually do, but are more reflective of a staff member's perception of program assessment activities based on little or low-quality evidence. In the future, the report will be pre-populated with data and information provided this year, but will also require that programs submit original evidence of key program assessment elements, rather than evidence pulled from an older report that may or may not be current and accurate.

Qualtrics served as an efficient and useful tool in this reporting process. However, future reports will include functionality for program representatives to skip sections unrelated to their programs. For example, some respondents expressed frustration that items asked for information unrelated to their specific degree level, although they were permitted to skip these questions. Future reports will employ more sophisticated skip logic to allow respondents to see only items related to the specific degree for which they are responding.

Finally, this annual report process, as well as meetings with individual program directors and faculty, served as a baseline measure of program assessment practices. Additionally, this process was new to all programs, and thus some respondents may have benefited from one-to-one support in completing the assessment report in order to best represent their programs in terms of assessment and program

evaluation. Results and conclusions are designed to allow the Director of Assessment and Curry leadership to identify the resources, supports, and structures necessary to improve program assessment and evaluation and foster a culture of evidence across the Curry School.