**Guide and Template for a Program Curriculum Map**

**Purpose**

A curriculum map helps instructors and students visualize the organization of a degree program in support of intended program-level learning outcomes. In doing so, curriculum maps also describe the coherence of a program’s curriculum – how courses, and other learning experiences, work together to strategically support intended student learning. A template is provided on pg. 3.

**Uses and Benefits**

*For programs*, curriculum maps facilitate communication and analysis of curricular organization in support of student learning and program planning and assessment. Toward this end, curriculum maps can

* Reveal if students have sufficient opportunities to develop and master intended outcomes
* Promote shared understandings of program organization among all instructors (faculty, TAs, etc.)
* Identify where evidence of student learning can be collected for program assessment
* Act as indirect evidence for interpreting program assessment results
* Identify opportunities to respond to program assessment results with curricular or pedagogical changes

*For instructors* (faculty, TAs, etc.)*,* curriculum maps inform teaching in the context of a program as they can

* Illustrate how a course contributes to an entire program curriculum
* Reveal ways to anticipate and build on prior student learning
* Provide context for creating assignments that support program learning outcomes
* Encourage connections among courses and other learning experiences for students
* Orient new faculty/instructors to the program

*For students*, curriculum maps provide information to empower stewardship of learning and education:

* See how courses work together in support of learning
* Offer information for use in planning educational/course choices
* Guide learning expectations
* Demonstrate that all program requirements contribute to learning

**Develop a Map**

The most representative and useful maps are collaboratively developed by a program’s faculty. As living documents, they are also regularly revisited to ensure accuracy. At UC Merced, programs are asked to revisit their curriculum maps as part of the annual assessment process.[[1]](#footnote-1)

To make a map that is useful to faculty and students:

1. List all approved courses and other unit bearing experiences for the major or standalone minor *together with* any required events or experiences (e.g. internships, licensure exams, advising, etc.).
2. Distinguish required from elective courses. A program may also want to organize the map to further distinguish the curricular structure of the program. For instance, the program might distinguish upper from lower division courses, course sequencing, including pre-requisites, and/or special groupings of courses, e.g. if the program has categories of courses from which students must choose.
3. For each course, determine and then indicate in the map:
4. The program learning outcomes (PLOs) the course helps students develop.

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) represent the collective results of learning in courses and other learning experiences. In light of this, when reviewing course learning outcomes, relative to the PLO, consider if one or more CLOs explicitly relate to the PLO, as well as the extent to which assignments (projects, exams, etc.) and activities provide students with the opportunity to practice and demonstrate achievement of the CLO, and in effect, PLO. Since courses play a specific role the sequence and/or focus of a program, most courses will probably address only a subset of the PLOs.

1. The course’s contribution to the development of the skills and knowledge associated with the PLO. Typically, programs identify three categories of contribution.
* **I** (Introduced) – The skills and knowledge associated with the PLO are introduced. Students meet, experience, begin to practice, and are assessed on the abilities through typical course activities.
* **D** (Developed) - The skills and knowledge associated with the PLO are developed. Through regular practice with feedback and related assessments, students continue to advance their proficiency.
* **M** (Mastered) - Through advanced assignments/assessments students further refine and then demonstrate the skills and knowledge associated with the PLO at a level of proficiency/competence expected of a graduate of the major or minor.
1. Indicate the courses from which evidence of student learning will be gathered to assess student achievement of the PLO as part of the program’s assessment plan.
* **A** (Assessed) – Evidence of student learning for program assessment purposes is gathered by the program.
1. As a faculty group, examine the completed map as a whole. Some questions to consider include,
* What does the map tell you about the coherence of the program in relation to intended learning outcomes?
* Do students have multiple, sequential opportunities to achieve all the program learning outcomes?[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Are some PLOs barely addressed or not at all?
* Are some PLOs only addressed in elective courses, raising the question of how all students will graduate with those abilities and knowledge?
* If some learning outcomes are addressed in just one or two courses, while others in nearly all, is this the right balance in light of the intended learning outlined by the outcomes?

**Share It**

Consider sharing this concise representation of your program with relevant audiences, internal and external to your program, as a means for realizing the *Uses and Benefits* previously described. Examples include

* Provide the map to TAs and faculty at orientations
* Put the map on the program’s website or in the catalog
* Provide the map to the undergraduate advising staff
* Distribute the map’s URL to all faculty, etc.

**Template Curriculum Map**

Cut and paste the map and key below to start your own.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Number** | **Course Name** | **Program Learning Outcomes** |
| **#1** | **#2** | **#3** | **#4** | **#5** |
| BA 10 | Introduction to Research Methods | I |  | I | I | I |
| BA 115 | Special Topics in the Discipline |  | D | D |  | D |
| BA 180 | Capstone seminar | M, A | M, A | M, A | M, A | M, A |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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KEY

Shaded courses are required, all others elective.

**I** (Introduced) – The skills and knowledge associated with the PLO are introduced. Students meet, experience, begin to practice, and are assessed on the abilities through typical course activities.

**D** (Developed) - The skills and knowledge associated with the PLO are developed. Through regular practice with feedback and related assessments, students continue to advance their proficiency.

**M** (Mastered) - Through advanced assignments/assessments students further refine and then demonstrate the skills and knowledge associated with the PLO at a level of proficiency/competence expected of a graduate of the major or minor.

**A** (Assessed) – Evidence of student learning for program assessment purposes is gathered by the program.

1. See [Guidelines for PLO Reports](http://assessment.ucmerced.edu/academic/guidelines-and-templates) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Suskie, Linda. *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)