**Harnessing Curriculum Mapping to Inspire Learning: A Step-by-Step Guide**

[Session Format: Roundtable Discussion](https://mobts.org/mobts-guidelines/)

**Abstract**

Curriculum mapping is a critical component of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Assurance of Learning (AOL) process; however, AACSB does not provide detailed guidelines on how to conduct curriculum mapping in the AOL process. In addition, there is a paucity of literature describing course mapping, which is the building block of curriculum mapping. By mapping specific course learning objectives to the program-level learning goals, faculty members are able to assess the impact of objectives on shared learning goals occurring over the entire course. This session will foster a discussion of 1) the specific steps faculty members need to follow in the course mapping process and 2) methods we can employ to integrate course mapping with curriculum mapping.

**Keywords**

Course mapping, curriculum mapping, learning goals, AACSB, assurance of learning

**Introduction**

A curriculum map documents the coverage of learning outcomes/goals in program curricula, using a matrix whereby the instructors indicate the linkages between courses and shared program learning outcomes (Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2004). As the building block of a curriculum map, a course map documents the coverage of learning outcomes/goals in a given course. The course is broken down into its components and then mapped to the corresponding program learning outcomes/goals. By mapping the specific course learning objectives to the program-level learning goals, faculty members are able to assess the impact of objectives on shared learning goals over the entire course. In this session, we discuss two key questions. First, *what are the specific steps faculty members need to follow in the course mapping process?* Second, *how do we integrate course mapping with curriculum mapping?*

This session will frame a discussion about the curriculum mapping process and ways to improve the integration of course mapping with curriculum mapping so that we can better understand how shared program learning outcomes and courses are connected. The presenter, who recently designed the course mapping and curriculum mapping process at her institution, will share her experiences in seeking to design a course mapping and curriculum mapping process. This process will facilitate the connection to the shared program learning goals in course design and evaluation. Collaboration among instructors will help to ensure identification of major gaps or unnecessary redundancies in content of the program curriculum. My goal for this session is to have a discussion of how to approach curriculum mapping in the AACSB Assurance of Learning (AOL) process in a stepwise manner. The target audience includes both faculty and administrators who have an interest in discussing student learning across the curriculum.

**Theoretical Foundation**

The principles-based assurance of learning (AOL) standards from the AACSB directs business programs to choose learning goals that are derived from the program’s distinctive mission and that reflect expectations of stakeholders (AACSB, 2020). The business program may choose both general (e.g., communication skills) and knowledge-based (e.g., accounting, finance, management) learning goals in its AOL program. The top five shared learning goals were communication, business ethics, global/international business, functional knowledge, and problem solving (Brink, Palmer, & Costigan, 2014).

AACSB-accredited programs are allowed to define their AOL systems with flexibility but are required to integrate AOL into their curriculum management processes (AACSB, 2020; Harvey & McCrohan, 2017). A recent internal analysis conducted by AACSB found that the peer review team and/or AACSB committees identified a deficiency in alignment with AOL standards in a disproportionate number of schools (AACSB, 2019). Curriculum mapping was frequently recommended to address this deficiency. As a useful tool in evaluating intended program learning outcomes, program design, assessment design and implementation (Veltri, Webb, Matveev, & Zapatero, 2011), curriculum mapping uses a matrix approach to documenting the coverage of learning outcomes/goals in program curricula, whereby the instructors indicate the linkages between courses and shared program learning outcomes (Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2004). Curriculum mapping is built upon course mapping, which documents the coverage of learning outcomes/goals in individual courses. Despite the existence of strong theoretical frameworks derived from research on education and learning (Bloom, 1956; Veltri et al., 2011), AACSB did not specify any rules to follow in curriculum mapping. Scholars argue that the matrix should include more detailed information about the extent of achievement of each learning goal in the corresponding courses (Lakhal & Sévigny, 2015), for example, introduce, or develop, or master (Garrett, Marques, & Dhiman, 2012). In addition, faculty members need to share a common understanding of the meaning of these levels of achievement of the learning goals (Garrett et al., 2012). All of these requirements call for step-by-step guidance that program faculty and school administrators can follow in collaboratively creating the connection between course content and shared learning goals.

Curriculum mapping offer many benefits, one of which is that all program faculty members contributing to the curriculum are engaged in the curriculum mapping process. This wide faculty participation will improve members’ commitment to the AOL process rather than causing them to feel disconnected from the individual curricular goals. This discussion can create a space for members of our community to think more explicitly about the curriculum mapping process, with a focus on how to design and implement this process, and by extension to consider how course mapping and curriculum mapping can inspire student learning.

**Session Description**

The session facilitator, who recently designed the course mapping and curriculum mapping process at her institution, will share her experiences in designing the course mapping and curriculum mapping process. The session will seek to build a discussion about how to approach curriculum mapping in the AACSB Assurance of Learning (AOL) process in a stepwise manner. The participants will discuss the impact of the new AACSB 2020 standards on the AOL process. The new Standard 4 includes the following: (1) Competency goals are defined in a broader way and at a higher level than the learning goals in the 2013 standards. (2) We are expected to document the use of current and emerging technologies in the program. (3) Curricular content needs to promote innovation, experiential learning and positive societal impact. The new Standard 9 emphasizes the overall positive societal impact of the school and its students. The schools need to clarify the explicit assessment and measure of the impact on society at various levels.

Session timeline:

1. Introduction and framing 10 minutes
   1. Ask each person to introduce himself or herself and answer three questions:
      1. What is about this topic that most excites them?
      2. What is their institutional context (subject area, size of department, number of students, etc.)?
      3. What seems most challenging about Assurance of Learning (AOL) across the curriculum?
   2. Share motivation for the session and experience in designing the course mapping and curriculum mapping process at my institution (I will share the attached *Appendix: A Step-by-Step Guide to Course Mapping and Curriculum Mapping*).
2. Course mapping methods 20 minutes
   1. Discuss current methods of course mapping
      1. *What are schools using?*
      2. Identify benefits and challenges of these systems.
   2. Discuss new methods of course mapping
      1. Ask: *Do our current methods capture the linkages of courses to shared learning goals?*
      2. Identify potential ways of improving the course mapping process.
3. Curriculum mapping methods 20 minutes
   1. Discuss current methods of curriculum mapping
      1. *What are schools using?*
      2. Identify benefits and challenges of these systems.
   2. Discuss new methods of curriculum mapping
      1. Ask: *Do our current methods capture the linkages of courses to shared learning goals?*
      2. Ask: *What is the impact of the new AACSB 2020 standards on the AOL process? What are possible strategies for meeting the 2020 AOL Standards?*
      3. Identify potential ways of improving the curriculum mapping process.
4. Wrap up 10 minutes
   1. Ask: *What from this session will you take back to your university?*
   2. Ask: *What challenges do you foresee in bringing this information back? How can you overcome them?*

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**Appendix: A Step-by-Step Guide to Course Mapping and Curriculum Mapping**

1. Writing course learning objectives:

The most common components of course mapping are the main learning objectives of each lesson. Good learning objectives are specific and measurable (Linse, 2016). A course learning objective is not assignment-specific. For example, requiring students to write a paper does not mean that writing skills are covered, unless the instructor teaches the specific writing skills used in that assignment. The number of course learning objectives should be limited to the most important 12-15 in course mapping so that each course has a comparable weight in curriculum mapping. If necessary, choose the terminal objectives (highest-level learning achieved during the lesson) and exclude enabling objectives (prerequisites for terminal objectives) (Nemec & Bussema, 2010). For example, “Identify the ratios used to measure the well-being of the common shareholder, and explain each ratio's formula and interpretation” should be rewritten as “Explain the formula and interpretation of each ratio used to measure the well-being of the common shareholder,” because “identify the ratios” is the prerequisite for the terminal objective (“explain each ratio’s formula and interpretation”). Please use specific and measurable learning objectives instead of broader general objectives for the course. For example, “Students will be able to understand the process of strategic implementation,” as a general course objective, includes multiple specific objectives.

2. Map the course components to the corresponding program learning outcomes/goals.

The list of titles of the major program competency goals, located in the top rows of the Word and Excel files of Curriculum Mapping, include Critical Thinking, Leadership, Communication, and Business Competencies.

Here is an explanation of the codes (I, P, and M) for Course Mapping:

• Foundations, or Introductory Phase “I”: Students are receivers of knowledge, and demonstrate comprehension and ability to apply knowledge within the field of study. (appropriate for introductory courses such as Fundamentals of Management, etc.)

• Reinforcement, or Practice Phase “P”: Students expand their ability to apply knowledge in the discipline. Foundation concepts and abilities are reinforced through practice. Formative feedback from faculty is key in this stage. The use of case studies, experiential exercises, or other applications of the concepts/theories/models/frameworks is required.

• Demonstration of Mastery Phase “M”: Students demonstrate mastery of knowledge domain and proficiency in using what they have learned; this requires at least 3 contact hours spent on demonstration of mastery of the knowledge domain.

3. Once you finish course mapping, name the file, using the following format: course number + course name + “course mapping” + instructor’s last name; post the individual course mapping files to the departmental shared folder.

4. To ensure the quality of curriculum mapping, a single-blind review of individual course mapping has been implemented. Each program faculty member was randomly assigned to review 2 or 3 course mappings. Each instructor received the reviewer’s comments and was required to respond by revising the course mapping or by providing a brief explanation if the reviewer’s suggestion is declined.

5. Enter your course data in the corresponding rows in both Word and Excel files of the Curriculum Map.

Attachment: Course mapping template

**Course Mapping Template**

Course #               Course name              Instructor’s name

Course Objectives

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **--- Major Program Competency Goals ---** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Upon the completion of this course, students should be able to: |
|  | 1  Critical Thinking | 2a  Leadership Knowledge | 2b Leadership Behavior | 3a  Writing | 3b  Speaking | 4a Accounting | 4b Economics | 4c Finance | 4d Information Systems | 4e International Issues | 4f  Legal and Social Environment | 4g Management | 4h Marketing | 4i Quantitative Business Analysis |
| Explain the formula and interpretation of each ratio used to measure the well-being of the common shareholder. |  |  |  |  |  | P |  | P |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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