MAKING YOUR ASSESSMENT PROCESS GO VIRAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a process that explicitly incorporates input from Business Advisory Council members into student learning outcomes assessment. The process is based on a practical assessment model using competencies suggested in the Global Benchmarking Initiative applied using a linked cascading information matrix protocol. Business Advisory Council input is obtained on a regular basis and linked to the development and/or verification of identified program competencies. The inclusion of this information permits the council to observe how their ideas directly impact curriculum and program activity development and assessment. Assuming that the linked cascading information matrices are constructed to track the development of a student, the assessment data also can be employed during academic advising to evaluate a student's progress in the program and compare it to that of other students at similar stages of development.

Development of Competencies

The process begins with the selection of competencies that link the body of business knowledge to the wishes of the business community. This is often a tricky task. The business community often wants technical and practical skills with general lack of appreciation regarding the process to development of these skills in conjunction with the knowledge required to prepare students for a career and not merely a job. A process that proves beneficial to accomplishment of this task commences with a simple brainstorming session involving members of a College's Business Advisory Council. A facilitator elicits input from the council members, listing skills the council feels are desirable for students to exhibit upon graduation. Next, the suggestions are categorized into individual groups. These groups are compared to published information, evaluated by faculty members and ultimately used to develop a set of competencies. By using a matrix linking the competencies with the grouped suggestions, the council is shown how their suggestions are addressed by the competencies. This same process can be repeated on a regular basis to verify and update the list of competencies. Although most often a faculty trusts their curriculum provides a set of courses that collectively supports and enhances each student's competencies in the selected areas, there remains a need to involve first hand practical business needs and to verify the level to which the students have improved their skills in these key areas.

Initially, based on discussion with our Business Advisory Council and a review of the existing literature regarding required business skills, the Dauch College of Business and Economics at Ashland University decided to adopt the set of student learning outcomes associated with the critical competencies identified by ACBSP. As part of the Global Benchmarking Initiative, rubrics were developed and tested in the following seven areas:

1. Communications
2. Critical Thinking
3. Business Knowledge and Technical Skills
4. Leadership/Teamwork Skills
5. Ethics
6. Analytical/Quantitative Skills
7. International and Global Perspective

These rubrics can be used for formative and summative periodic assessment of student learning outcomes within a college or program. In addition, they can be used to collect representative data across multiple institutions for benchmarking purposes, using the Global Benchmarking Initiative (GBI) database system developed by ACBSP and hosted by LiveText, Inc.

Although the College's faculty and administrators believed that this set of competencies were appropriate, we decided to validate the competencies with input from our Business Advisory Council (BAC). A brainstorming session was held as part of a regularly scheduled meeting of the BAC. During the session, BAC members were asked to provide answers to the question "What competencies do our graduates need?" A faculty facilitator obtained input from each BAC member using a standard brainstorming process, while a second faculty facilitator recorded and displayed the responses. Forty-four responses were recorded and subsequently grouped into eleven categories of critical skills. The eleven categories were mapped against the seven College competencies, and the results were presented to the BAC members later in the meeting, giving the members an opportunity to review the competencies and verify their applicability. Figure 1 presents the results of the Business Advisory Council session in matrix form, showing the mapping of the eleven critical skills to the competencies identified by the college.

Once a set of College-level competencies has been selected and validated, assessments of student learning outcomes related to these competencies must be embedded in required courses so that all students are assessed as part of their curriculum requirements. Table 1 shows where assessments are placed in the curriculum.

Table 1: Embedded Assessments

Content Area (Competency)	Core Course	Class Level	Assessment Evidence
1. Communications	MIS 221 Information Technology	FR/SO	MS Word paper assignment
2. Critical Thinking	ECON 232/233 Micro/Macro	FR/SO	Essay on exam
3. Business Knowledge	various in each major (see below)	various	various methods (see below)
4. Leadership/Teamwork	MGT 240 Intro. to Management	FR/SO	case analysis
5. Ethics	MGT 401 Business Law I	JR/SR	case analysis
6. Analytical/Quantitative	MGT 319 Operations Management	SO/JR	case analysis
7. International/Global	MKT 233 Principles of Marketing	FR/SO	case analysis

The third competency area, business knowledge, includes content from all functional areas of business. In addition, the faculty in each program major must determine a set of specific competencies relevant to students majoring in that area, and then link those competencies to the College competencies using the same matrix mapping described earlier. A sample mapping for the Marketing program major is shown in Figure 2.

Once this is completed, the final step is linking student learning outcomes from each course and/or activity to the program competencies. Figure 3 shows such a mapping for the MKT233 Principles of Marketing course. During this step, faculty will find this to be an important tool for program development and curriculum review. Implementing a curriculum mapping process is a natural compliment to this approach.

The summative assessment is applied in the capstone course in the form of a case analysis that will be evaluated using rubrics designed by ACSBP and is part of a Global Benchmarking program that will enable comparison of business programs worldwide. Total summative assessment will include this information, review of the student's internship experience, and results from the ETS Major Field exam. The progress of each student is monitored using these marker assessments and the cumulative outcome of the process combined with the final summative assessment from the final program assessment. This process is most effective when administered via an assessment management assistance program. Without this type of electronic organizer the paperwork would be overwhelming and prohibitive.

The final step in this process is the application of formative assessments during the advising process. For example, as a Marketing student progresses thru the program they will complete formative assessments during each class. Using the assessment data management program an advisor can monitor the students progress and compare to other students at the same point in the program. The advisor can highlight strong and weak performance as it relates to the identified competencies of the program and remedial actions can be taken to assist the student in development of these required competencies. In addition, to the student benefit the faculty can periodically review these data and revise the program components on a real-time basis.

Naturally, this is a continual process that is a closed loop. It begins with the inclusion of advisors and other identifiers of stakeholder requirements, permits faculty to translate the body of knowledge through coordinated programs to the students, and offers a real-time review process for students and program. The cascading matrix plan allows this to be accomplished with maximum visibility and inclusion of all interested stakeholders.

Figure 1: Linking Business Advisory Council Input to College Competencies

	Critical Skills	COBE Competencies						
		Communications	Critical Thinking	Business Knowledge and Technical Skills	Leadership and Teamwork Skills	Ethics	Analytical and Quantitative Skills	International and Global Perspective
		Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable
Categories from Business Advisory Council Brainstorming	Communications (3)	X		X	X			
	Leadership skills (4)			X	X			
	Ethics (2)			X		X		
	Understanding job demands (3)		X	X				
	Experiential learning (5)	X		X	X		X	
	Functional business integration and networking (5)		X	X				
	Analytical and problem solving skills (4)		X	X			X	
	Critical thinking (5)		X	X	X			X
	Global exposure (other cultures) (5)			X				X
	Lifelong learning and adaptability (4)		X	X				
	Sales skills & entrepreneurial mindset (4)	X		X	X		X	

Figure 2: Linking Program Competencies to College Competencies

	COBE Competencies						
	Communications	**Critical Thinking**	**Business Knowledge and Technical Skills**	**Leadership and Teamwork Skills**	**Ethics**	**Analytical and Quantitative Skills**	**International and Global Perspective**
Marketing	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**
Perform appropriate market research, define market segments, and describe critical market characteristics and trends.	X	X	X			X	
Develop operational product plans.	X		X				
Develop product placement criteria and distribution channel alternatives.			X			X	X
Develop pricing practices based on appropriate quantitative pricing models.			X			X	
Develop product promotion and sales plans.	X	X	X		X	X	
Prepare, implement, and manage an integrated market plan that meets the domestic and/or global requirements of the business.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Figure 3: Linking Individual Course Outcomes to Program Outcomes

	Upon completion of a Marketing Major a student will:					
	Perform appropriate market research, define market segments, and describe critical market characteristics and trends.	Develop operational product plans.	Develop product placement criteria and distribution channel alternatives.	Develop pricing practices based on appropriate quantitative pricing models.	Develop product promotion and sales plan.	Prepare, implement, and manage an integrated market plan that meets the domestic and/or global requirements of the business.
Bus 233 - Principles of Marketing	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**	**Applicable**
1. Actively exhibit how marketing has evolved over the last 3 centuries.	X	X	X	X	X	
2. Demonstrate an understanding of how the dynamics of uncontrollable factors must be considered when dealing with the controllable aspects of marketing.	X		X		X	
3. Demonstrate how product success can be monitored, using various business models, in a global environment.	X	X	X	X	X	
4. Create a marketing research model, using current technology.	X					
5. Demonstrate how all product categories (physical, service, etc.) must complement one another.		X	X		X	
6. Show how pricing concerns, cost analysis, and consumer perception of price interrelate.		X	X	X		

Student Learning Objectives