ADVICE FOR DEVELOPING THE GRADUATE PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN

Due date: May 19, 2013

Section I. Program Goals

Considerations for filling in the template for Section I.

• Develop broad statements about program goals; best to keep the number down (2 - 5)
• These provide broad intentions and are linked to more quantifiable subsets of the student learning outcome objectives which follow on the next page
• In this assessment context, goals should refer to student learning rather than other aspects of program success, e.g. admissions, faculty, resources, or other such indicators that may be important for program review
• See the models and Table 1 for some examples of goals

Section II. Curriculum Map (Linking Learning Outcomes and Requirements)

Considerations for filling in the template for Section II.

• In listing student learning outcomes, fewer is better; accredited programs may wish to aggregate into clusters to save space and time (see the model and Table 2 for examples)
• The outcomes should be grouped under the relevant goal and numbered accordingly (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, etc.)
• Across the top, indicate program requirements, proceeding chronologically from left to right to the extent that is possible
• Include courses plus other requirements that are important for providing key learning experiences and evidence of student performance for assessing competencies in the program
• Use the “Map Key” (I, R, E) to help yourselves think through the level of expected outcome at each stage of student progress through the program, linking outcomes to experiences that promote development and mastery of the outcome on the part of the student.
• Accredited programs can use the template Curriculum Map or refer to a similar table in accreditation-related documents that shows how outcomes are linked to their program requirements (provide page numbers and attachment or URL), or cut and paste into the template.

Section III. Assessment Timeline:

Considerations for filling in the Template for Section III.

• Column 1, Academic Years: put in the three 2-year periods (starting with 2012-2014)
• Column 2, Outcomes:
  o Select some outcomes from your list on the previous page to address in each of the three 2-year periods
  o You can use subsets of outcomes or the total set each year
  o By the end of the 6-year cycle, all of your Goals should have been represented by the examination/assessment of at least one outcome connected to that goal
You do not need to assess every outcome in the 6-year cycle
Start with outcomes you are particularly interested in taking a look at
Accredited programs can use their most recent re-accreditation review as a guide to selecting outcomes worthy of attention
TIP: use the numbers (noting goal # and outcome #) from your Curriculum Plan to save space and time
TIP: to simplify the data collection activities each year, pick outcomes that can be linked to a few major sources of evidence/course experiences as shown in your Curriculum Map,

- **Column 3, Requirements:**
  - Your Curriculum Map answers the question for Column 3 (Requirements)
  - TIP: as discussed above, you may wish to start with requirements that tap into late-in-program sources of evidence in which that outcome is "Emphasized" (e.g. thesis/dissertation; practicum/internship supervisor ratings) or you may wish to start with the early preparation in which an outcome is Introduced.

- **Column 4, Assessment Evidence:**
  - Think about products/student work that can be examined to assess student competence for each learning outcome you select
  - TIP: often the student work can be used to examine multiple outcomes simultaneously (e.g. thesis/dissertation)
  - Ordinarily final grades in courses are not good evidence – unless the whole program faculty have agreed on key features of the syllabus and rubrics used to evaluate student work, so that the same standards are being applied across instructors and years, and the standards are ones endorsed by the program. (Remember, we are trying to determine whether the program is meeting its goals as defined by the faculty – not whether the student has met a particular instructor’s goals.)
  - TIP: Using a standardized final assignment in a course, allowing minor variations of content across instructors, and scoring with a standardized rubric, is one way to make this work
  - If you are using a thesis defense draft, or a thesis proposal, or an oral defense, as a source of evidence, you will need a rubric agreed upon by the program faculty. For example, the Methods and Results sections of a research thesis could provide excellent evidence for the achievement of research methodology learning objectives, with rubric categories for things like “clearly explains and justifies the research method employed,” “correctly uses the method,” “precisely, accurately, thoughtfully reports the results,” “demonstrates clear understanding of the meaning of the results and their limitations.” (That’s just an example – best to have the faculty determine the content of a rubric like this.)
  - TIP: The Research Proposal Rubric and Oral Defense Rubric provided by the Graduate School will be useful resources for programs that have a thesis requirement

- **Column 5: Assessment Method**
  - For each type of “assessment evidence” indicated in Column 4, list the means you have in mind for using that evidence. For example, for a course “final
assignment” you might have a “departmentally developed rubric.” For a thesis proposal or defense, a rubric would also be a likely means of quantifying faculty judgments of student success on relevant criteria.

- Other examples of assessment methods would include Supervisor Ratings on faculty-determined criteria, scores on standardized tests used by your field, checklists of competencies demonstrated.

| TABLE 1 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| **Examples of Goal Statements** | **Comments** | **Possible Revisions** |
| Students should be able to use appropriate formatting for business communications. | The outcome is fairly narrow. | Students should be able to demonstrate effective business communication skills. |
| Graduates should know how to think critically and should be able to exercise civic responsibility. | The statement seems to reflect two distinct goal areas. | Graduates should know how to think critically. Students should be able to exercise civic responsibility. |
| Students should be able to use the research methods appropriate to scholarship in the field | This broad statement can be elaborated with Outcome statements | None needed |

| TABLE 2 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| **Examples of Outcome (Competency) Statements** | **Comments** | **Possible Revision** |
| Students should be knowledgeable about history. | The outcome is too broad and will be difficult to assess. | Students will be able to use historical theories, terms, and examples to propose solutions to unresolved problems in the field. |
| Students should be able to communicate effectively in writing and in oral presentations. | The statement is describing two distinct outcomes which should be stated and assessed separately. | Students should be able to write effective papers, using the conventions of the field. Students should be able to deliver effective oral presentations. |
| Students should be able to use the concatenate function in Microsoft Excel 2003. | The outcome is too narrowly defined. This might be an outcome for a particular section of a course, but a program outcome should be more broadly stated. | Students should be able to use software tools effectively to manage business information. |
| Graduates are able to construct methodologically appropriate research to test well developed questions in the field | The outcome could be split to improve assessability | Graduates are able to select and competently employ research methods in the field. Graduates are able to conduct critically informed literature reviews to identify and explicate important unresolved questions in the field. |