THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Assessing Graduate Program Learning Outcomes: Building Evaluation Capacity in an Inhospitable Environment

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Rationale: Why Look Specifically at Graduate Program Assessment?

- Higher education accreditors hold us accountable for assessing learning in degree programs
- Focus has been on undergraduate degree programs
- Graduate programs are a little different in requirements and structure
- Graduate faculty may sometimes be less amenable

Have you done student learning outcomes assessment?

Have you trained others to do it?

Are you at a higher education institution with graduate programs?

About Us

- Mid-sized public research university:
  - 15,660; 2,306 Grad
- Guided by:
  - Regional accreditor (NEASC)
  - RI Office of Higher Education
- Assessment Office partnered with Grad School, 2009
- Undergraduate programs began in 2006
- Survey of chairs (2009, 2012): Value-added?

Barriers

- Faculty:
  - Extra work – no extra resources
  - Deemed irrelevant: Students get jobs; isn't that all that matters?
- Accredited Programs:
  - Already do this, and should not have to duplicate work
- Non-accredited Programs:
  - Symptom of the corporatization of the university! (meaningful learning can't be quantified)
  - Every student's "program" is unique!

What would you add to this list?

Responding to Barriers: One Guiding Principle

Build capacity

- We are a learning organization
- Start small and build
- Make work meaningful *and* manageable
- Teach to the task
- Respect the pros!

Institution Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy (2010)

- Learning Outcome Oversight Committee (LOOC)
- Every degree program, every two years
- Cohorts for graduate program assessment reporting:

  Pilot programs: later folded into Cohort I (n=7)

  Cohort I: Plans, May 2013
  Reports, May 2014 (n=13)

  Cohort II: Plans, May 2014
  Reports, May 2015 (n≈35)

Steps in Developmental Process

Started 2009 → First cohort reports 2014 = 6 years!

- **Piloted Grad Assessment Process**
  - Funded Pilot programs
  - Templates, feedback rubrics, informative materials, models
- **Two cohorts formed**
- **Mini-grant RFP** to develop Assessment **Plans**
  - Workshops/Peer Review/Feedback

More Steps in Our Developmental Process

- **Plans**
  - Workshops/Peer Review/Feedback
- **Reports**
  - Workshops/Peer Review/Feedback
- **Top-down Leadership**
  - Report at annual Graduate Faculty Summit since 2011

How many of you have used some of these strategies?

Which have paid off?

What do you wish you had known before you started?

Pilot Programs Paved the Way

- Seven programs recruited: "Pioneers"
- Funding and Workshops
- 1st Grad Assessment Plans: Nov 2011
  Reports: May 2012
- How Pilot programs helped:
  - Aligned language in forms
  - Refined workshops and materials
  - Developed models and anecdotal examples
  - Developed rubrics for evaluation

Mini-Grants Supported Planning

- **Cohort I** (Spring 2012):
  - 13 awarded: 37 faculty, 8 graduate students funded
- **Cohort II** (Spring 2013):
  - 25 awarded: 57 faculty, 8 graduate students funded
- **RFP and Prep Workshop**
- **Proposals Peer Reviewed**:
  - 6 reviewers, Graduate Council
  - 2 reviewers, LOOC

Workshops: Practical and Interactive

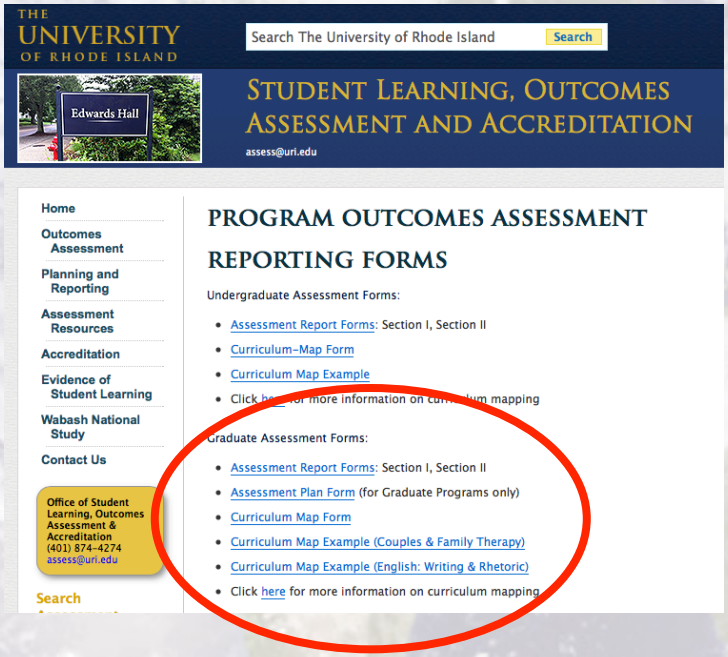
- **Teach to the task:** Linked training to the templates for Plans and Reports
- **Respect the pros!** Break-out discussions:
  - Collegial interaction makes all the difference
  - Peer norms (taking it seriously, learning from accredited programs)
  - Not in it alone
- **Start small:** Exemplars from the Pilot programs

Workshop Overview

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Mini-grant preparation	2	3	
Plan I: Goals & Outcomes		2	2
Plan II: Curriculum Mapping		2	2
Plan III: Evidence and Timeline		2	2
Report I: From Plan to Report			3
Report II: Analysis & Recommendations			2
College-specific		1	1

Workshops for Assessment Plans: Snapshot!

All this and much more online!



http://www.uri.edu/assessment

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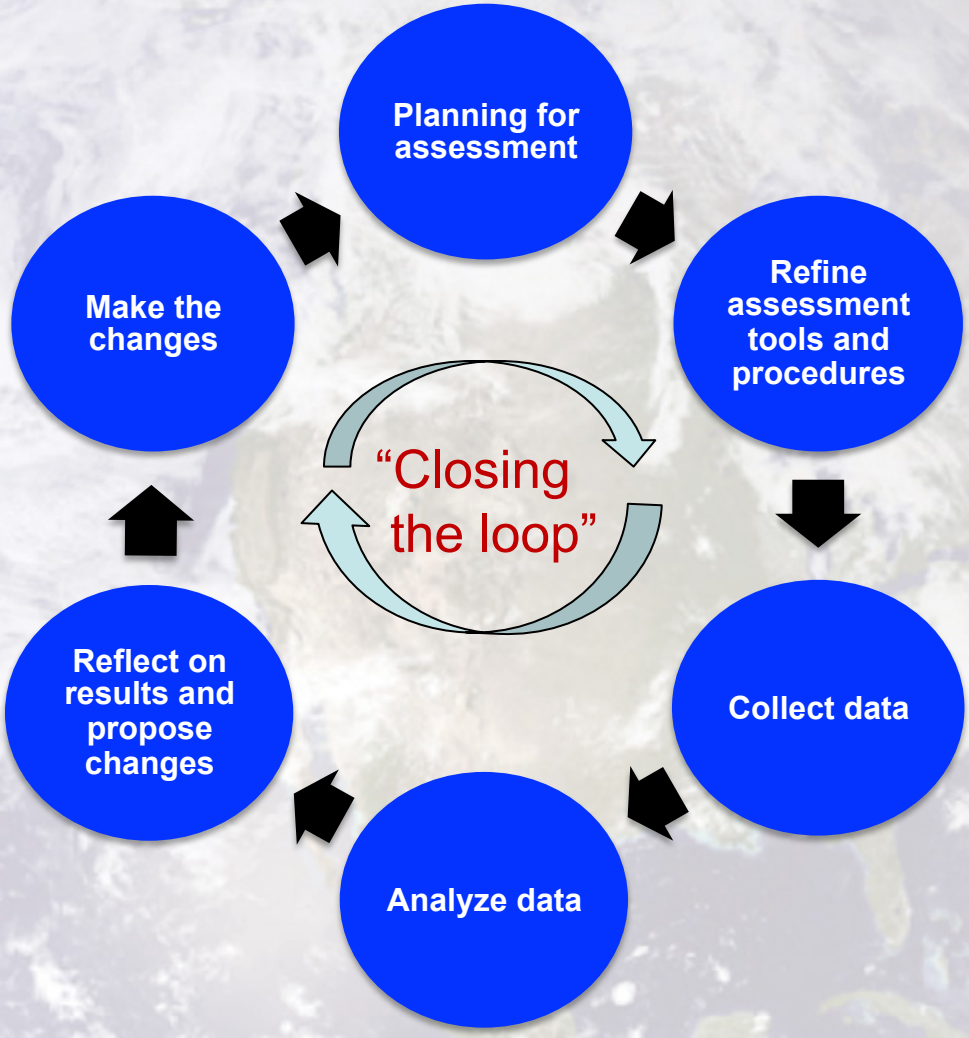
Assessment Cycle



Building an Assessment Plan

Drafting Outcomes

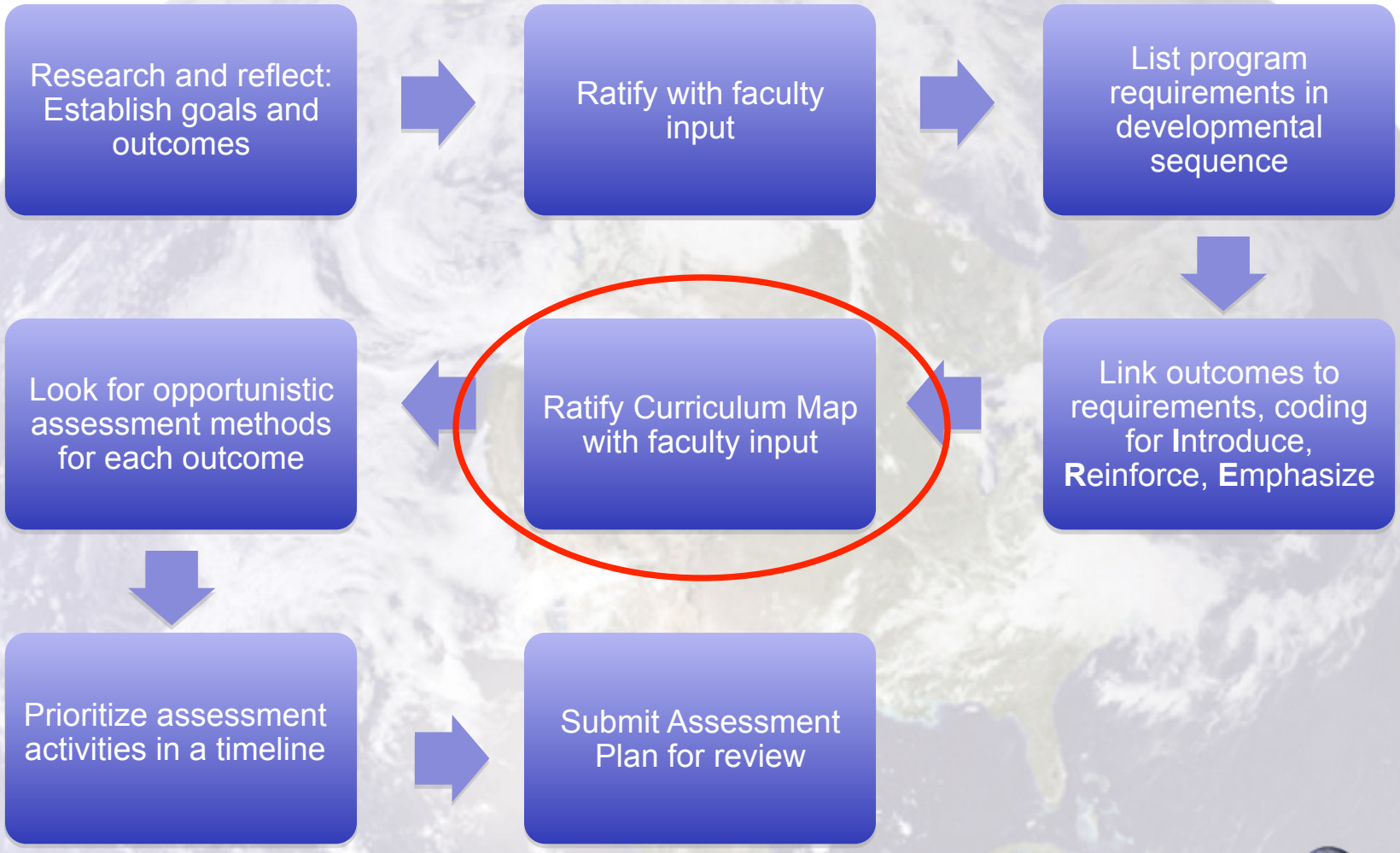
Exercise:

Which **outcome statements** look promising, and why?

(Group discussion: 3 min.)

1. Students should be knowledgeable about the field.
2. Graduates should be able to write technical reports that meet professional standards, and communicate effectively in oral presentations of those reports.
3. Students should get at least a B in required courses.
4. Graduates can demonstrate familiarity with rhetorical theories and histories from the classical period to the present.
5. Students should be able to use the concatenate function in Microsoft Excel 2003.

Building an Assessment Plan



Indicating I-R-E on a Curriculum Map: Couples & Family Therapy (CFT), MS

Map Key
I = Outcome Introduced
R = Outcome Reinforced
E = Outcome Emphasized

Course Numbers/Program Requirements:
In addition to specific courses, this can include internships, portfolios, and other requirements not associated with a course number, such as thesis/dissertation proposals, thesis/dissertation defenses, and comprehensive examinations.

Student Learning Outcomes (Competencies):		Core Theory					Specialty Theory					Clinical Practicum Sequence					Intern-Ship				
		HDF 563	HDF 570	HDF 578	HDF 564	HDF 501	HDF 505	HDF 536	HDF 559	HDF 566	HDF 569	a HDF 565	b	c	d	e	HDF 583	HDF 584	HDF 581 Research	Comp. Exams	Self Assessmt.
Goal #1 (Knowledge)	**1.1 Theory:** Evaluate CFT theories	I		I	I	I	R		R	R									E	E	
	1.2 Research: Apply current research related to clinical practice		I	I			I	R	R	R	I	I	R	R	R	R	R	R	E	E	
	1.3 (Theory) Articulate their own working theory of clinical practice						I		R	R			I	R	R	R			E	E	
Goal #2 (Clinical Skills)	**2.1 Identifies/explores interventions:** Monitor clinical outcomes using empirically derived data to make appropriate therapeutic adjustments											I	I	R	R	R	R	E			R
	2.2 Integrates/evaluates interventions: Implement a personal program to develop and maintain professional competence and effective practice							R				I	I	R	R	R	R	E			R

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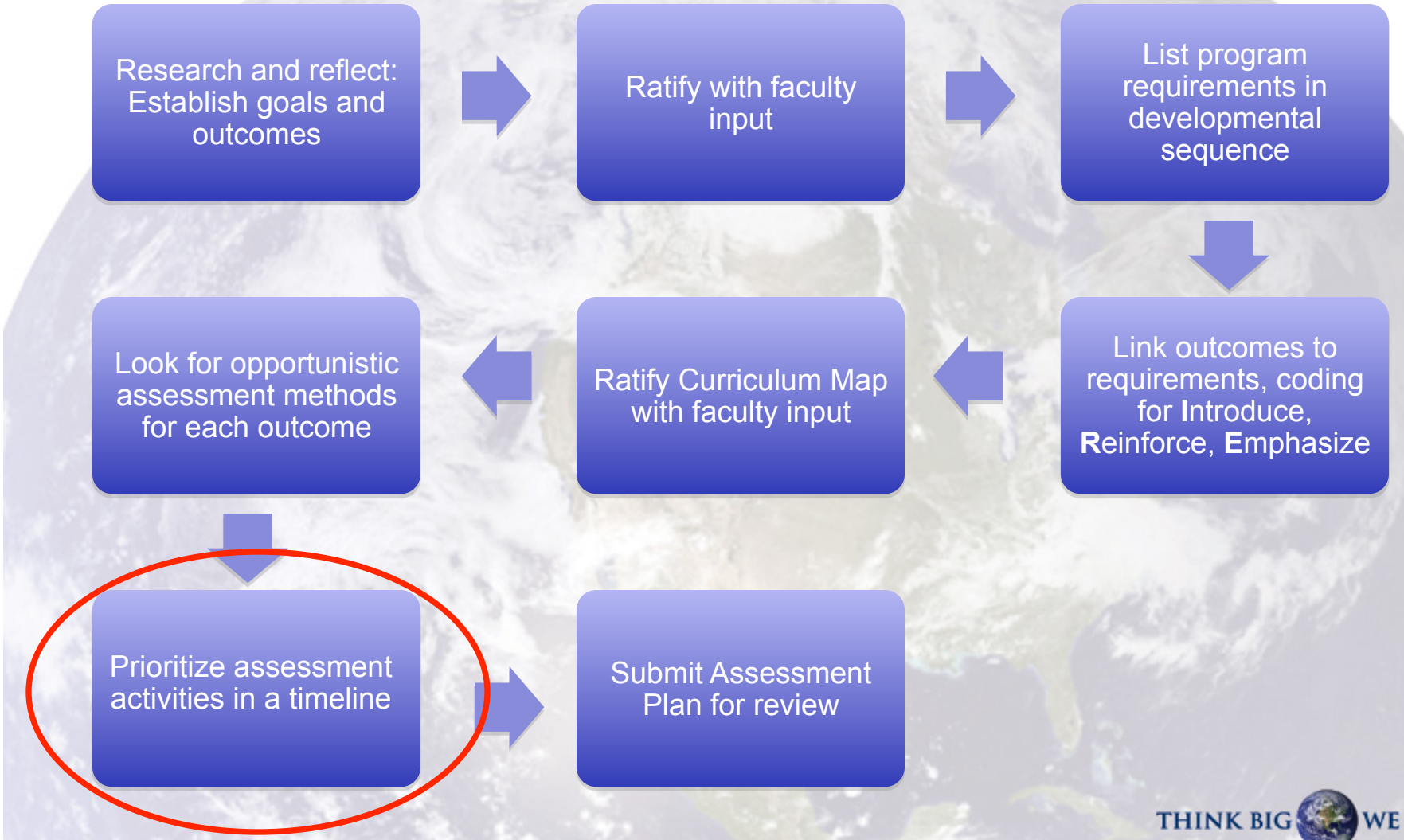
Building an Assessment Plan



Assessment Timeline: CFT

Academic Years	Outcome(s)	Course(s) and Other Program Requirements	Assessment Evidence (direct/indirect)	Assessment Method
	WHICH outcome(s) will you examine in each period (by number, i.e. 1.1 etc.)?	WHERE will you look for evidence of student learning (i.e., what course(s)/program requirements)? Designate for each outcome.	WHAT student work or other evidence will you examine in order to generate conclusions and recommendations? Designate for each requirement.	HOW will you look at the evidence; what means will you use to quantify the evidence? Designate for each source of evidence.
Assessment Period 1 2012-14	Outcomes 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	Practicum/internship HDF 565 a-e HDF 583, 584	Supervisor Practicum/Internship Evaluation rubric (at end of each semester)	Supervisor-scored rubric rating from novice to expert on 5 professional practice criteria
Assessment Period 2 2014-16	Outcome 1.2 Outcomes 2.1,	Student research project HDF 581 Practicum/internship HDF 565 a-e HDF 583, 584	Final grade evaluation of HDF 581 research project Supervisor Practicum/Internship Evaluation rubric (at end of each semester)	Instructor-scored rubric, designed by program faculty Supervisor-scored rubric rating from novice to expert on 5 professional practice criteria
Assessment Period 3 2016-18	Outcome 1.3 Outcomes 2.1	Comprehensive examination Practicum/internship HDF 565 a-e HDF 583, 584	Final grade on theory question, based on program-approved rubric Supervisor Practicum/Internship Evaluation rubric (at end of each semester)	Committee-scored rubric, designed by program faculty Supervisor-scored rubric rating from novice to expert on 5 professional practice criteria

CFT Assessment Timeline:
How to Look at Research Competence

Academic Years	Outcome(s)	Course(s) and Other Program Requirements	Assessment Evidence (direct/indirect)	Assessment Method
	WHICH outcome(s) will you examine in each period (by number, i.e. 1.1 etc.)?	WHERE will you look for evidence of student learning (i.e., what course(s)/program requirements)? Designate for each outcome.	WHAT student work or other evidence will you examine in order to generate conclusions and recommendations? Designate for each requirement.	HOW will you look at the evidence; what means will you use to quantify the evidence? Designate for each source of evidence.
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Feedback on the Plans: Using a Peer Review Process

- Faculty peers recruited from key committees
- Summer stipends
- Training to norm review process
- Detailed rubrics for feedback
- Review Process:
  - Complete rubrics individually
  - Meet to negotiate final feedback to program

Starting with Assessment Plans

	PILOT	COHORT I	COHORT II
Plans due	7	13	35
Plans submitted	7	9	25
Plans peer-reviewed	7	9	25
Plans approved	5	8	22
Reports due	7	22	Due 2015
Reports submitted	6	15	Due 2015

Feedback Rubrics: How Did the Plans Do?

Cohort I & II

	Ready to Implement	Minor Revisions	Resubmit
Accredited Programs	6	10	2
Non-Accredited Programs	3	16	4

Feedback for Plans
Detailed Rubric Results: Part I

Rubric Items	1	2	3	Mean
	Well Developed	Developing	Less Developed	
GOALS				
1a. Broad goals	28	12	1	**1.34**
1b. Limited in number	35	6	0	**1.15**
OUTCOMES				
2a. Outcomes linked to goals	35	5	1	**1.17**
2b. Each goal represented	37	3	1	**1.12**
2c. Observable/measurable	24	17	0	**1.41**
2d. Statements of what students will know or do	25	16	0	**1.39**
2e. Reasonable number	37	3	1	**1.12**

Detailed Rubric Results: Part II

Rubric Items	1	2	3	Mean
CURRICULUM MAP				
3a. Curriculum map lists requirements developmentally	25	16	0	**1.39**
3b. Outcomes appropriately linked	21	19	1	**1.51**
TIMELINE - 3-YEAR PLAN				
4a. Timeline reporting period 1 thoroughly presented	25	15	1	**1.41**
4b. Periods 2 & 3 are presented	26	14	1	**1.39**
4c. All goals represented at least once	40	0	1	**1.05**
4d. Requirements clearly stated & connected to outcomes	29	12	0	**1.29**
4e. Evidence stated for each outcome	32	8	1	**1.24**
4f. Takes advantage of existing indicators	32	5	1	**1.18**
4g. Evidence stated in enough detail	21	19	1	**1.51**
4h. Evidence feasible for collection	25	14	2	**1.44**
4i. Methods for quantifying are stated	15	17	2	**1.62**
4j. Methods appropriate for evidence	16	16	2	**1.59**

Where Do We Need More Work?

- **The five lowest-rated Plan rubric criteria:**
  - Outcomes are linked to appropriate requirements
  - Evidence feasible for collection
  - Evidence is stated in enough detail to guide assessment activities
  - Methods for quantifying are stated
  - Methods appropriate for the evidence
- **What can we do to improve these results?**

From Planning to Reporting

- Detailed report template
- Workshops to support report completion
- Peer review
- Rubric-based feedback to programs

Assessment Report Template

Outcome(s) Examined	Data/Evidence	Evaluation Process	Results & Reflection	Recommendations & Planning
Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed during *this* reporting period?	Other than grades, what data/evidence* were used to determine that students have achieved the stated outcome(s) for the degree? Provide: • type of artifact* • sample (include the number of students sampled, which semesters, number or type of course(s)/ section(s)/program requirements	What method(s) or process(es) were used to evaluate student work? Provide: • evaluation tool/instrument** • expected level of student achievement of the outcome • who applied the tool*** • who interpreted the results of the assessment process	What were the results of the analysis of the assessment data? Provide: • quantitative results, including a comparison of expected level of student achievement to actual level of student achievement • analysis of the results, including identification of patterns of weakness or strength • reflection and conclusions	Are there recommendations for change based on the results? If yes: Provide: • recommendation(s) for change(s) planned • timeline for program to implement the change(s) • timeline for program to assess the impact of the change(s)

Assessment Report Template: English, PhD

Outcome(s) Examined	Data/Evidence	Evaluation Process	Results & Reflection	Recommendations & Planning
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1.4: Graduates are able to use scholarship to define key terms in the field	Direct evidence: research papers written in seminars, F11, F12; n=30	Program-approved rubric plus holistic comments (see appendix A) 15 faculty in the program rated 2 papers each; evidence was combined and interpreted by program director; Expected=80% "average" or above	89.3% scored average or above; This exceeded the expected level of 80%; While students did well overall, more work can be done to assure conversance with key terms, particularly by increasing student engagement with existing scholarship in the field	Formal research paper will now be required in all graduate seminars (to be implemented F14, re-assessed AY 14-15, 15-16); Pedagogy: we will explore use of a required annotated bibliography with the research paper; Create an archive of "model" papers (implemented F14, reassessed AY 14-15, 15-16); Assessment: revise the rubric to better reflect expected level (for F13); make rubric available to all students (F13);

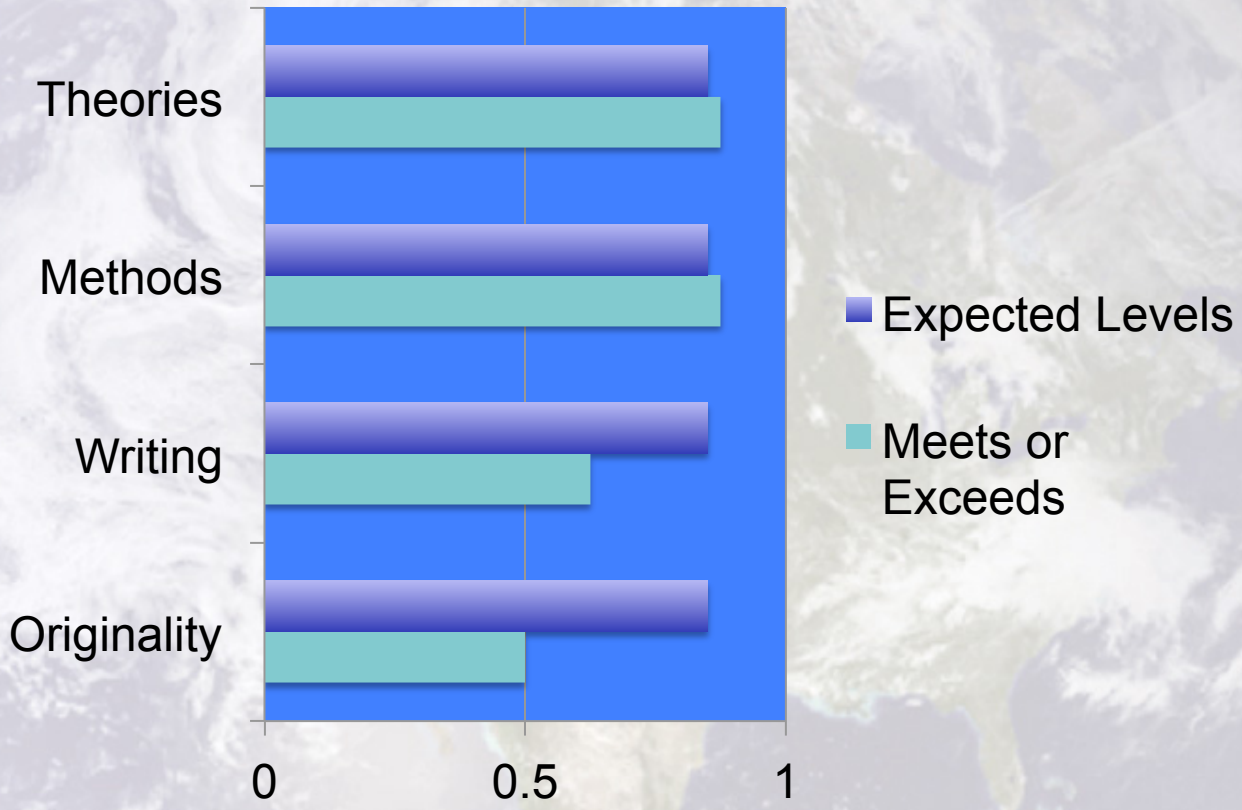
Thesis Proposal Rubric: Example of Scoring for Results

Criterion	Does not meet expectations = 1	Meets expectations = 2	Exceeds expectations = 3	Score
1. Mastery of theories and concepts in the field demonstrated in problem statement and literature review	☐ Arguments are sometimes incorrect, incoherent, or flawed ☐ Objectives are poorly defined ☐ Demonstrates limited critical thinking skills ☐ Reflects limited understanding of subject matter and associated literature ☐ Demonstrates limited understanding of theoretical concepts ☐ Documentation is weak ☐ Inadequate statement of hypotheses	☐ Arguments are coherent and reasonably clear ☐ Objectives are clear ☐ Demonstrates acceptable critical thinking skills ☐ Reflects understanding of subject matter and literature ☐ Demonstrates understanding of theoretical concepts ☐ Documentation is adequate ☐ Generates adequate hypotheses	☐ Arguments are superior ☐ Objectives are well defined ☐ Exhibits mature, refined critical thinking skills ☐ Reflects mastery of subject matter and associated literature. ☐ Demonstrates mastery of theoretical concepts ☐ Documentation is excellent ☐ Generates well-reasoned and well-supported hypotheses	
2. Mastery of methods of inquiry	☐ Design inappropriate to questions ☐ Confused or ineffective plan for analysis ☐ Lacks anticipation of regulatory compliance requirements	☐ Design reasonable for questions ☐ Plan for analysis reasonable, acknowledges some limitations ☐ Considers regulatory compliance	☐ Design, analysis plan, excellent ☐ Plan for analysis goes beyond the obvious, acknowledges limitations and critically considers alternatives ☐ Demonstrates regulatory compliance	
3. Quality of writing	☐ Writing is weak ☐ Numerous grammatical and spelling errors apparent ☐ Organization is poor ☐ Style is not appropriate to discipline	☐ Writing is adequate ☐ Some grammatical and spelling errors apparent ☐ Organization is logical ☐ Style is appropriate to discipline	☐ Writing is publication quality ☐ No grammatical or spelling errors apparent ☐ Organization is excellent ☐ Style is exemplary	
4. Originality and potential for contribution to discipline	☐ Limited potential for discovery ☐ Limited extension of previous published work in the field ☐ Limited theoretical or applied significance ☐ Limited publication potential	☐ Some potential for discovery ☐ Builds upon previous work ☐ Reasonable theoretical or applied significance ☐ Reasonable publication potential	☐ Exceptional potential for discovery ☐ Greatly extends previous work ☐ Exceptional theoretical or applied significance ☐ Exceptional publication potential	

Table for Comparison: Expected to Actual Levels of Achievement

Sample size N=8	B Meets	A Exceeds	A + B	Expected	Expectations met?
Criterion #1 Mastery of theories/ concepts	3 37.5%	4 50.0%	7/8= 87.5%	85%	yes
Criterion #2 Mastery of methods of inquiry	4	3	87.5%	85%	yes
Criterion #3 Quality of writing	2	3	62.5%	85%	no
Criterion #4 Originality and potential for contribution	2	2	50.0%	85%	no

Graphing Results for Performance



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Recommendations for Change

- **Pedagogy**:
  - Include research papers in all grad seminars
  - Require annotated bibliography
  - Create archive of model papers
  - Make rubric available for students in advance
- **Assessment process:**
  - Revise rubric for assessing student work

Engage Colleagues: Maintain a Timeline

- **Consider the timing** for meetings with colleagues (and students) to get the Report in by May
- **Where are you now?**
  - Designating the artifacts and designing the tool
  - Choosing the sample
  - Collecting the artifacts
  - Applying the evaluation tool (rating instrument, rubric)
  - Scoring and aggregating results
  - Reviewing and reflecting
  - Recommending and planning

Directions from Here?
Continue to Build Capacity!

What's most useful and feasible for you?

What's likely to get in the way
at your institution?

What can help?


Thank you for joining us!