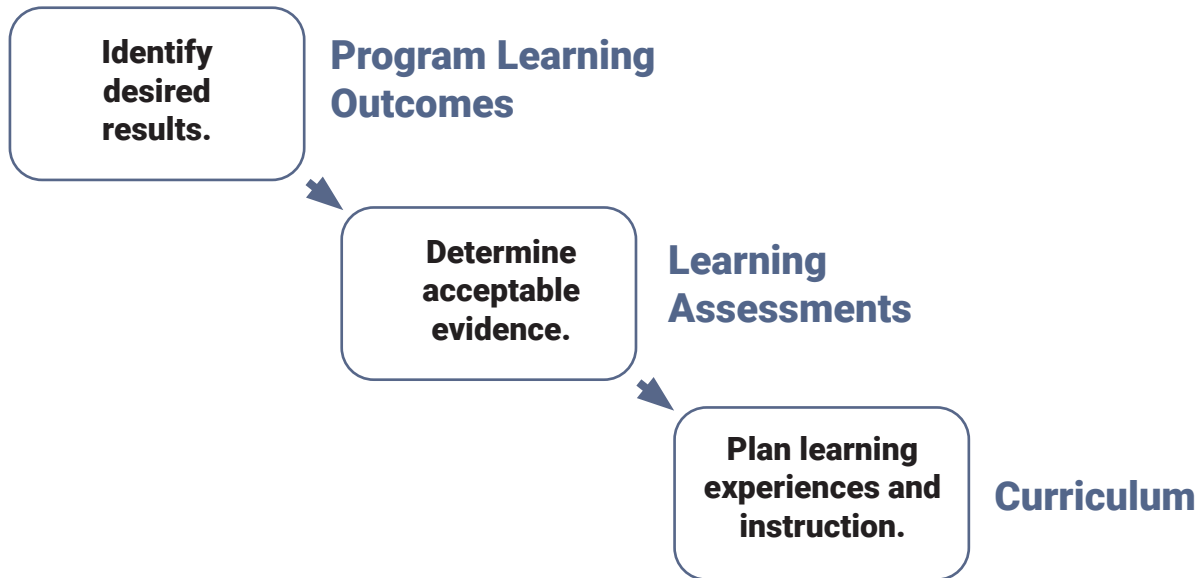


CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT

What is curricular alignment?

Curricular alignment is the process of aligning a program's curriculum with its goals. It is a part of a high-level backwards design approach to the design of an entire curriculum. In backwards design, one starts by defining the learning goals (in this case, the program level learning outcomes, PLOs). Those goals then drive the design of assessments and of the educational intervention (in this case, the curriculum itself).

Stages of backwards design of the curriculum:



What is a curriculum map?

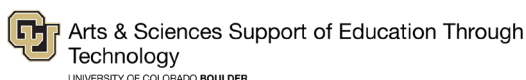
A key document created in this process is a *curriculum map*, a spreadsheet or matrix identifying which courses are responsible for addressing, and assessing, specific PLOs. A curriculum map allows for a better understanding of the curriculum, and more deliberate design of that curriculum to achieve the desired outcomes, by identifying strengths, gaps, and redundancies.

What are the steps to aligning a curriculum?

On the back are the steps required to actually map out and align the curriculum. While this could be done solo, this is not likely to result in actual curricular changes, so we also show where departmental engagement is likely important. Ideally, the mapping process should be done as part of a faculty group with an external facilitator. We leave it to the reader to determine how these steps might look for their particular structure.

- Initial exploration and scope
- Write program-level learning outcomes (PLOs)
- Map current curricula to PLOs
- Develop an assessment plan
- Use the map and program assessment data
- Re-evaluate and adjust

More information and resources can be found at: <http://bit.ly/curriculumalignment>



CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT FLOW CHART

ALIGN THE CURRICULUM

ENGAGE THE DEPARTMENT

Initial exploration and scope

Become familiar with the process and some examples (see link for resources).

Identify the problem. What are you trying to do, why, and what would success look like?

Determine scope:
Will you align 1 course? 2-4 courses? The full curriculum?

Introductory presentations and discussions with faculty.

Commitment from chair with support for team.

Write program level learning outcomes (PLOs)

Collect data (see link).

Establish a vision of success for students in your program by doing the Ideal Student exercise and creating a values statement (see link).

Write PLOs, preferably in a facilitated group (see link).

Ask for support in gathering data, especially institutional or program data.

Do a goal-writing activity with faculty.

Share PLOs with faculty and students, advisors to get input and engagement.

Seek consensus on PLOs by a faculty vote.

Map current curricula to PLOs

Choose the best format for your curriculum map (e.g., what are the rows and columns?). (See link).

Draft the map (using data gathered at the right) by filling in which courses fulfill which learning goals, and at what level (e.g., introductory, intermediate, capstone).

Solicit feedback and finalize the map, revising PLOs if needed.

Collect artifacts (syllabi and/or learning goals) from target courses.

Survey or interview faculty who teach target courses and adjacent courses about their goals for these courses.

Seek consensus on map with faculty discussion and vote.

Develop an assessment plan

Develop a plan which identifies how to assess student achievement of these skills at a formative and capstone level (see link).

Seek consensus on plan with faculty discussion and vote (see link).

Use the map and program assessment data

Implement the assessment plan to gather program level learning assessments.

Analyze strengths, gaps, and redundancies in curriculum.

Make decisions about changes to address program weaknesses.

Revise the map to reflect the new curriculum.

Seek consensus on plan with faculty discussion and vote. This will likely require a faculty retreat or long-term strategic planning.

Seek resources to support curricular redesign (instructional design assistance, space, faculty incentives and rewards).

Re-evaluate and adjust

Re-evaluate the curriculum and map regularly, based on relevant data (see link).

Create structures to re-evaluate curriculum on a regular basis.