

Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

Donna Woolcott, Executive Director

**Mapping New Territories: Graduate Program
Outcomes and Career Paths**

April 12, 2013

Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools
New Brunswick, NJ

Outline of Presentation

- Overview of quality assurance of graduate programs in Ontario
- Key elements of the new Quality Assurance Framework
- Degree Level Expectations (DLEs) and Learning Outcomes (LOs) for Graduate programs
- Assessing learning outcomes
- Resources
- Questions/discussion

International Context

- Quality assurance in Ontario universities operates at the level of excellence consistent with western Europe, United Kingdom, United States, and Australia
- Like other global leaders in quality assurance, Ontario universities are shifting their focus to learning outcomes
- Ontario's Degree Level Expectations cover each degree level and universities have learning outcomes for individual courses and programs

LOs and DLEs - 1

- LOs and DLEs are at the heart of the Quality Assurance Framework
- Are the foundation of a culture of continuous quality improvement at Ontario universities
- Help faculty members design new programs and assess existing programs
- Make it easier for students to move between educational institutions in Canada and around the world

LOs and DLEs - 2

- Learning outcomes
 - What a student should know / be able to do by end of an assignment, activity, class, course, or program
- Degree Level Expectations
 - Represent the threshold level for skills and knowledge Ontario students must demonstrate in order to successfully complete their programs
 - Help ensure consistency across institutions
 - Set a threshold for assessing quality

Introduction of Degree Level Expectations and Learning Outcomes

Undergraduate

Political Science

Autonomy and Professional Capacity

Moral Maturity

An ethical practitioner who values diversity of opinion and perspective

Will utilize Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms in determining resolution to case studies.

Nursing

Autonomy and Professional Capacity

Moral Maturity

A graduate of BScN program practices in compliance with the College of Nurses of Ontario Ethics Practice Standard.

Will demonstrate respect for life in clinical practicum course by following the behavioural directives defined in the Ethics Practice Standard.

Graduate

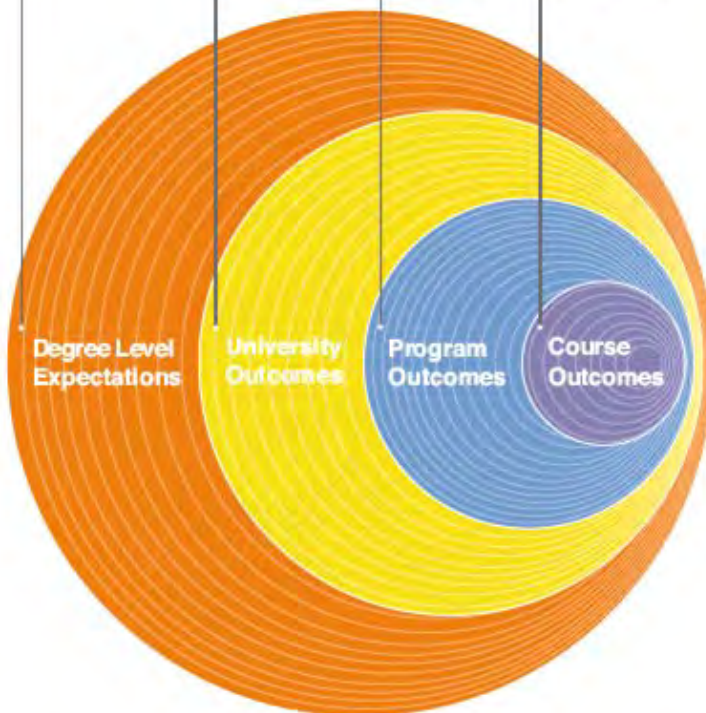
PhD program in any field

Research and scholarship

Ability to produce original research

Publication of a research paper in a peer-reviewed scholarly/professional journal

Assess strengths and weaknesses of various research methodologies to test hypotheses.



Barriers to identifying and assessing LOs: real or perceived?

- Some faculty in graduate programs are resistant to defining LOs
 - Academic freedom
 - Don't see a problem to be "fixed" by creating/assessing LOs
 - Too difficult to pin down measureable outcomes at program level when they work one on one with graduate students

On the other hand....

- Some faculty have embraced the concept and many report that they feel much better about what they are trying to do in their program as a result of the effort to clearly define program outcomes
- Program redundancies have been removed and opportunities have been created for new program elements to be added
- Student involvement and feedback add to the benefit

Reality under the Quality Assurance Framework

- It is now required that all new programs in Ontario have defined Learning Outcomes in order to be approved by the Quality Council
- All existing graduate programs must identify learning outcomes and report on their assessment at each cyclical program review
- Each university is audited every 8 years to examine if its quality assurance practices are in conformity with the ratified policy

How is it working?

- With experience, programs are getting better at identifying learning outcomes and mapping them to Degree Level Expectations (through the process of getting approval for new graduate programs)
- Universities that offer support to programs that are developing or reviewing graduate programs in this area are making good progress

Support for developing LOs can come in many ways...

- Facilitated discussion with graduate faculty members to assist them to articulate what they actually already know
- Dedicated instructional designers and faculty mentors assisting programs in the process
- Templates to assist programs as they develop LOs and map them to DLEs
- Exemplars from other programs

New Programs:



All New Programs

- Must be based on degree level expectations appropriate to degree (undergraduate, graduate)
- Identify learning outcomes and how their achievement will be assessed

Mapping Learning Outcomes to GDLEs

DLEs	Learning Outcomes	How the Program Design & Requirement Elements Support the Attainment of Student Learning Outcomes	Learning Outcome: Method of Assessment
1. Depth & Breadth of Knowledge	<p>Depth and breadth of knowledge is defined in (program name) as a thorough and up-to-date understanding of ...</p> <p>This is reflected in students who are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Apply such knowledge to a synthesized account of how... •Address current issues... 	<p>The program design and requirement elements that ensure these student outcomes for depth and breadth of knowledge are:</p> <p>The student's final degree requirement, the doctoral thesis, will entail...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display expertise in at least one area of ... • Critically assess a problem that is complex and has conflicting objectives • Adjust communications to address different audiences • Identify key debates that result from conflicting stakeholder views
2. Research & Scholarship	<p>Research and scholarship is defined in (program name)...</p>	<p>The program design...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualize, design, implement strategies to... • Make informed judgements on complex issues in the context of ... • Communicate those strategies and judgements
3. Level of Application of Knowledge	<p>Research and scholarship is defined in (program name)...</p>	<p>The program design...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess a complex problem from the viewpoints of stakeholders

Assessment methods may include

- Demonstration of knowledge, skills through traditional means: papers, examinations, clinical practice; presentations
- Demonstration of independence in creating knowledge, products---- patents, etc.
- Portfolios
- Published papers other scholarly products
etc, etc.

Mapping Learning Outcomes to DLEs - 2

	Depth of Knowledge	Research & Scholarship	Level of Application of Knowledge	Professional Capacity / Autonomy	Level of Communication Skills	Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
Learning Outcome 1	√	√	√	√		
Learning Outcome 2 a)	√		√		√	√
Learning Outcome 2 b)	√		√		√	
Learning Outcome 3 a)				√	√	
Learning Outcome 3 b)			√	√	√	√
Learning Outcome 3 c)	√		√	√	√	√
Learning Outcome 4 a)				√	√	
Learning Outcome 4 b)		√	√	√		
Learning Outcome 4 c)	√		√	√		

Mapping Learning Outcomes to DLEs - 3

1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge.

Depth and breadth of knowledge is defined in XX Program as: a knowledge of the history of the development of, and contemporary approaches to, This is reflected in students who are able to:

- display expertise in ...;
- critically review existing research literatures to identify key areas for research;
- etc.

2. Research and Scholarship

Research and Scholarship is defined in XX Program as: the ability to conceptualize, design, and implement research for ... This is reflected in students who are able to:

- review relevant literatures;
- identify original research questions and appropriate methodologies/analytics for addressing these questions;
- Write papers for publication in refereed venues, etc.

Evaluation Criteria: New Programs

Program content

- a) Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b) Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.
- c) For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.
- d) Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses.

Evaluation Criteria: New Programs (Continued)

Assessment of teaching and learning

- a) Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.
- b) Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the institution's statement of its Degree Level Expectations.

Evaluation Criteria: New Programs (Continued)

Resources for all programs

- a) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.
- b) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program.
- c) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

Evaluation Criteria: New Programs (Continued)

Resources for graduate programs only

- a) Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation and foster an appropriate intellectual climate.
- b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.
- c) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

LOs and Existing Programs

- External arms-length reviewers are asked to review existing programs using similar evaluation criteria to those used at new program introduction
- Appropriateness of LOs for the graduate program is evaluated
- Evidence of student achievement of LOs is examined

How are we doing in assessment?

- Quality Council does not get direct involvement in cyclical program reviews- hears informally that there is still plenty to do in this area of program review
- Some external reviewers are not knowledgeable yet about LOs and don't do a very comprehensive report on this aspect of reviews
- Audits of universities indicate that universities are not yet fully in compliance with their policies as required in this area

Mapping to Careers

- Graduate Programs in many fields have a great track record in documenting outcomes for graduates in terms of employment or further study
- Would be good to see more program planning that is based on the reality of where graduates go; why not have learning outcomes that map to the ultimate careers of graduates?
- “Cloning” faculty not likely the most effective approach

Summary: Quality Assurance for Ontario Universities

- Processes designed to encourage high standards, quality and innovation while being efficient
- Processes support the creation of a “culture of quality” in the universities
- Learning outcomes are front and centre at all degree levels, programs and courses; patience and persistence is required
- New system is more transparent and facilitates accountability to key stakeholders: students, their parents, university community, governments

Developing Learning Outcomes: Some Suggested Resources

- McMaster University, Ontario's Degree Level Expectations (<http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/>)
- Carleton University, Moving Towards an Outcomes-based Curriculum (<http://www1.carleton.ca/oqa/documents-and-links/>)
- COU, Ensuring the Value of University Degrees in Ontario (<http://www.cou.on.ca/issues-resources/student-resources/publications/reports.aspx>)

Developing Learning Outcomes: Some Suggested Resources (continued)

- University of Toronto, Developing Learning Outcomes: A Guide for Faculty (http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/topics/course_design/learning-outcomes.htm)
- University of Guelph, Course progression maps (<http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/id/currdev/maps/index.cfm>)

Developing Learning Outcomes: Some Suggested Resources (continued)

- Ryerson University, Curriculum Development
(<http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/programs/curriculum/curriculumdevelopment/#Analyze>)
(www.ryerson.ca/curriculumquality)
- Ryerson University, Mapping Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations
(<http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/programs/curriculum/degreelevelexpectations/index.html>)

Developing Learning Outcomes: Some Suggested Resources (continued)

- University of Waterloo, Curriculum Mapping Template (http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/OCAV/index.html)
- Presentations from 2012 Learning Outcomes Symposium:
<http://www.cou.on.ca/news/news---views/cou-news-and-events/quality-council-symposium-on-learning-outcomes>

Understanding Learning Outcomes: A Resource

- A Guide to Developing and Assessing Learning Outcomes at the University of Guelph (<http://www.vpacademic.uoguelph.ca/avpa/>)

Learning Outcomes Assessment, Practically Speaking

- April 22 – 23, 2013, Delta Chelsea Hotel, Toronto
- Interactive workshop sessions designed to share tools, tips and techniques that are being utilized across the province to assess learning outcomes
- More broadly, there will be multiple opportunities for delegates to share with one another your experiences in this important area of work
- Open for registration (<https://event-wizard.com/LOAPS2013/0/register/>)

For More Information:

Dr. Donna Woolcott

Executive Director Quality Assurance

dwoolcott@cou.on.ca

<http://www.cou.on.ca/related-sites/the-ontario-universities-council-on-quality-assura.aspx>

Questions? Discussion