Decoupling and Recoupling: The Important Distinctions Between Program Assessment and Course Assessment

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Learning Outcomes

- Differentiate program assessment from course assessment
- Distinguish program formative assessment from course formative assessment
- Identify methods to conduct program assessment using existing course assignments
- Revise an existing course rubric to program assessment rubric
Agenda

- Introduction
  - About York
  - Purpose and Challenge
- Decouple/Recouple
  - Course and Program Level Assessment
- Case Example: English
- Case Example: Biology
- Summary
- Activity
- Q&A
About York

- Jamaica, Queens, New York City
- 8,258 students (5,066 FT, 3,192 PT)
- 32% FT Faculty
- 19:1 Student to Faculty ratio
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)-Spring 2018
Purpose

Improve Student Learning

Academic Program Review

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Middle States
Decouple/ Recouple
Challenge

- Distinction between program assessment and course assessment
  - Course assignments used were not designed for program level assessment.
  - Not all the criteria on a course grading rubric is relevant to program level student learning outcomes (SLOs).
Decoupling

- A holistic grade vs. performance on specific knowledge or skills
- A course summative assignment to assess course objectives vs. relevant contents in a summative (or course formative) assignments to assess program goals
- A course level interpretation of the data vs. a program level interpretation
Recoupling

- Align course objectives with program goals
- Extract relevant sections from course formative/summative assignments
- Revise course grading rubrics to fit the program goal/SLOs.
- Link the interpretation of the data at the program level back to the course contents, curriculum, pedagogy, etc.
Case Example: English
English Department-1\textsuperscript{st} Phase

- Department has 2 programs—English and Journalism Majors
- Went through our APR in AY ‘15-16
- Developed a rubric based on one of the English Major goals as a pilot for assessing the program.
English Department—1st Phase (continued)

- **English Major Rubric**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>1=Pre-Major</th>
<th>2=Foundation</th>
<th>3=Gateway</th>
<th>4=Capstone</th>
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<td>Responds to text in experiential manner, and/or interprets without use of critical terms</td>
<td>Displays a working knowledge of basic terms and concepts used in the analysis of a variety of literary genres.</td>
<td>Recognizes and defines various critical and/or theoretical lenses and applies them to specific works to explore how their meaning shifts from these different perspectives.</td>
<td>Writes confidently, at a ready-for-graduate-school level, addressing complex issues in the language of the chosen field of study.</td>
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English Department—2nd Phase

- The goal to assess: explore a variety of classic and contemporary literature
- Three student learning outcomes (SLOs) are identified to measure the goal.
- A rubric is revised for the purpose
Case Example: Biology
Biology: Assessment mechanism

Use existing course assessments to evaluate students' mastery of program learning objectives.
Use of existing assessments

Advantages:

1. With large, multi-section courses, it is easier to coordinate.
2. Minimizes disruption of established routines.
3. Takes advantage of overlap between course and program objectives.
Use of existing assessments

Disadvantages:

1. Course objectives do not completely overlap with program objectives.
2. Assessments may be designed to measure similar, but not identical, outcomes.
Recall: program learning outcomes must be designed to be measurable.
1. Students understand of the basic principles governing biological organisms and communities.

   a. Students will acquire fundamental knowledge of principles governing biological systems.

   b. Students will be able to analyze information about biological systems and use it to predict the outcome of a manipulation of a system.

   c. Students will be able to use data regarding a biological model to evaluate the plausibility of the model.
The final exam in Bio201 is multiple choice; each question tests skills that are described as:

- Knowledge/Comprehension
- Application/Analysis
- Evaluation/Synthesis

How do we relate these to the program’s learning outcomes?
Relating the final exam questions to the program’s learning outcomes

Knowledge/Comprehension

⇒ Students will acquire fundamental knowledge of principles governing biological systems.

Application/Analysis

⇒ Students will be able to analyze information about biological systems and use it to predict the outcome of a manipulation of a system.

Synthesis/Evaluation

⇒ Students will be able to use data regarding a biological model to evaluate the plausibility of the model.
Study design

- We inserted 3 questions, one of each level of Bloom’s taxonomy.

- All 3 were on the same topic (natural selection).
Expectations

We expect students to do better on questions that were categorized as lower levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.
Results: 2017 Spring Biological Principles I Final

* *p=0.01-0.02, 4 sections, n=125

Correct (%)

- Comprehension
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- All

Question type
Possible actions based on outcomes

• Program learning outcome: Students will be able to analyze information about biological systems and use it to predict the outcome of a manipulation of a system.

➢ Remediation: Students need more opportunities to practice identifying important information while reading.
Possible actions based on outcomes

- Program learning outcome: Students will acquire fundamental knowledge of principles governing biological systems.

  Remediation: Natural selection should be discussed more extensively, and can be revisited over the course of the semester by using it to frame more of the subjects covered.
Goals for the immediate future

Tweak existing assessments to extract more relevant information by writing questions that test our learning outcomes more explicitly.
Summary: Decouple/Recouple
Summary

- Importance of differentiating course and program assessment
- Importance of connecting course and program assessment
  - Embed program assessment in course assignments through proper alignment of course objectives with program goals and learning outcomes
Program Goal A

Course 200 Summative Assignment (relevant questions only)
English: Program Formative Assessment

Program Goal A

Course 200 Assignment

Course 300 Assignment

Course 400 Assignment
Future Plan: Recoupling

- Design/revise course formative/summative assignments to
  1. Make them directly aligned with each designated program goal/SLOs
  2. Make them ready to use for assessing program goals/SLOs
- Build the program assessment into the routine practice for faculty
THANK YOU!