



Curriculum Map Toolkit

A portable guide to helping
colleagues learn curriculum maps, a
key component of program
assessment

Cathy Barrette, WSU Director of Assessment



Preparation



Check that programs have program-level learning outcomes

LOs are an essential element of a curriculum map




Download the [curriculum map template](#) if the program doesn't have a curriculum map yet



For programs that do have a map already, review it to identify strengths and areas for improvement

Curriculum Map (CM) Definition

A CM answers the question “How does each course or other learning opportunity contribute to students’ progress toward our program’s learning outcomes?”



A good curriculum map is a table or graphic that communicates how students’ learning is intentionally developed across a program’s courses (and other learning opportunities) for each learning outcome

Uses for a Curriculum Map

Students can:

- See how each course/learning opportunity fits into the “big picture” of the program
- Better understand why they should take particular courses, or take them in a particular order

Faculty and staff can:

- Advise students more effectively about which classes to take when to support all learning outcomes and individual students’ needs and interests.
- Identify the interrelationships among courses, which can guide colleagues’ collaboration, problem solving, and curriculum revision
- Identify strategic places to assess student learning based on the questions faculty and staff have about student learning, such as baselines, progress, challenges, and ultimate achievement

Good Example: MA in Sociology (Excerpt)

All learning outcomes included

Course	LO 1: Sociological Theory	LO 2: Research Methods	LO 3: Data Analysis	LO 4: Writing
SOC 6050	B			B
SOC 6060	B			B
SOC 7200		B	B	D
SOC 6280			D	D
SOC 7030	D	D	D	D
Essay/Thesis	M	M	M	M

Courses plus another key learning opportunity

Key: B = Beginning; D = Developing knowledge; M = Mastery of knowledge


Developmental levels used, not just presence/absence

All developmental levels used in every LO

Diagnostic Discussion Questions for CMs

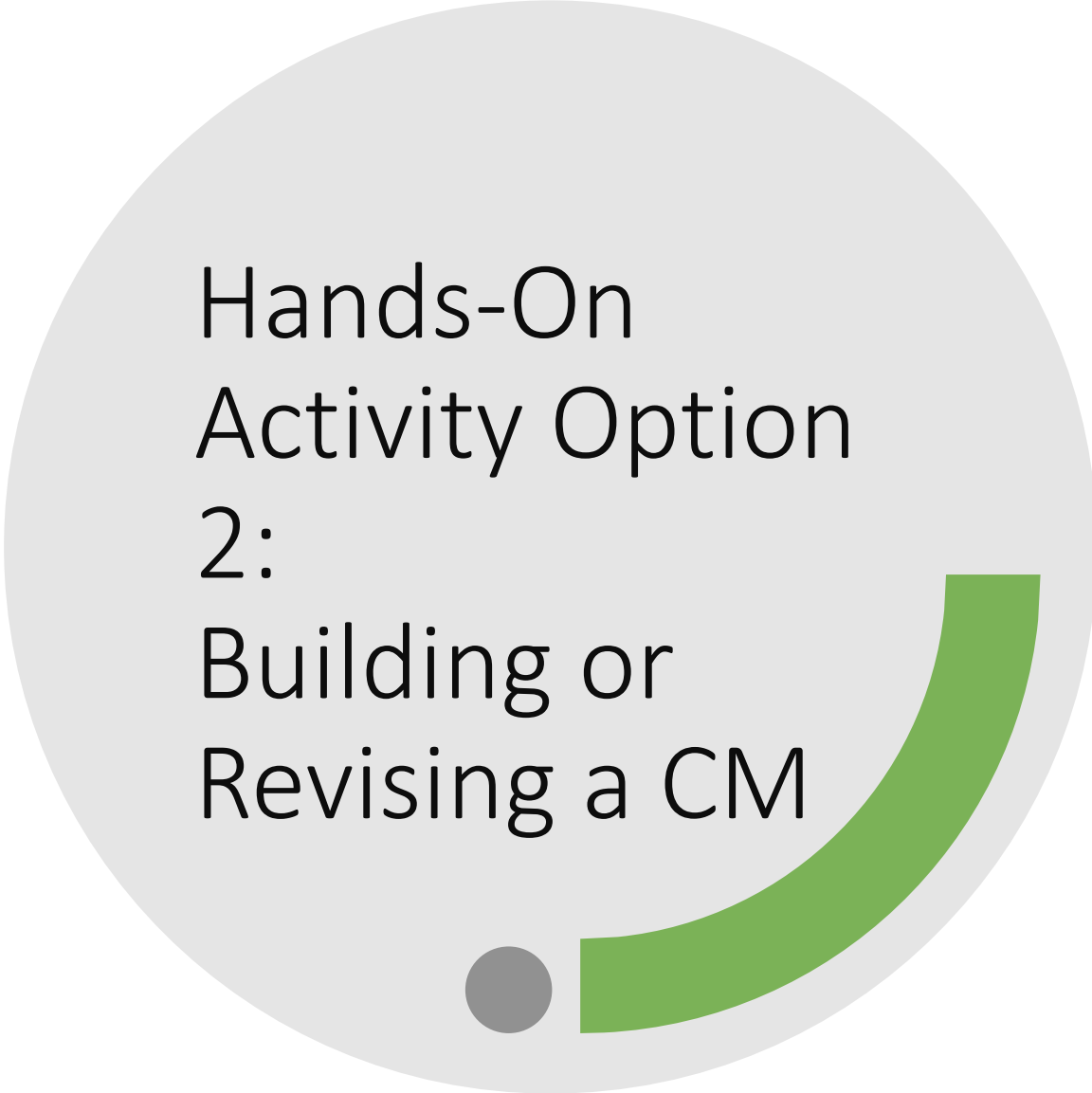
- Is the curriculum map up to date? Does it reflect reality, or is it aspirational?
- Do all courses/learning opportunities contribute to at least one program learning outcome?
- Do courses/learning opportunities deliberately build on each other to help students grow in their understanding or skills for each program learning outcome?
- Is the balance of introductory, developing, and mastery experiences appropriate **within** each learning outcome?
 - For example, some outcomes may require more developmental experiences than others.
- Is there a reasonable balance of experiences **across** learning outcomes? For example, do more difficult outcomes include more learning opportunities?

- Curriculum maps help identify logical places for assessment. Based on your map, in which courses or learning opportunities would you consider collecting assessment data for the following questions?
 - Are our graduating students well prepared for common careers or for continuing their education?
 - Why are students still struggling with [learning outcome 2] at the end of their program?
 - Why do so many students struggle to pass our mid-level required course(s)?
 - There's a new development in your field that needs to be incorporated in the curriculum and learning outcomes. How can the program "save time" in existing course/learning opportunities to fit the new development in without increasing credit hours for graduation?
- What are the actual questions in your program? What information in the curriculum map can help you answer them?



Hands-On Activity Option 1: CM for Assessment

- Whether you're working on curricular revisions or identifying logical points for assessment, having an accurate curriculum map is useful.
- To begin building or revising your curriculum map, start by adding all courses/learning opportunities to the [curriculum map template](#) and sharing the file with relevant colleagues. Then try one of these strategies:
 - For the PLOs they teach, ask colleagues to identify the developmental level for their courses on the curriculum ap.
 - Collect syllabi for all courses. Organize a committee to review the syllabi to align each course with relevant learning outcomes and identify a developmental level for each.
- Once complete, organize small groups around each learning outcome to discuss how to deliberately and coherently build students' learning from one developmental level to the next and where to assess that learning.



Hands-On Activity Option 2: Building or Revising a CM