

Michigan State University - MURP Learning Outcomes

The URP program faculty view education from a constructivist perspective (Erwin, 1991), which assists students in learning how to obtain knowledge, in building upon student's existing knowledge, and in advancing students systematically with each course towards becoming a well-rounded planning scholar and practitioner according to the PAB criteria. As a planning program, the faculty take responsibility to know if, what, and how well students have learned taught material in a value-added way. As a learning-oriented faculty, we have implemented a student assessment rubric. Over the past three years (2014-2017), we have evaluated each student individually through formative assessment based on PAB required knowledge, skills and values annually (at the end of each spring semester). We also complete an entry (within the first three months of starting our program) and exit diagnostic (in our practicum) for a summative assessment. We initialized our student assessment during three planning sessions in spring 2014, during which faculty members worked together to create an assessment tool for the courses and the URP program. During fall 2017 and spring 2018, we modified our student assessment tool given the new PAB-criteria that now contain: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, COMPETENCIES, AND HABITS OF MIND. The new evaluation rubric came into effect in spring 2018. The program faculty defines assessment according to Dary Erwin (1991), "as the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. More specifically, assessment is the process of defining (1), selecting (2), designing (3), collecting (4), analyzing (5), interpreting (6), and using (7) information to increase students' learning and development."

1) Defining We followed Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) to update our learning goals (last revision to learning goals in 2014) for the undergraduate and graduate curriculum during our strategic planning meetings in 2017/2018. Our learning objectives now cover knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind, while we evaluate them through five competencies. We strive to educate our students graduating from our program as:

- Policy-oriented learners
- Knowledgeable planning practitioners
- Skillful professionals
- Innovative thinkers
- Ethically-driven team leaders

Our competencies reflect our MSU motto "Spartans will" and CSS goals for engaged learners.

Definitions used since spring 2018

GENERAL PLANNING KNOWLEDGE		
Bloom's taxonomy	Undergraduate Learning Goals	Graduate Learning Goals
Knowledge: Identify and recall information.	Knowledge: Identify general planning knowledge concepts and local planning context of local communities.	Knowledge: Describe general planning knowledge concepts and local planning context of local communities.
Comprehension: Understand material organize and select facts and ideas.	Comprehension: Discuss the purpose and meaning of planning based on history, law, theory and the future of planning.	Comprehension: Explain and generalize the purpose and meaning of planning based on history, law, theory and the future of planning.
Application: Use facts, rules and principles and apply them to new situations.	Application: Apply general planning concepts to real-life scenarios, especially local communities.	Application: Investigate and interpret real-life scenarios in the profession applying the general planning knowledge acquired, especially local communities.
Analysis: Separate whole into component parts to understand.	Analysis: Compare and contrast different planning concepts across cultures, countries and communities.	Analysis: Compare and contrast different approaches to planning solutions across cultures, countries and communities.
Synthesis: Combine ideas to form a new whole, product of solution.	Synthesis: Combine theory, law and history in different communities into a consistent perspective on planning.	Synthesis: Create a coherent philosophy of planning using past experience applied to future needs for different communities.
Evaluation: Make judgments, opinions or decision with reference to criteria.	Evaluation: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different planning solutions and create viable planning options, especially for projects assisting local communities.	Evaluation: Evaluate the efficacy of various planning scenarios and make appropriate recommendations for action, and create viable planning options, especially for projects assisting local communities.

PLANNING SKILLS		
Bloom's taxonomy	Undergraduate Learning Goals	Graduate Learning Goals
Knowledge: Identify and recall information.	Knowledge: Recall a variety of basic planning skills.	Knowledge: Identify and recognize planning techniques and methods of analysis.
Comprehension: Understand material organize and select facts and ideas.	Comprehension: Distinguish between various planning skills and summarize their differences and importance.	Comprehension: Estimate benefits and costs of solving problems using specific planning methods.
Application: Use facts, rules and principles and apply them to new situations.	Application: Apply planning skills learned through the curriculum to empirical situations where needed or appropriate, especially in different local communities.	Application: Employ appropriate methods to solve a variety of planning problems, especially in different local communities.
Analysis: Separate whole into component parts to understand.	Analysis: Inventory specific technical skills to understand the content and purpose for what they address.	Analysis: Appraise the assumptions and differences between learned planning methods and skills.
Synthesis: Combine ideas to form a new whole, product of solution.	Synthesis: Formulate effective planning outcomes suitable for local communities based on analysis & accepted techniques.	Synthesis: Prepare unique ways of combining existing techniques to solve complex problems of local communities.
Evaluation: Make judgments, opinions or decision with reference to criteria.	Evaluation: Assess the utility of solutions based on planning objectives supported by empirical data.	Evaluation: Discriminate between the effectiveness of common techniques used and predicted results of tool implementation.

ATTITUDES		
Bloom's taxonomy	Undergraduate Learning Goals	Graduate Learning Goals
Knowledge: Identify and recall information.	Knowledge: Recognize ethical practices and planners' responsibilities in the context of diverse communities.	Knowledge: Relate ethical practices and responsibilities to diverse communities.
Comprehension: understand material organize and select facts and ideas.	Comprehension: Give examples of fair and just solutions to planning dilemmas and discuss impacts on diverse communities.	Comprehension: Interpret ethical dilemmas and defend possible solutions based on impacts on diverse stakeholders and their work/personal lives.
Application: Use facts, rules and principles and apply them to new situations.	Application: Illustrate and interpret an ethical planning scenario in a diverse community using the latest knowledge, skills, and information available	Application: Construct and solve an ethical planning scenario in a diverse community using the latest knowledge, skills, and information available
Analysis: Separate whole into component parts to understand.	Analysis: Compare and differentiate how planning processes and solutions affect diverse communities.	Analysis: Anticipate how planning processes and solutions affect diverse communities and critique each.
Synthesis: Combine ideas to form a new whole product of solution.	Synthesis: Creatively choose planning methods and cooperatively design planning processes to solve planning dilemmas ethically	Synthesis: Creatively design and cooperatively formulate and prepare planning methods to solve planning dilemmas ethically
Evaluation: Make judgments, opinions or decision with reference to criteria.	Evaluation: Persistently judge scenarios on best-practice and latest information	Evaluation: Persistently balance different stakeholder interests using latest information and best-practice knowledge and skills

HABITS OF MIND		
Bloom's taxonomy	Undergraduate Learning Goals	Graduate Learning Goals
Knowledge: Identify and recall information.	Knowledge: Describe key planning values and ethical guidelines based on the PAB code of ethics	Knowledge: Know the PAB code of ethics and recognize key planning values
Comprehension: understand material organize and select facts and ideas.	Comprehension: Give examples of ethical dilemmas and discuss possible solutions. Explain key planning values and distinguish when they would come into play.	Comprehension: Interpret ethical dilemmas and defend possible solutions. Suggest applicable planning values.
Application: Use facts, rules and principles and apply them to new situations.	Application: Interpret an ethical planning scenario incorporating perspectives of multiple stakeholders.	Application: Consider the input of multiple stakeholders when solving an ethical planning scenario.
Analysis: Separate whole into component parts to understand.	Analysis: Willing to consider the impact of choices on myself and others and able to compare and differentiate how habits of mind affect the planning process and outcomes.	Analysis: Analyze and weigh different options and able to predict how different values affect the planning process and outcomes.
Synthesis: Combine ideas to form a new whole product of solution.	Synthesis: Compile and compose various and different viewpoints to construct viable scenarios.	Synthesis: Recognize and accept own biases and perceptions and able to generate alternative scenario to own/initial solution
Evaluation: Make judgments, opinions or decision with reference to criteria.	Evaluation: Summarize ethically-grounded concepts including social equity, environmental values and growth and development even if it differs from own perspective	Evaluation: Able to change one's own perspective given evidence presented by others, but firmly grounded in PAB ethical code.

2) Selecting

Based on the learning goals, each URP instructor has designed learning objectives for their course, which ensures that the assessment of a course reflects the range, scope and emphasis on the instructor's goals for students learning and the material that was taught. Each course is integrated into the PAB criteria through our curriculum matrix.

3) Designing

The URP designed our assessment tool around authentic assessment (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998) given our planning program is practitioner-oriented and program goals focus on graduating students that are ready to take an advanced or senior position in the planning profession. The URP also paid particular emphasis on validity (assessment accurately measures what it is designed to measure) and reliability (assessment will produce the same result consistently when repeated, or when assessed by multiple evaluators) of our assessment tools. With the centrality of the learning paradigm of Barr and Tagg (1995), we designed the URP curriculum around cooperative and collaborative learning.

4) Collecting

We hold the belief that the best evidence of students learning is based on their work, in addition to SIRS forms, self-reporting, grade distributions etc. Consequently, the URP strives to implement course-embedded assessments that provide immediate feedback to the instructor on how well students learn the material for each one of our courses.

5) Analyzing

As a program, the URP moved from a norm-referenced assessment (a test in which a student's performance is compared to that of a norm to assign a grade) to a criterion-referenced assessment (an assessment in which the results determine a student's progress toward mastery of the competency. We expect mastery from our students upon graduation). This gave us the advantage of measuring student achievement relative to the learning goals we had set.

6) Interpreting

We place a strong emphasis on knowing our students. The URP use rubrics as our tool that lay out the expectations for the program and each competency based on the PAB criteria. With the rubrics, we trace each student's progress towards mastering the competencies, whereby the competencies represent an accumulate of knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits of mind. To note here is that rubrics encourage student to think critically; rubrics also level the playing field, facilitate communication, provide timely feedback and help refine our teaching method immediately and permanently (Ambrose, 2010).

Assessment matrix used since spring 2018

- Policy-oriented learners
- Knowledgeable planning practitioners
- Skillful professionals
- Innovative thinker
- Ethically-driven team leader

Student:		Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Exemplary
URP competencies	Policy-oriented learner	Unwilling to learn planning knowledge, skills, values, habits of mind, and attitudes.	Learns willingly about the planning profession and its applications to policy when instructed.	Has self-motivated drive to learn to benefit the planning profession and advise policy-makers.	Eager to learn beyond lessons taught in the classroom to apply the most recent planning knowledge, skills, habits of mind, and attitudes as a professional planner and policy-maker
	Knowledgeable planning practitioner	Unfamiliar with the basic purpose and meaning of planning, planning skills and planning values.	Shows an awareness of the fundamental planning knowledge required for the planning profession.	Demonstrates broad planning knowledge and is able to use it in different hypothetical scenarios.	Efficiently and confidently applies appropriate planning knowledge to solve complex planning problems.
	Skillful professional	Can not identify the range of skills planners use in their profession.	Shows familiarity with the wide range of planning skills planners use in professional settings.	Effectively applies planning skills in professional practice.	Critically examines various planning skills before applying them to contemporary planning issues.
	Innovative thinker	Unable to link planning knowledge, skills, and values to planning practice.	Can combine knowledge skills and values to recognize planning trends.	Able to analyze and describe trends affecting the planning process using a combination of knowledge skills, values, and habits of mind.	Eager to predict trends and propose innovative planning solutions given the knowledge, skills, and values taught in our program.
	Ethically-driven team leader	No recognition of ethical conflicts and values and unable to lead a team.	Able to identify and define professional values and ethics while recognizing the skills a team leader must possess.	Able to honor and apply professional ethics in most instances while leading teams.	Able to efficiently apply professional ethics in various ethical dilemmas every time while leading teams efficiently.

7) Using

The URP program uses the student assessment outcomes continuously to improve the program. For example, we update our courses and our alumni hold workshops on topics in which students lack behind in making sufficient progress in mastering their competencies. For example, in spring 2018 our alumni held a workshop on public engagement and governance; in our 2017 student assessment review, we had identified “governance and participation” as the topic in which many students had not achieved mastery. We also review our assessment tools at our annual strategic meetings and align our curriculum to any learning objectives or goal changes based on updates to our strategic plan. As a program, we will continue to conduct exit surveys, measure student outcomes on an annual basis and update our assessment tools to reflect the latest scholarship on teaching and learning.

Citations used in this Section:

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