

## Beyond Student Learning: Using Outcomes Data from Projects to Address Program Evaluation and Accreditation Needs

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### Workshop description

**\*\*\*Two team members from your institution should attend this workshop together!\*\*\***

Individuals who are responsible for running and evaluating programs or who directly support accreditation efforts could benefit by having access to information that shows how project work impacts student learning. The usefulness of student assessment data will vary, though, depending on how project work is assessed, how those assessment data are handled, and the extent to which program and institutional needs were considered when assessment plans were developed. During this workshop, participants will develop an approach they can use to maximize the value of evidence of student learning through projects to address program evaluation and accreditation needs. A series of questions will be used to help participants identify institutional data needs, identify key stakeholders, and facilitate communication between “project-based learning people” and “program and accreditation people.” Participants will leave the workshop with a list of steps to follow that will be specifically tailored to their institution’s circumstances. This workshop does not focus on how to assess student learning. Instead, it focuses on ways to make the most of student assessment data. Institutions (and individual participants) will benefit most from this workshop if at least two team members attend the workshop together.

### Schedule

Item	Time (minutes)
Introduction and Introductions	7
Consider the malleability of your project-based learning activity/activities and assessment of them	10
Identify institutional data needs and stakeholders	15
Consider how you will approach stakeholders	10
Craft your message	5
Reach out to stakeholders	2
Collaborate with stakeholders	3
Reflect on the collaborations	3
Identify next steps	15
Evaluation	5

## Introduction

In your project-based learning with students, ideally you're going to have learning objectives or outcomes stated for the project experiences. And, ideally, you're going to be gathering data that speak to those learning objectives or outcomes. It takes a lot of energy and effort to gather, interpret, and disseminate data. Those data will be valuable to you because they will show you the extent to which the objectives or outcomes of students' project-based learning are addressed. Those data are probably of value to other people at your institution, as well. The others who might find the data useful are those responsible for working with institutional accreditors and those who either run or evaluate programs at your institution in which project-based learning activities are or could be situated. To use evidence relevant to project-based learning outcomes to address accreditation and program evaluation needs requires a significant commitment on your part, though, to approach assessment of student project work in a way that will be relevant to these additional stakeholders. This workshop focuses on how to make the data you gather relevant to others who are not directly involved with your work. The focus is not so much on the actual sharing of the data but instead on a process that you could use to make sure to get all interested parties talking about what the project-work-relevant data needs at your institution are.

While collaboration with colleagues is something you already do on a daily basis in your work, this workshop lays out steps to take that will help facilitate that collaboration. These steps are designed merely to prompt you to consider how the evidence that you will gather on student outcomes in project work can be useful to those colleagues who are not directly involved with your project-based learning efforts.

## Consider malleability.

In the context of this workshop, “malleability” refers to the extent to which your project-based learning activities and their assessment are open to being shaped by outside influences (like accreditation or program evaluation needs). It will be helpful to consider project and assessment malleability first because it will inform how you approach collaborating with your colleagues:

- Think about the objectives for your project-based learning activity. Is the activity designed to foster teamwork? Communication skills? Problem solving? Something else? Do you know for sure what you want students to be able to learn or do as a result of the project work? At this point in time, how malleable is the project-based learning activity that you’re going to be doing? How malleable are the objectives for it? Is your project-based learning activity still in development or is it already well-articulated and stable? Where on this continuum does it lie?
- Think about the ways that you’re going to assess the project-based work that students will be doing. Will you be using student grades on project-related assignments as evidence of achievement? Ratings on rubrics by outside observers? Attainment of a particular benchmark? Something else? A combination of different types of evidence? At this point in time, how malleable is the assessment of the project-based learning that you’re going to be doing? Where on the continuum of “still-in-development” to “well-articulated and stable” does it lie?

**On the continuum below, where does your project-based learning activity lie?**

Undeveloped and open  
and  
to modification  
modified



Fully developed  
unable to be

**On the continuum below, where does *assessment* of your project-based learning activity lie?**

Undeveloped and open  
and  
to modification  
modified



Fully developed  
unable to be

## Who cares? Identify institutional data needs and stakeholders.

- Think about accreditors for your institution. Who are they? What kind of information do they seek from your institution? To what extent might project-based learning be relevant to accreditation from them? Do they want to see assessment data that speak to outcomes or do they want to see merely that you've identified outcomes or have established learning objectives for students? Who at your institution interacts with the accreditors? If you don't know who these people are, who can you ask who might know?
- Think about all of the different programs that run at your institution. What are the goals of these programs? Might project-based learning be relevant to them? Who at your institution is responsible for running and evaluating these programs? What kinds of information do they view as valid sources of evidence for student achievement of outcomes? If you don't know who these people are, who can you ask who might know?
- Are any new programs under development? If so, who's developing these programs? Might they be interested in data you gather on student outcomes from project-based work?
- What offices at your institution have purposes that are related to teaching, learning, evaluation, outcomes assessment, institutional research, innovation, etc.? Who in those offices might you speak with to find out if they know of anyone who could benefit from using your data?
- Who else at your institution might be interested in data on student outcomes? Who else might be a stakeholder?

**Brainstorm and identify all of the people and offices at your institution who might be interested in student outcomes data for project-based learning.**

**Consider how you will approach stakeholders.**

Do you already have relationships with the stakeholders you just identified? If not, who else do you know at your institution who does? Would it be helpful to ask them to arrange an introduction between you and the stakeholders?

**Identify individuals who have (or might have) relationships with stakeholders.**

Given your stakeholders and your relationship to them and their relationships to one another, consider what the best ways to approach them. Individually? As one large group? As several smaller groups? Through an information session? Via email messages? Do you know enough about them and their potential needs already to even make these decision? Think about the pros and cons of each approach.

**What are likely to be the most effective ways to approach various stakeholders?**

### **Craft your message.**

The way that you approach potential stakeholders about sharing data resulting from your project-based learning activities will establish the foundation of, and set the tone for, your relationship. Decide what you want to tell stakeholders about your project-based learning activities and your assessment of them:

- Are you going to invite them to help you develop your project-based learning activities and your approaches to assessment or do you have everything developed already and do you merely want to share with them what data you will have available that they might be able to use?
- Is there anything you want to ask the stakeholders for? Would you like them to help you carry out your project-based learning activities or maybe assess them?
- If you already know that your project-based work with students is going to produce data that will be of use to these stakeholders, might they be willing to help you gather, manage, process or interpret those data?
- Do you believe that by working together, you might be able to create some efficiencies that will be of mutual benefit?

**What are you going to tell your stakeholders about your project-based learning activities and your assessment of them? What are you going to ask them for?**

## **Reach out to stakeholders.**

Using the message or messages that you crafted, let potential stakeholders know that you're doing project-based learning and that you're interested in collaborating with them. Invite them to talk with you about it.

**When does it make sense to reach out to stakeholders, given the current status of the following:**

- 1. Your work on developing project-based learning activities for students**
- 2. Your plans for assessing those project-based learning activities**
- 3. The role you envision stakeholders playing in development of activities and assessment?**

**What's your timeline for contacting various stakeholders?**

## **Collaborate with stakeholders.**

- Discuss the project-based learning activities you'll be doing (especially the objectives and outcomes associated with them). Share your interests, plans, and needs with stakeholders. Find out what the stakeholders' interests and needs are regarding project-based learning for students. Develop plans for moving ahead together to create a mutually beneficial situation.
- Discuss evaluation and assessment of the project-based work you'll be doing (or would like to do) with students. Share your interests, plans, and needs with stakeholders. Find out what the stakeholders' needs and interests are regarding getting evidence of student achievement of outcomes associated with project-based learning. Find out what standards they would like to meet or need to meet. Develop plans for moving ahead together to create a mutually beneficial situation.

### **Include the following questions in your collaborations:**

- 1. To what extent does alignment exist between what data you have to offer and what data are needed at your institution for accreditation or program evaluation purposes?**
- 2. To what extent does alignment exist between what you need (programmatically or logistically or otherwise) and what others at your institution have to offer?**
- 3. If alignments do exist, when can you start developing plans to gather and use data?**
- 4. If alignment doesn't exist, where is there flexibility to create alignment?**
- 5. Are there any areas where you and others at your institution have project-work-relevant unmet data needs? For example, do you need to do any of the following:**
  - a. Articulate learning outcomes?**
  - b. Develop assessment strategies?**
  - c. Create or obtain assessment tools?**
  - d. Develop protocols for data collection or data sharing?**
  - e. Develop systems for data management?**
  - f. Decide how to analyze data?**
- 6. If unmet needs exist, how might you move forward to meet those needs?**
- 7. If multiple needs exist, what needs should be prioritized?**

**List other questions you think might be useful to include in your collaborations:**

**Reflect on the collaborations.**

- After collaborating with stakeholders, determine the extent to which you are going to revise the project-based learning activities to better meet the needs of other stakeholders at your institution.
- After collaborating with stakeholders, determine the extent to which you are going to revise the assessment of your project-based learning activities to better meet the needs of other stakeholders at your institution.

**If you are going to revise your plans, what do those revisions entail?**

**If you're not going to revise your plans, then what are your priorities?**

**To what extent might it be beneficial to formalize the collaborations by creating working groups or establishing official committees?**

**Identify next steps.**

Start with page 3 of this packet and review your notes on each page. Where does work need to be done? Use the table below to begin to outline next steps for being able to effectively use outcomes data from projects to address program evaluation and accreditation needs at your institution.

Activity	People Responsible	Start Date	End Date	Comments