Program Overview

Environmental Policy and Decision Making explores the protection of long-term natural resource use and environmental quality through changes in human behavior and policy. Students study the economic and social forces that impact decision making across society, giving particular consideration to how policies are formulated and implemented and what impact they will have on society as well as how to best engage individuals and communities to respond to environmental challenges. Students have the opportunity to specialize in the following areas: Communication and Behavior Change, Environmental and Science Justice, International Policy and Law, Policy and Governance, and Pre-Law.

The Communication and Behavior Change specialization focuses on how best to communicate environmental, science and risk information to public audiences. Students will learn what motivates individuals to act to protect the environment and how best to frame information to engage the public in pro-environmental behavior. Students can take courses in risk communication, principles of environmental campaigns, environmental anthropology, and consumer behavior.

Students in the Environmental and Social Justice specialization focus on the local and global inequality in access to and control over resources, the impact this has on livelihoods, and how corporations and policies can contribute to both solutions and problems faced by disadvantaged populations. Students can take classes in social groups in developing societies, environmental justice, urban political geography, and planning for and with people.

Students in the International Policy and Law specialization focus on global issues specific to particular areas of the world. Students will learn about the details of the law and the legal system, the political decision making process, the evaluation of laws related to their stated objectives, and how legal institutions interact with social institutions. Students can take courses in international law, politics of the developing world, social groups in developing societies, and food security and globalization.

The Policy and Governance specialization focuses on understanding how policies that affect the environment and natural resources are designed and implemented. Students can take classes in public policy analysis, ethics and public policy, public budgeting, and resolving social conflict.

The Pre-Law specialization introduces students to the specifics of the U.S. law and legal process, political theory, and law and policy evaluation. Students can take courses in introduction to political theory, intro to law and society, agribusiness law, and politics of legal decision making.

Program Learning Goals & Outcomes

Goal 1.0
Have the ability to think critically in solving problems related to environmental policy and decision making

Outcome 1.1
Describe what critical thinking is, how evidence is used to develop an argument, and how to avoid errors in critical thinking

Outcome 1.2
Evaluate the extent to which critical thinking is employed in a group research project related to environmental science, forestry/fisheries/wildlife science and management, natural resource management, environmental policy and decision making, or similar fields related to environmental sustainability

Outcome 1.3
Apply critical thinking to a real-world environmental issue in which the role of the soil is central, such as food security, land degradation, carbon cycle/global change, downstream water quality

Outcome 1.4
Critically analyze a current environmental or natural resources issue at a local, regional, state level, how a broad range of stakeholders are engaged in the issue, how concepts and issue-solving skills learned to-date can be applied to the issue, how possible means to address the issue may be received by stakeholders from environmental, social, and economic perspectives, and how to evaluate and communicate supportable and realistic solutions through a team effort

Outcome 1.5
Demonstrate critical thinking in solving environmental problems

Goal 2.0
Know how to apply theoretical concepts of environmental policy and decision making to address contemporary environmental policy and decision making issues

Outcome 2.1
Relate concepts from social science theories to describe human dimensions of real-world environmental challenges

Outcome 2.2
Relate concepts from environmental science and environmental policy and management to address contemporary environmental issues

Outcome 2.3
Apply theory to professional practice in solving environmental problems

Continued on Back . . .
Program Learning Goals & Outcomes (Continued)

Goal 6.0
Understand coupled systems, human and natural, and their relevance for environmental policy and decision making

   Outcome 6.1
Demonstrate an understanding of the links between human and natural systems in the context of Limits of Acceptable Change planning frameworks

   Outcome 6.2
Integrate information related to natural and human dimensions of contemporary environmental issues and formulate professionally appropriate recommendations to address those issues

   Outcome 6.3
Illustrate the integration of information related to natural and human dimensions of contemporary environmental issues while making professionally appropriate recommendations to address those issues

Goal 7.0
Manifest professional competency for career-track employment or graduate work related to environmental policy and decision making

   Outcome 7.1
Demonstrate basic knowledge of the role of spatial information and information systems in addressing environmental and natural resource issues

   Outcome 7.2
Analyze spatial information relevant to natural resource and ecosystem management and resource planning by utilizing digital vertical image interpretation and geographic information systems

   Outcome 7.3
Demonstrate professional competency through job placement and success in professional certification exams (soil, water, forestry, fisheries, wildlife, other)

   Outcome 7.4
Demonstrate professional competencies

   Outcome 7.5
Demonstrate competency in skills and procedures related to: the legal and regulatory frameworks for planning at the Federal and State levels; Federal and State property records; map reading; writing goals, objectives and action statements for the results of the VRM, ROS, and LAC labs; and, developing program budgets to implement the VRM, ROS, and LAC objectives and actions
Assessment Fundamentals

What is assessment?
While there are certainly many answers to this question, in the context of the CFAES academic community, assessment is the practice of evaluating the manner or degree to which students in academic programs in our College are learning. Academic units and programs within CFAES have developed student learning outcomes, which are statements of the key indicators of student learning in specific programs. Assessment is designed to compare actual student performance to these predetermined student learning outcomes.

Assessment is used to respond to at least two concerns: 1) Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning? and 2) How can educators document that students are learning what they are supposed to be learning? While these two concerns are intertwined, they also fulfill separate functions. Concern one is primarily a question of academics: Are our teaching methods effective? Are our students learning what they should and as well as they should? What can we do to improve student learning? Concern one is aligned with continued improvement of teaching and learning. Concern two is aligned more with the issue of accountability. Education is increasingly being asked and even required to document that students know and can do what we say they can do and simple completion of course, program, and graduation requirements is not enough. Accountability requires that educators show that students can actually demonstrate what they know and can do and merely one grade on a test, a paper, or in a course is not sufficient. Accountability should flow naturally from the focus on teaching and learning.

Why do assessment?
Assessment needs to take place for at least two reasons:
1) Assessment is designed to function as continued improvement for teaching and learning.
   - Assessment helps educators improve the manner and degree to which students learn what they are supposed to be learning.
   - Assessment provides information that allows educators to make good decisions based on quality information about student learning.
   - Assessment encourages educators to look at what they do in the classroom, how their classroom practices affect student learning, and what changes could be made in teaching methods or materials to enhance student learning.

2) We need to do assessment to remain accountable to the publics we serve.
   - Students and their families should be able to see what we do in teaching and learning, and what we expect of students;
   - Accrediting agencies need to know that we are effective in our teaching and learning;
   - Legislative and executive governmental bodies provide funding and need to know that these funds are accomplishing their intended purposes.

Assessment Cycle
The assessment cycle considers collection and review of data on an ongoing basis to formulate recommendations for incremental programmatic change. Accumulative findings for all program goals based on the contributing outcomes are used as the cornerstones for programmatic review. Assessment provides essential information for making strategic adjustments to the academic program, which assures continuous quality improvement with the intent of improving teaching and learning.

The language of assessment . . .
Goals: Student Learning Goals are stated in terms of achievement resulting from student learning. Goals provide a broad description identifying the foundations, concepts, theories, abstractions, principles, knowledge base, and/or skills, which are the products of what students are to be able to do, know, and care about upon the completion the program. Learning goals are frequently stated using the verbiage of: understand; appreciate; know about; become familiar with; learn about; or become aware of. Reoccurring learning goal concepts/themes for CFAES programs are Critical Thinking, Communications, Academic and Professional Integrity, Diversity, and Knowledge.

The stated learning goals of the programs within CFAES have the inferred prefix of, “Students will . . .”

Outcomes: Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) [also commonly referred to as Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO’s) or “objectives”) are statements indicating changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, or values relative to a desired goal as a result of a specific activity, such as completion or participation in a program, activity, course, or project. Cognitive learning outcomes can most effectively be stated using verbs aligned with one of the six domains of the Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, or Creating). Appropriately structured outcomes serve as the supportive methods/means of measuring student attainment of the associated learning goal.

The stated expected learning outcomes of the programs within CFAES have the inferred prefix of, “Students will have the ability to . . .”
Assessment & Curriculum Connection

Assessment results are used in concurrence with the program curricular map to form the underpinning for informing curricular decisions and to further enhance student learning. Curricular mapping demonstrates the opportunities for students to be introduced to knowledge (beginning), opportunities for reinforcement of knowledge (intermediate), and opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge (advanced) relative to the stated programmatic learning goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Learning Goals</th>
<th>B=Beginning, I=Intermediate, A=Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ENR 2100</td>
<td>Introduction to Environmental Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENR 2300</td>
<td>Society and Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENR 2367</td>
<td>Communicating Environmental and Natural Resources Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Courses**

**ENR 2100**

Introduction to Environmental Science

**ENR 2300**

Society and Natural Resources

**ENR 2367**

Communicating Environmental and Natural Resources Information

**Assessment & Curriculum Connection Continued on Back . . .**
### Program Learning Goals

B=Beginning, I=Intermediate, A=Advanced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Have the ability to think critically in solving problems related to environmental policy and decision making</th>
<th>Know how to apply theoretical concepts of environmental policy and decision making to address contemporary environmental policy and decision making issues</th>
<th>Communicate effectively in oral and written forms</th>
<th>Understand natural systems with breadth across biotic and abiotic components</th>
<th>Understand human systems with breadth across individual, community, and polity levels of organization</th>
<th>Understand coupled systems, human and natural, and their relevance for environmental policy and decision making</th>
<th>Manifest professional competency for career-track employment or graduate work related to environmental policy and decision making</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENR 3000 Soil Science</td>
<td>I.3 <strong>Apply</strong> critical thinking to a real-world environmental issue in which the role of the soil is central, such as food security, land degradation, carbon cycle/global change, downstream water quality</td>
<td>I.4.2 <strong>Demonstrate</strong> an understanding of abiotic components of natural systems, such as illustrating elements of the hydrologic cycle, and integration of the abiotic and biotic systems, such as illustrating elements of the carbon and nitrogen cycles</td>
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<td>ENR 3300 Introduction to Forest, Fisheries, and Wildlife</td>
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<td>I.4.3 <strong>Demonstrate</strong> a comprehension of the structure and dynamics of populations and communities in relation to sustaining resource production and biological diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENR 3700 Introduction to Spatial Information for Environment and Natural Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7.1 <strong>Demonstrate</strong> basic knowledge of the role of spatial information and information systems in addressing environmental and natural resource issues</td>
<td>7.2 <strong>Analyze</strong> spatial information relevant to natural resource and ecosystem management and resource planning by utilizing digital vertical image interpretation and geographic information systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>Program Learning Goals</td>
<td>ENR 4000 Environmental and Natural Resources Policy</td>
<td>ENR 4900.01 Environment and Natural Resources Management</td>
<td>ENR 5640 Natural Resources Administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENR 4000 Environmental and Natural Resources Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.2 Appraise the nature and values of organizations and polities and their importance in social problem solving and policy making related to environmental and natural resource issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Critically analyze a current environmental or natural resources issue at a local, regional, state level, how a broad range of stakeholders are engaged in the issue, how concepts and issue-solving skills learned to-date can be applied to the issue, how possible means to address the issue may be received by stakeholders from environmental, social, and economic perspectives, and how to evaluate and communicate supportable and realistic solutions through a team effort</td>
<td>2.2 Relate concepts from environmental science and environmental policy and management to address contemporary environmental issues</td>
<td>3.3 Communicate technical information with correct spelling and grammar, logically organized, and with technical style and format that is appropriate to the discipline for oral and written forms of communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENR 4900.01 Environment and Natural Resources Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the links between human and natural systems in the context of Limits of Acceptable Change planning frameworks</td>
<td>7.5 Demonstrate competency in skills and procedures related to: the legal and regulatory frameworks for planning at the Federal and State levels; Federal and State property records; map reading; writing goals, objectives and action statements for the results of the VRM, ROS, and LAC labs; and, developing program budgets to implement the VRM, ROS, and LAC objectives and actions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The data collection for the identified direct methods of the supporting learning outcomes is conducted annually (or each semester the affiliated course(s) or activities are conducted) starting Au2012. In adherence to the CFAES Academic Program Assessment Plan Revision Cycle (presented and adopted at the December 01, 2011 meeting of the CFAES Committee on Academic Affairs) this program will go through a comprehensive outcomes assessment review every six years.

During the first year of implementation of a new (or re-envisioned) program assessment plan, focused attention will be given to refining the measures used for assessing achievement to assure alignment of identified assignments with outcomes. During the initial year of the plan, the program will collect and report supporting data for half of the documented learning goals.

In year two, focused efforts will explore and reexamine alignment of methods with specific program learning outcomes along with data collection and reporting on the remainder of the program learning goals (those not addressed previously).

During the third year, in addition to collecting and reporting data for all program learning goals, the program will explore conducting faculty facilitated student, alumni, and/or stakeholder focus groups and/or surveys to aid in assessing success of learning outcomes.

For year four of the cycle, supporting data will continue to be collected and reported for all program learning goals. Upon conclusion of the academic year, the academic unit, with the assistance of the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, will craft and submit to the College’s Academic Affairs Committee. An executive summary of findings for the programs based on the four years of Program Assessment Plan data collected.

In the fifth year of the cycle the program will continue collecting and reporting data for all program learning goals and the program coordinator will review the stated set of program learning goals to determine if modifications should be made in the forthcoming rendition of the program assessment plan.

During year six, data collection and reporting for all program learning goals will continue. In addition, the unit, upon notification from the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment will work with the academic unit’s assessment contact(s) to assemble and convene a formal programmatic assessment review team, comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and stakeholders, to do the following program evaluation: 1) Review the accumulated findings from the assessment review cycle; 2) Appraise the achievement and success of the program; 3) Examine alignment of program learning goals and outcomes; and 4) Produce a summary of recommendations for program modifications and enhancement. The efforts of the team’s comprehensive review of the individual Program Assessment Plan in “year six” will produce a “re-envisioned” plan.
Assessment Findings

Reporting Synopsis
Data from identified methods (measures) were collected and reported as evidence of achievement of program learning goals via supporting outcomes (objectives) for the 2012-2016 assessment reporting cycles. Collectively in periodic meetings (review colloquy) the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and the assessment contact for the Environmental Policy and Decision Making program elaborated upon the process by which the program was going to review and use evidence (findings/results). They also discussed the procedure which was going to be followed for taking future actions and examined the approach for future planning for the program. One of the primary topics of discussion at these meetings was exploring how the information gathered about student learning was to be shared with the division’s faculty, instructional staff, and leadership, and how to use it for improvement of learning outcomes.

This document, the Assessment Executive Summary which is a collaborative report compiled from the information submitted by the academic unit’s assessment contact(s) to the Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, is to serve as a mechanism for sharing the status of the program’s assessment activities and results with the program faculty and instructional staff, unit and college leadership, stakeholders, the unit’s Committee on Academic Affairs, the college’s Assessment Committee and CFAES Committee on Academic Affairs.

This summary covers 23 of the 31 identified methods for the 26 supporting outcomes of the 7 program learning outcomes assessment plan were reviewed during the 2012-2016 assessment reporting cycle.

Use of Assessment Findings

Use and Actions Taken
Any changes and/or modifications to this program and/or its learning outcomes assessment plan resulting from these assessment results were explored while reflecting upon collected and reported assessment data during the annual Autumn semester review colloquy. Resulting desired adjustments were then enacted during the following assessment reporting cycle.

The program’s coordinator, assessment contact, the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, and other faculty and instructional staff has examined the program, its supporting course work, and the related assessment findings on an ongoing basis to formulate recommendations for incremental change. Areas for which assessment data has and will be used include:

- Analyzing and discussing trends with the unit’s faculty
- Analyzing and reporting to college/school
- Making improvements in curricular requirements
- Making improvements in course content
- Making improvements in course delivery and learning activities within courses
- Making improvements in learning facilities, laboratories, and/or equipment
- Periodically confirming that current curriculum and courses are facilitating student attainment of program goals

Program Learning Goals & Outcomes (Continued)

Goal 3.0
Communicate effectively in oral and written forms

Outcome 3.1
Communicate effectively in oral and written forms

Outcome 3.2
Demonstrate a basic level of sufficiency in oral communication

Outcome 3.3
Communicate technical information with correct spelling and grammar, logically organized, and with technical style and format that is appropriate to the discipline for oral and written forms of communication

Outcome 3.4
Communicate effectively in written and oral forms in professional settings following graduation

Goal 4.0
Understand natural systems with breadth across biotic and abiotic components

Outcome 4.1
Apply theoretical concepts in environmental science to understand how Earth’s biotic and abiotic systems function, how humans affect the environment, and how to achieve global sustainability

Outcome 4.2
Demonstrate an understanding of abiotic components of natural systems, such as illustrating elements of the hydrologic cycle, and integration of the abiotic and biotic systems, such as illustrating elements of the carbon and nitrogen cycles

Outcome 4.3
Demonstrate a comprehension of the structure and dynamics of populations and communities in relation to sustaining resource production and biological diversity

Outcome 4.4
Apply understanding of natural systems with breadth across biotic and abiotic components in professional settings

Goal 5.0
Understand human systems with breadth across individual, community, and polity levels of organization

Outcome 5.1
Identify concepts, theories and examples relevant to understanding human systems across individual, community, and polity levels of organization

Outcome 5.2
Appraise the nature and values of organizations and polities and their importance in social problem solving and policy making related to environmental and natural resource issues

Outcome 5.3
Apply understanding of human systems with breadth across individual, community, and polity levels of organization in professional settings

Continued on Additional Pages . . .
Achievement of program learning goals are assessed systematically utilizing the identified means for the aligned learning outcomes via direct and indirect measures that serve as authentic assessment methods.

**Direct**
Direct assessment methods are means of assessment that measure students’ performance directly, are authentic, and minimize mitigating or intervening factors. In general, direct assessment methods are assessment tools that measure student learning by having students create or perform directly based on their learning. Direct methods are the direct evaluation of aggregate student achievement on specific learning outcomes.

**Indirect**
Indirect assessment methods are means of assessment that are steps removed from direct methods and are based upon perception of student learning from various constituents. In general indirect assessment methods infer whether learning has taken place by asking for perception of learning, typically from students, but also from those with whom they have worked. Indirect methods are tools that enable us to infer actual student achievement, very often from student self-reports of their perception of their learning.

Within the Environmental Policy and Decision Making program's assessment plan, the following methods have been identified as means of assessing student attainment of state learning outcomes:

### Direct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embedded Testing</strong></td>
<td>Student work in designated courses is collected and assessed in relation to the program learning outcomes, not just for the course grade. The assessment may be conducted at specific points in a program and the products of student work need to be considered in light of the multiple dimensions of the learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Assignment</strong></td>
<td>Written display of comprehension of course topic(s). This can be done through a research report, essay, journal entry, creative writing piece, or another suitable writing method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capstone Course</strong></td>
<td>A method of summative evaluation. Student is given an opportunity to demonstrate integrated knowledge and growth in the major. May assess a student’s cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning in the major and also the overall collegiate learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Presentation</strong></td>
<td>A classroom presentation or showcasing of the results of a particular project that has been conducted by an individual student or by a group of students in fulfilling a course assignment. The presentation might take place in a classroom or over the web and would typically present the results of a course-based assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Direct Measure</strong></td>
<td>Specific course assignments also serve as assessment methods for appraising students’ ability to evaluate situations while collecting accurate information to make sound decisions and solve problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scaffolding to Support Learning Outcomes Assessment**

The primary purpose of program learning outcomes assessment is to assure that all students have the opportunity to learn what is truly valued by the program. It is not enough to simply collect data for the programmatic learning outcome assessment; these data must be used to reflect and examine whether learning expectations are being obtained and when weaknesses are discovered, needed changes are determined. Educators must remember that the foremost purpose of learning outcomes assessment is for programs to continually be improving the quality of the teaching and learning experiences that enable significant learning.

To assure that all students have the opportunity to learn what is truly valued by the program, the program must engage all faculty and instructional staff at some level of the assessment process. To be successful a program must also have leadership and a supportive scaffolding structure in place to facilitate its assessment efforts.

**Overview**
The 2012 Environmental Policy and Decision Making - BS program assessment plan was crafted under the leadership of the unit assessment contact(s) for Environmental Policy and Decision Making located on the Ohio State Columbus campus. The CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment coached the program’s learning outcomes assessment plan development team through the process by: 1) Elucidating program learning goals and developing measurable contributing outcomes; 2) Identifying the means and methods by which the embedded assessment of learning outcomes will be achieved; 3) Defining programmatic criteria for student achievement of each identified outcome; and 4) Planning for the use and implementation in the process of generating the comprehensive program learning outcomes assessment plan.

**Commitment**

Development, implementation, documentation and reporting associated with the 2012 Environmental Policy and Decision Making - BS program learning outcomes assessment plan are coordinated through academic unit's assessment contact(s) with adherence oversight and support provided by the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. Data collection is a collaborative endeavor between the unit's assessment contact(s), course instructors and academic advisors, and students. The assessment contact(s) partners with the CFAES Office for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment to collect, report, and review results on the basis of the Ohio State’s annual assessment reporting cycle. The assessment contact(s), Environmental Policy and Decision Making program, the School of Environment and Natural Resources, and course instructors are to review the program, its supporting coursework, and the related assessment results annually, on an ongoing basis, to formulate recommendations for incremental programmatic change to the unit’s Academic Affairs Committee. With the goal of improving learning, instruction, and curriculum, indicators from a summary report of the findings are to be used to plan the incorporation of needed modifications. Accumulative findings for all program goals based on the contributing outcomes will be used as the cornerstone in the programmatic review cycle, providing essential information for making strategic adjustments to this academic program, assuring continuous quality improvement.
Continued Assessment Methods Table...

Direct

Laboratory Report

A report generated after the student completes designated experiment, process, research, or other laboratory procedure. The report should outline steps taken, materials used, methods, and results. This shows a student's comprehension of laboratory procedures and methods and ability to implement learned methods.

Indirect

Survey (Employer)

Surveying of student internship and/or alumni student employers provides insights regarding students' workforce preparedness, professionalism, work ethic, and being cooperative team members. Can be accomplished through mail and/or telephone surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Survey (Alumni)

Surveying of program/college alumni allows insight into the perspective that students have on their education after time away from school. Allows for external look at strengths/weaknesses of a program. Can be accomplished through mail and/or telephone surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Other Indirect Measure

Other course assignments/ experiences serve as assessment methods for appraising students' ability to collect and apply accurate information to make sound decisions and solve problems. Examples include a research forum presentation, annual report or a report from a certification agency.