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# How to create a great curriculum map without wasting a lot of time

**Curriculum mapping is a process that holds the potential for great rewards, but it carries many risks. One of the biggest risks is that it will be a giant waste of time. In our work with clients, we often see ambitious curriculum mapping projects fail because the final result was just not useful enough. In this guide we will share some practices that will help ensure your curriculum map is not only LCME-compliant, but is continually updated and useful too.**

## Make the curriculum map useful for students

To some, the curriculum map is purely administrative overhead to ensure LCME compliance. To others it is a useful planning and reporting database used to inform curriculum changes. But almost never is it a tool for students to find and reference content and learning objectives.

This is a mistake. In our experience, schools that make their curriculum map useful for students enjoy a map that is more comprehensive, updated more frequently, and used more by faculty and administration. This occurs because of the natural adjustments that faculty and administration make to match their processes up with student behavior.

To begin making your map more useful to students, a great place to start is with exam objectives. Survey your students and ask them which reports about the curriculum would help them study for their exams. Or, ask them which

parts of finding curriculum content they find frustrating. These answers will help you discover valuable curriculum mapping changes to make. You could include a question about this on your end-of-course survey.

Once you've got an idea what students are looking for, try mapping a course or two to its exam objectives. Have a small group of students report and search before their next exam and see if the new mappings addressed their issues. After a few rounds of this process, you'll have an idea of a valuable set of curriculum mappings to make. This will lower the risk of creating mappings that no one uses.

## Use data on report usage to drive updates to the curriculum map

Our data shows that users perform curriculum searches far more than they navigate the curriculum. If your system allows for it, gather data on the types and frequency of searches users are performing. Periodically, ask the users doing these searches what other data they'd like to find. This feedback is invaluable at curriculum committee meetings as it provides qualitative and quantitative data to help justify changes to the curriculum map.

For example, if someone suggests linking competencies to session objectives, and the usage data suggests this might be a good idea, start small. Link the competencies to the objectives for one course and see if the changes



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increase search usage or user satisfaction. If they do, fantastic! You have a compelling reason to change your map. If not, fantastic! Now you can work on a different initiative that will have more value and you haven't wasted any time.

### Add more detail in small increments

If you focus on making the curriculum map valuable for stakeholders at every step, you'll have an enviable problem: people will want you to make the system even more valuable for them. For students and faculty, this may mean making reports easier to generate, or more specific. For your curriculum committee, this may mean adding more detail to the map.

If you are considering changes to your curriculum map, focus first on testing that the changes will produce value for your users at a small scale before rolling them out full-scale. This means mapping one course instead of 10, or having a few students generate reports while you watch them work, or creating a test installation of your curriculum map where you can play around without worrying about making mistakes. Your goal with these small scale experiments is to get the users excited about the results. Whenever a suggestion is made to change the curriculum, try and ask "how can we test that this will add value?"

Proceed carefully, and try and match your curriculum mapping efforts with the most valuable use-cases for those efforts. We hope that by doing this you'll find greater success and buy-in from students, faculty, and administrators. Good luck!