

Defining the Assessment Coordinator Position: Supporting the Academic Community and Building a Culture of Inquiry

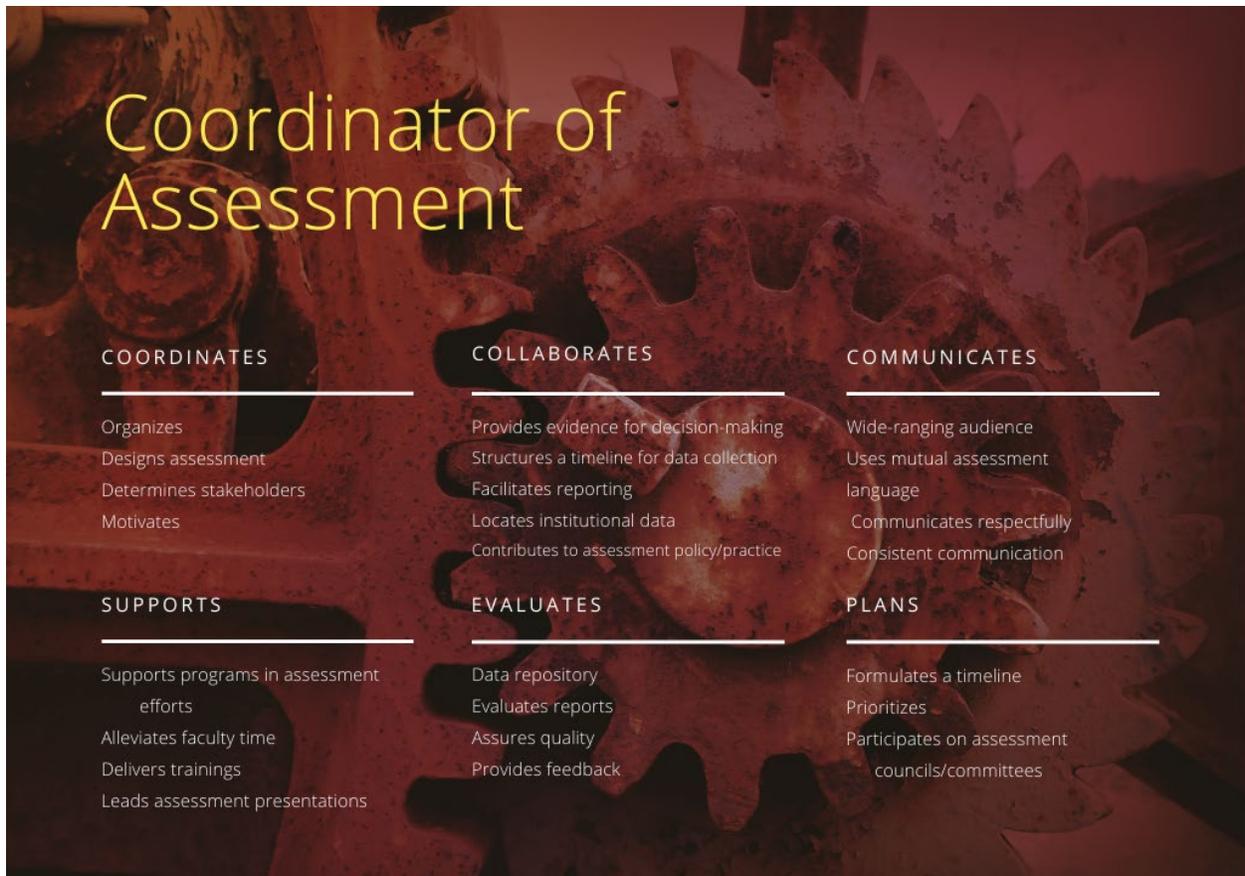
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I. Historical Background

- Reports such as Integrity in the College Curriculum and To Reclaim a Legacy accelerated the demand for greater curricular coherence.
- Emphasis was placed on course assessment and standardized tests (i.e. ACT & SAT) with less emphasis on the overall program assessment.
- The national report “A Nation at Risk” drove the need for “large-scale assessment” and became a major catalyst for program evaluations.
- The lack of conformity and pressures to increase accountability from accrediting organizations left faculty extremely frustrated.
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Assessment Coordinator Position and Responsibilities

II. Coordinator (Who a Coordinator is)

(n.) a person whose job is to organize events or activities and to negotiate with others in order to ensure they work together effectively.

- organize events or activities - Assessment workshops (design, implementation, close the loop), resources website page, presentations (identifying measures and setting targets, curriculum mapping, writing SLOs) – In accordance to the needs of each program.
- negotiate with others - Manage assessment activities with people of widespread expertise and perspectives – Experts in their field working together to best understand student learning and make continuous program improvements. Agreeing on shared values contributes to a collaborative working environment.
- ensure they work together effectively - Motivate everyone involved in assessment to stay engaged in the process, provide stakeholders with needed evidence to help them make informed decisions.

i. **Coordinate (What a Coordinator does)**

(v.) brings the different elements of (a complex activity or organization) into a harmonious or efficient relationship effectively, or match or harmonize attractively.

- the different elements – Assessment design (writing SLOs, choosing measures, deciding targets, analyzing data), assessment policy and process, well-defined assessment language/vocabulary and working with people of diverse knowledge/perspectives.
- into a harmonious or efficient relationship effectively - assessment planning (prioritization to avoid lapses in assessment cycles, timeline creation), assessment review (assure quality, provide feedback).

ii. **Collaboration**

- **A successful collaboration requires** – an open-mind, good listeners, the ability to work well with people of diverse experiences/perspectives, the willingness to value others' thoughts, trust (dependable, knowledgeable, supportive, respectful), clear communication, a timeline (deadlines, responsibilities), a creative/positive working environment.
- **Administrators** – provide them evidence that supports informed, strategic decision-making, liaison (providing updates about assessment initiatives)
- **Faculty and Program Directors (Chairpersons)** – design assessment plans, structure a timeline for data collection, provide suggestions about how to close the loop/analyze data, report assessment data clearly.
- **Other assessment experts** – facilitate college and university-level assessment reporting
- **Students** – sharing assessment plans (goals, SLO's, rubrics), curriculum maps
- **Office of Planning and Analysis** – locate institutional data
- **Assessment Committees/Councils** – contribute to the development of assessment policies/practices
- **Accreditation Agencies** – communicate programs assessment practices, serve as a liaison between program faculty and review committee

iii. **Communicate**

- Clearly communicate to a wide-ranging audience.
- Consistent, regular communication using multiple mediums (email, video, website)
- Use, or adopt, a well-defined, mutual assessment language/vocabulary.
- Be open to hear others' thoughts, critically listen (tone/inflections so as to learn others' values/passions).
- Interactions and communications should be respectful and thoughtful to foster a collaborative working environment and build trusting relationships with colleagues.
- Successful collaborations and good assessment practices are achieved through clear and consistent communication of assessment guidelines, policies, expectations, and benefits.



iv. Support

- Hired as experts who support programs in their assessment efforts
 - Provide guidance on all aspects of assessment planning (goals, SLOs, measures, targets, survey writing)
 - Encourage faculty to stay engaged in the process through reminder emails, discussions, timeline development, encouragement
 - Provide assistance with data collection, reporting
 - Collaborate on assessment projects (curriculum mapping)
- Alleviate faculty time
 - Document assessment plans, rubrics, timelines, surveys, curriculum maps as they are determined, serve as a repository for data, manage assessment documents (reports, rubrics, samples student work, surveys), locate requested data
- Deliver trainings on software used to facilitate assessment
 - Knowledgeable about the University's assessment management software (creating assessment plan templates, reporting, inputting/extracting data)
- Lead assessment presentations for faculty/staff professional development

v. Evaluate

- The analysis and reporting of program assessment data should be conducted by program faculty
- The assessment coordinator can serve programs in this process by informing them of
 - observed data trends
 - correlations between data sets
 - inconsistencies in data results
- Evaluate submitted assessment reports to confirm quality assurance (alignment, collecting meaningful data - meeting university requirements or addressing accreditation competencies)
- Ensure that assessment is completed ethically (report aggregate data)
- Provide feedback (assessment letter with recommendations, memorandum with strengths/weaknesses, rubric, resources)

vi. Plan/Make Assessment Manageable for Faculty

- Formulate a timeline
 - deadlines for assessment plan design
 - data collection (who, what, where, when)
 - reporting deadlines
 - coordinator can send reminders to faculty
- Prioritize
 - if the coordinator oversees assessment for many programs, identifying and prioritizing individual needs to avoid lapses in the assessment cycle will also require considerable planning
- Involvement in committees/councils
 - central in assessment design, policy and process development; bridging councils and faculty

III. Essential Knowledge and Skills

i. Knowledge

- Assessment design
 - Writing student learning outcomes (SMART-Specific, Measureable, Authentic, Realistic, Timely)
 - Choosing assessment measures (which would provide the most reliable/telling data of student learning?)
 - Rubric design (writing rubrics that are meaningful, useful for everyone-including students)
 - Surveying (how to write questions/responses, how to increase survey response rates)
 - Sampling
 - Determining thresholds (targets)
 - Analyzing data (identifying ways to use assessment results for program improvement)
 - Reporting (clearly communicating assessment results)
 - Data collection schedule (when should data be collected during the course of study, formative, summative?)
 - Mapping curriculum
- Assessment theory
- Methodologies
 - Summative/Formative, Qualitative/Quantitative, Embedded/Add-on Assessment
- Tools
 - Curriculum Mapping (portfolios, rubric, focus groups)
- Best practices
 - Triangulation, Bloom's Taxonomy-action verbs in SLOs
- Ethics
 - Proper use/reporting of data
- History/context
- Assessment policies governed by their campus
- Assessment standards established by the university's or program's accrediting body

ii. Skills

- Organization
 - Working with multiple programs on unique projects; build a culture of inquiry
- Oral and written communication
 - Clearly communicate deadlines, policies
- Problem solving
- Attention to detail
 - Creating timelines, working with data
- Prioritization
 - Multiple, overlapping, diverse projects
- Planning
 - Enhancing assessment within the campus community
- Time management
 - Manage time during busy parts of the year (beginning/end of the semester, accreditation site visits, reporting deadlines), keep busy during lighter parts of the year (assessment research, prepare articles/presentations)
- Technical proficiency
 - Assessment management software, Excel, Word

IV. Contributions to an Assessment Culture: Disposition, Leadership, Liaison

i. Disposition

- To create a comfortable and productive working environment
 - Team-oriented
 - Promote a collegial atmosphere
 - Possess strong interpersonal skills
 - Have exceptional relationship building skills
- To guide programs to make continuous improvements that enhance student learning
 - Strong work ethic
 - Honesty
 - Dedication
 - Ownership of personal performance goals
- To balance, manage and prioritize a diverse workload
 - Energetic
 - Ambitious
 - Self-directive and attentive to detail
- Be mindful that faculty are very dedicated to and passionate for the subject area, student learning, and the program
 - Flexible
 - Open-minded
 - Passionate

ii. Leadership

- A strong leader is essential for programs to work through the design process
 - sharing assessment knowledge
 - offering support
 - assuring quality
 - providing clear direction
 - identifying/defining goals
 - communicating the big picture



Coordinator Definition (How a Coordinator is Described)

Coordinator (adj.) “Equal in rank or importance”

- A person serving in this position should be viewed by their colleagues as an equal to build trust and credibility for successful collaboration.
- These could be earned through educational background, experience, or expertise, but more notably through the coordinator’s regular interactions with program faculty.

iii. Liaison

- Communicates between administrators, faculty, students, accreditors, or industry professionals.
- Assessment coordinators need to be effective communicators so that they can deliver information accurately and effectively to a broad audience, as they are looked to as a source for needed information.
- Coordinators must be involved with assessment activities within their unit and connected with other assessment experts across campus to be able to keep appropriate constituents well informed about assessment policies, successes, challenges, initiatives, or projects.

Conclusion

V. Lessons Learned and Further Development of the Position

- Importance of strategically analyzing subcultures
 - Identify assessment champions/skeptics
 - Learn what each program values most
 - Learn what engages, motivates and excites members about their program. What are they passionate about?
 - Demonstrate a genuine interest in the people, program/discipline, and future aspirations
 - Diligently seek out resources to support faculty assessment work.
 - Bridge networking gaps among faculty in the department, college, institution and beyond.

Conclusion

- A culture of inquiry is dependent on connecting with subcultural values.
- Cultural shifts in regards to student learning do not happen overnight.
- The demand for assessment professionals is still rising-heightened awareness of increasing competition, especially with programs going online.
- Future preparation – staying in front of the changes that are shaping higher education.