



What is Assurance of Learning (AoL)?

Assurance of Learning is a cost-effective mechanism for us to demonstrate that our students are learning what we say they will. It involves first understanding the intended learning goals and outcomes for a program, and then ensuring that the program's curriculum provides space for these goals and outcomes to be introduced, reinforced and mastered. Then, at regular intervals, the efficacy of the program is reviewed through direct and indirect assessment of student learning.

By engaging in a robust AoL system, we are able to examine what we are doing well, and consider approaches that allow us to build from these strengths. From a mindset of appreciative inquiry, we highlight the successes, and use those stories to influence areas where we have opportunity for growth and continuous improvement. It is an integral aspect of building and managing our curricular offerings at Bentley, and as such faculty must have ownership over this process.

AoL refers to the assessment of student learning in a program, not in individual courses.

What AoL is Not:

Assurance of Learning is not about standardized tests, making life overly difficult or complex, or individual faculty performance evaluation. It is not done on an ad hoc basis, and we are "not trying to produce publishable data." (Walvoord, 2004)

What is Required of AoL?

We engage in AoL because we want to ensure that we are providing the best education to our students. While our accreditors do require regular assessment of student learning, we understand that we gain the benefits to these processes beyond accreditation compliance.

It is important to note that our accreditors do not require highly complex approaches to assessing student learning. Their requirements are straightforward, and thus as an institution we develop assessment practices that are clear to faculty, benefit our students, and allow for continued growth and improvement. Here is some of what our accreditors say about AoL:

AACSB: "The school uses well-documented assurance of learning (AoL) processes that include direct and indirect measures for ensuring the quality of all degree programs that are deemed in scope for accreditation purposes. The results of the school's AoL work leads to curricular and process improvements." (2020 Standards, p. 41)

NECHE: "The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, competencies, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered.

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with

established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters.” (NECHE, Standard 4)

What is not required of AoL Processes?

Misconceptions about what is required of AoL are common among many campuses. Here we highlight what is NOT required, to ensure that our processes continue to be useful, clear, and of best use to students and faculty.

- We are not required to utilize a standard set of learning goals and objectives. The Bentley faculty determines those, for our students and programs.
- We are not required to assess every student, every year.
- We are not required to use specific tools and measurement methods. We determine what is best.
- We are not required to assess every goal, every year.
- We are not required to benchmark our outcomes against other institutions.

What are examples of strong assessment practices?

Assurance of Learning depends on direct assessment measures and tools. These measures and tools provide demonstrable evidence of student learning. Examples include course embedded measures such as assignments, test questions, projects, logs, portfolios and observations that are often assessed with a rubric.

Strong assessment practices also include regular reviews of the program’s curriculum and the intended learning goals and outcomes, in relation to student learning assessment. Ensuring that the curriculum provides proper coverage of the intended goals and outcomes is crucial to assuring learner success.

What does “closing the loop” mean?

Closing the loop is the development of an action plan resulting from assessment analysis. We celebrate areas where we are meeting our benchmarks/performance thresholds, and utilize those areas to inform the learning outcomes where we have not met our benchmark goals. The instructional design and assurance of learning team at Bentley will help program faculty review the student learning data to maximize the development of an actionable plan.

Closing the loop consists of two parts:

1. Implementing the action plan
2. Measuring a second time

Here are some actions that can be taken as part of “closing the loop”

- Considerations to course sequencing/pre-requisites
- Modifying courses
- Further coordination amongst courses
- Faculty development
- Developing new courses
- New extracurricular activities