

Developing an Outline for Assessing Learning Outcomes

Troy Harding, Engineering Technology (tdh@ksu.edu)

Patricia Marsh, Assessment & Program Review (pmarsh@k-state.edu)

Kansas State University

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*Main Source: Academic Chairs Conference, February 2004, Orlando, Florida
Susan Hatfield, Winona State University, Shatfield@winona.edu*

The Workshop Series

Understanding Assessment

Departmental Assessment Plans, Nuts and Bolts:

- Common Language & Approaches to Student Learning Outcomes**
- Developing an Outline for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**
- Identifying the Tools for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**
- Developing a Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning in a Degree Program**

A Brief Review

Assessment

Assessment is:

- ✓ an ongoing process,
- ✓ aimed at understanding and improving student learning.

It involves:

- ✓ making our expectations explicit and public,
- ✓ setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality,
- ✓ systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards,
- ✓ using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

Assessment

When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
- Assessment requires attention to outcomes, but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.

Please refer to handout.

Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA)

<http://www.ncacihe.org/>

- In 2002, K-State was reaccredited by NCA for another 10 years, however, two main areas that need improvement were identified:
 - (1) Assessment of student learning, and
 - (2) Diversity education
- **Thus, the institution was granted reaccreditation with the *condition* that an Assessment Focused Visit will be conducted in spring 2005.**

Highlights from NCA's Observations of Assessment K-State, October 2001

Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow up:

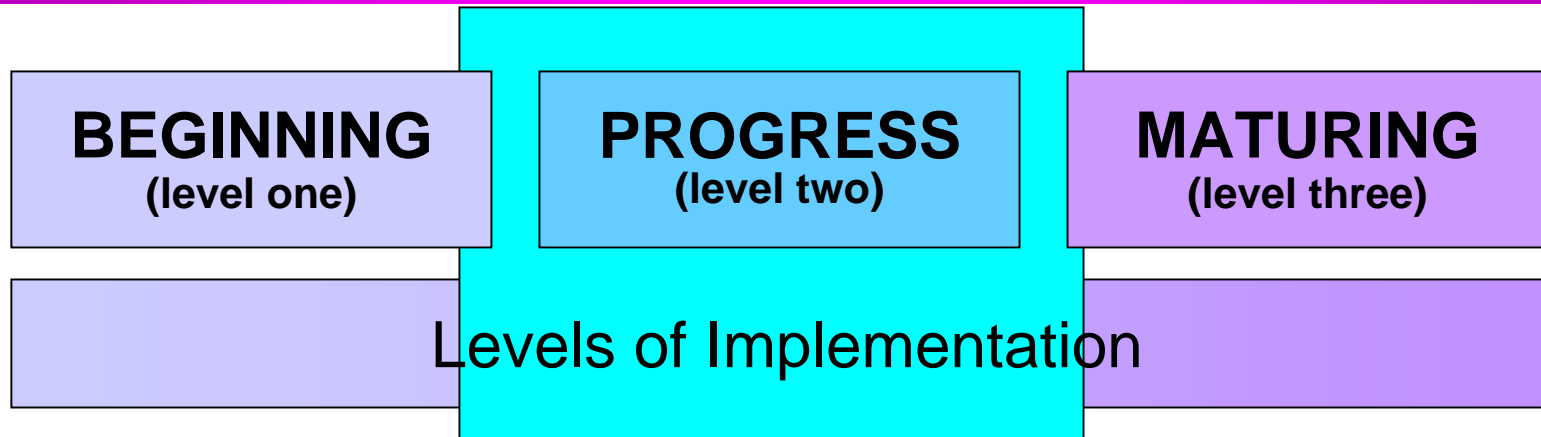
- ⊗ “There is not presently a coherent, widespread understanding that the purpose of assessment is the continuous improvement of student learning”
- ⊗ “Faculty ownership of assessment in academic programs has not developed consistently across campus, and assessment in graduate education has not begun.
- ⊗ “Students have not participated in the development or implementation of the University's assessment program.”

Highlights from NCA's Observations of Assessment K-State, October 2001

Evidence that requires institutional attention and Commission follow up (continued):

- ☒ “The K-State assessment program is in its infancy; the supporting infrastructure has not been fully developed. ... to develop the structures needed for
 - a) educating the University community about assessment,
 - b) providing administrative leadership that will lead to embedding the assessment process in the institutional culture, and
 - c) ensuring the sustainability of the assessment program.”

Maturing Assessment



BEGINNING
(level one)

PROGRESS
(level two)

MATURING
(level three)

Levels of Implementation

- I. Institutional Culture**
 - a) Collective/ Shared Values
 - b) Mission

- II. Shared Responsibility**
 - a) Faculty
 - b) Administration and Board
 - c) Students

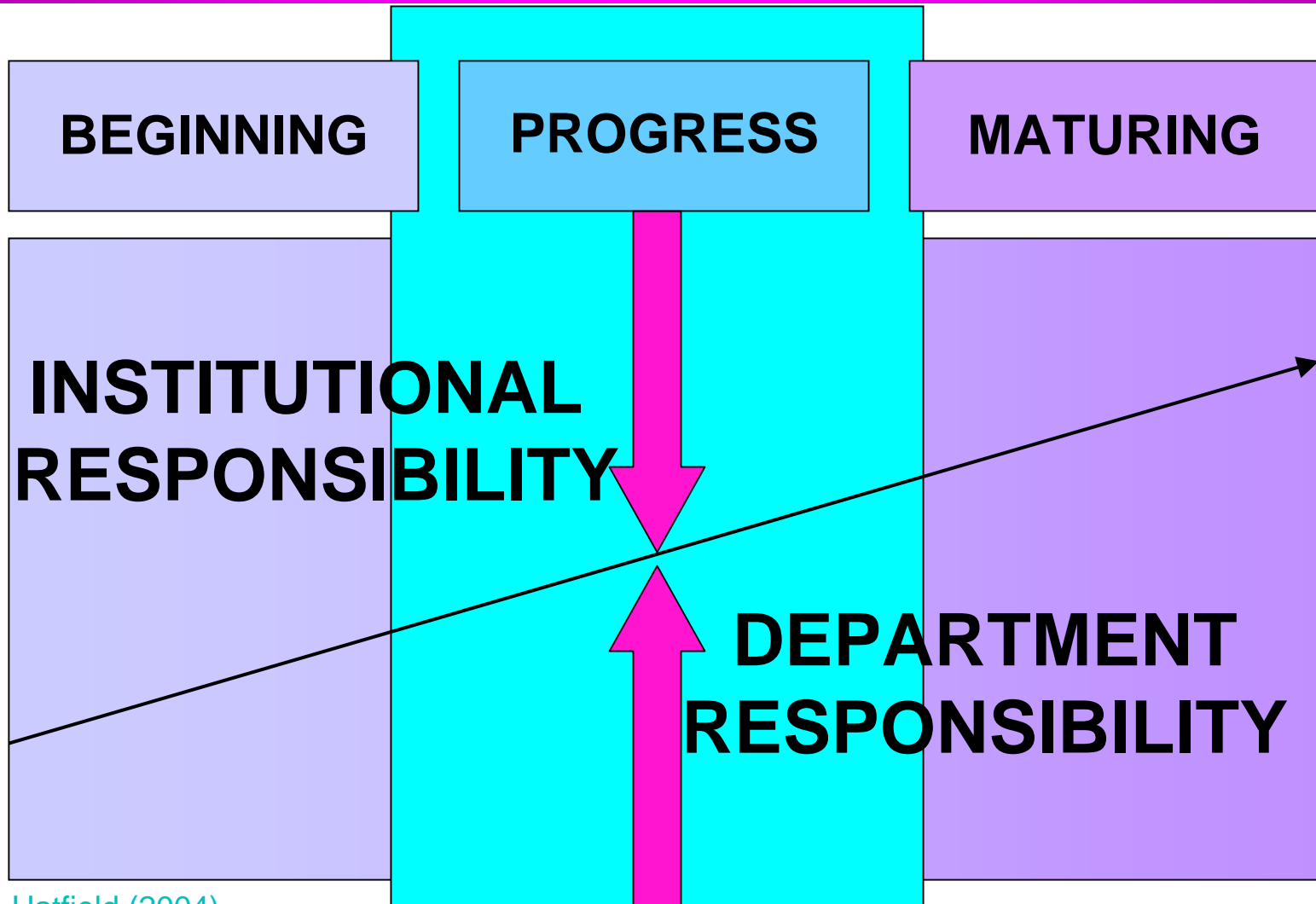
- III. Institutional Support**
 - a) Resources
 - b) Structures

- IV. Efficacy of Assessment**

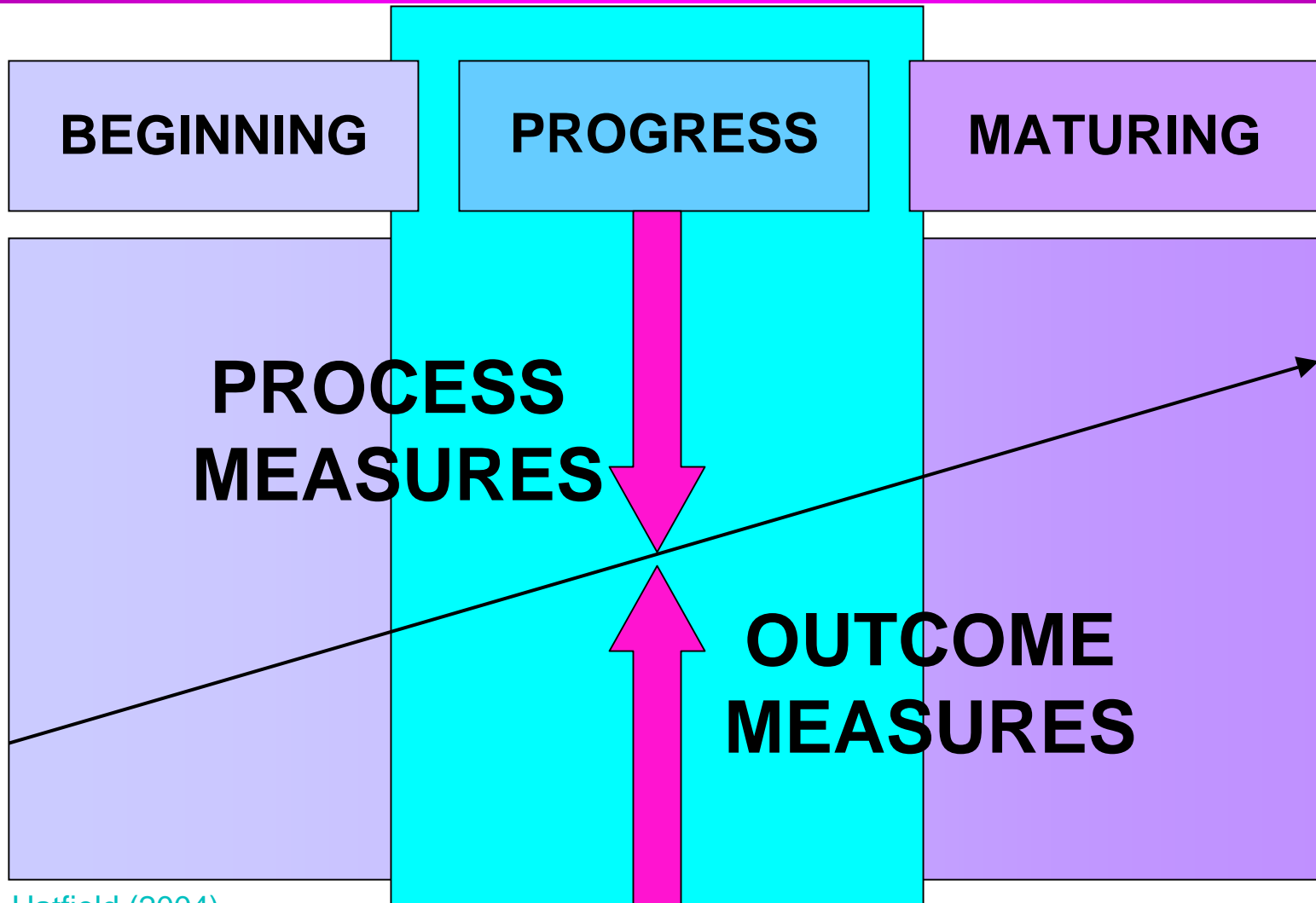
Understanding Assessment

- **Assessment initiatives evolve**

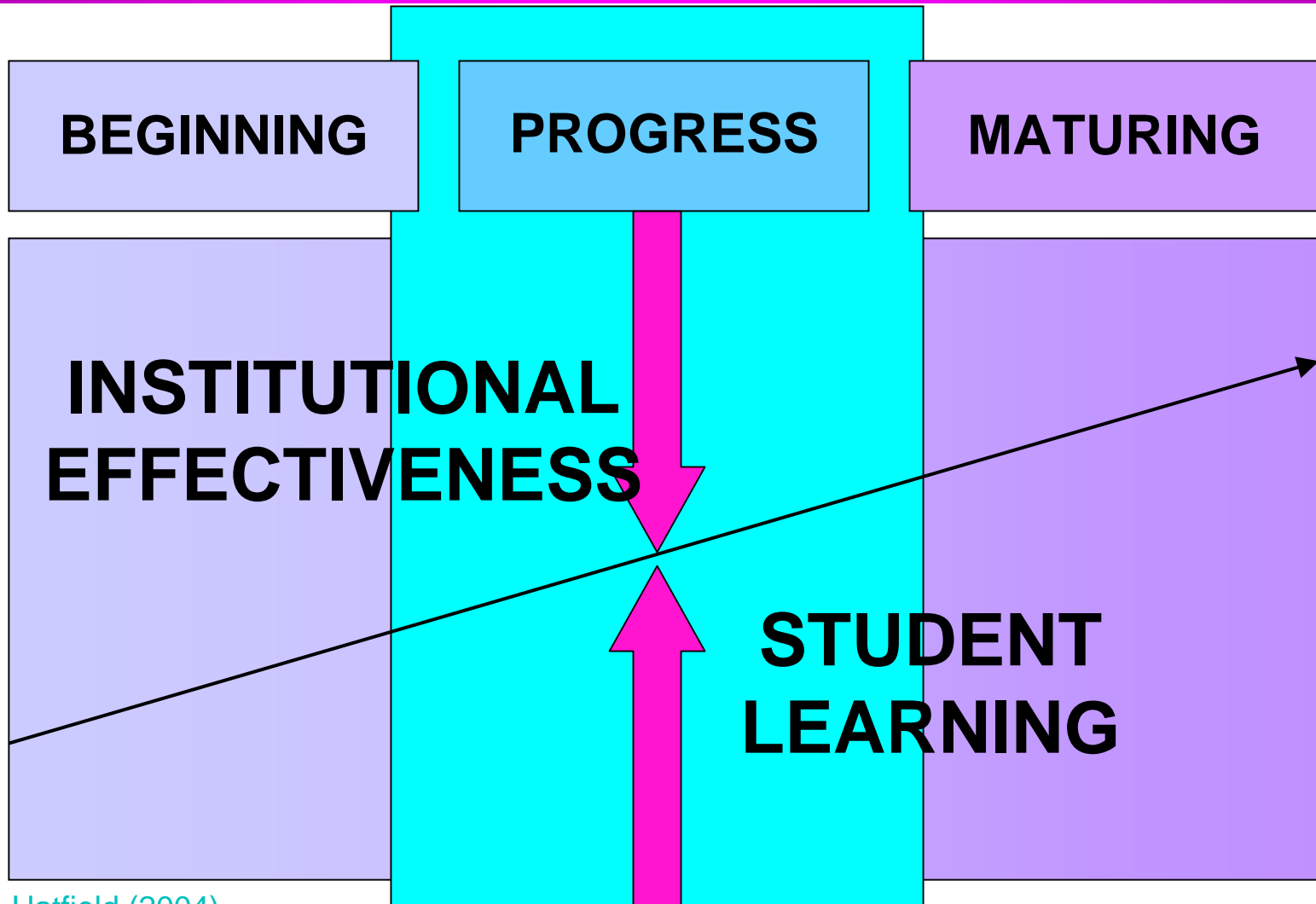
Maturing Assessment



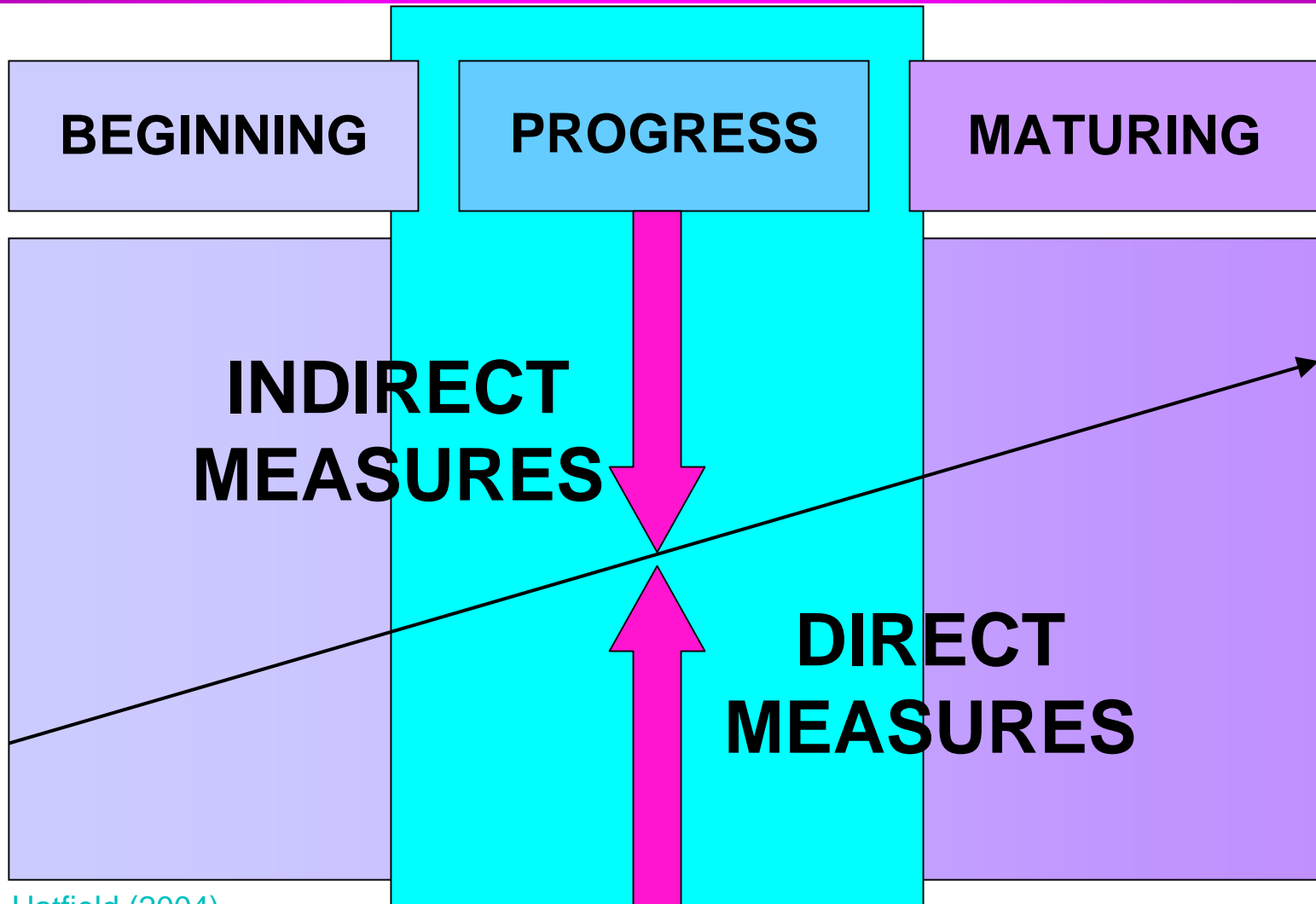
Maturing Assessment



Maturing Assessment



Maturing Assessment



Understanding Assessment

- **Assessment is about measuring student learning, not about teaching**
 - **Assumes that quality teaching has been established.**

Student Learning Outcomes

They are:

- Learner Centered
- Specific
- Action oriented
- Cognitively Appropriate

Student Learning Outcomes

Basic Format:

- Students will be able to <<action verb>> <<something>>

Example:

- Students will be able to apply research methodologies to examine issues within the discipline.

Student Learning Outcomes

- How to revise student learning outcomes into a simpler and easier to use format.
- The proposed format will help in the selection of applicable assessment tools, measures, assignments, performances, etc.

Example #1

Gather factual information and apply it to a given problem in a manner that is relevant, clear, comprehensive, and conscious of possible bias in the information selected.

BETTER: Students will be able to apply factual information to a problem.

COMPONENTS:

Relevance

Clarity

Comprehensiveness

Aware of Bias

-
- **Identify the components of successful achievement of the outcome.**

Things to think about:

- What are we looking for?
- What do we want our students to achieve?

Understanding Assessment

➤ **Language of Assessment**

Language of Assessment

- A. Specific accomplishments to be achieved
OUTCOMES
- B. The key elements related to the accomplishment
COMPONENTS
- C. Data indicating degree of achievement
EVALUATIVE CRITERIA
- D. The objects of analysis: **OBJECTS**
(e.g., assignment, performances, speeches, etc.)

Components

Degree Program

Outcome Outcome Outcome Outcome Outcome

Components



Example

Students will be able to apply factual information to a problem.

Components

Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Comprehensiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Aware of Bias	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evaluative
Criteria

Hands-on Exercise

Select one of your degree program student learning outcomes and identify its key components.

- » Utilize the list of example “components” (in your handout).

Feel free to work on a second learning outcome, if time permits.

Examples

- Organization, Structure
- Level of understanding
- Complexity of ideas
- Support for ideas
- Coherence of presentation
- Knowledge of material
- Awareness of audience
- Mechanics: Writing, Language, Style
- Problem Identification

*Please refer to handout
for more examples*

Degree Program

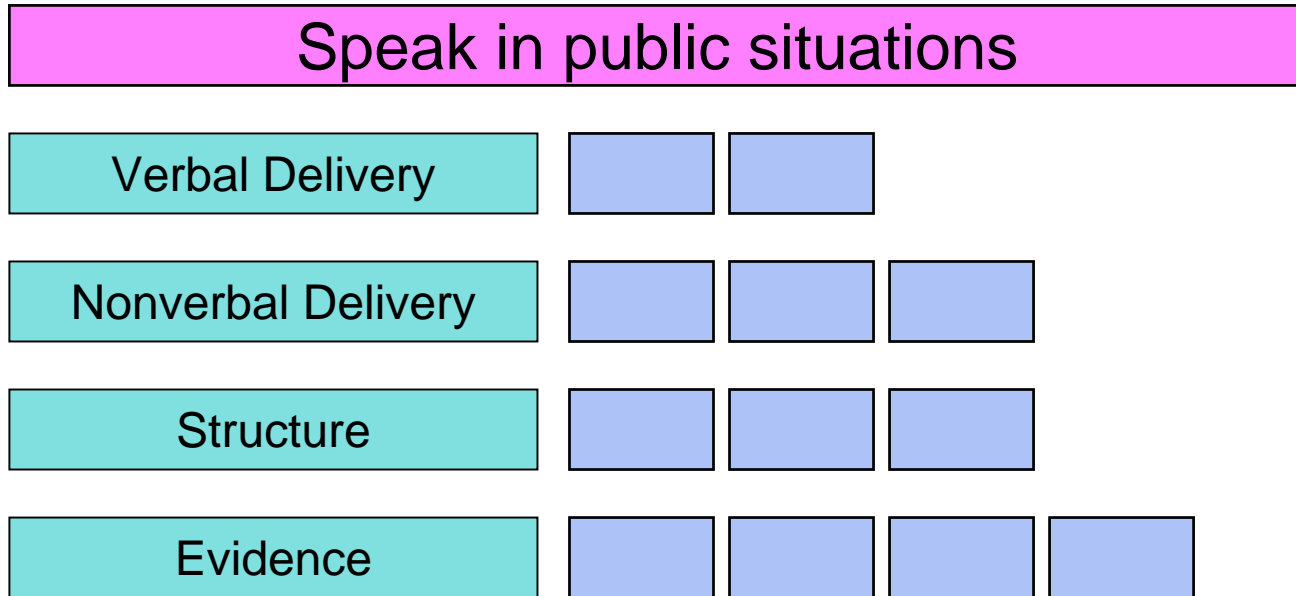
Student Learning Outcomes of the Degree Program

Write (Written Communication)	Relate (Interpersonal Communication)	Speech (Verbal Communication)	Listen (Listening Skills)	Participate (Engaged & active Participation)
Component	Component	Component	Component	Component
Component	Component	Component	Component	Component
Component	Component		Component	Component
Component				

Evaluative Criteria

- Scale or description for assessing each of the components
- Two to Five-point scales for each component are typical. Each department will determine the appropriate performance range for their programs.

Example Layout



Speak in public situations

Verbal Delivery	1 Several	2 Some	3 Few fluency problems		
Nonverbal Delivery	1 Distracting	2	3	4	5 Enhancing
Structure	1 Disconnected	2 Connected	3 Integrated		
Evidence	Doesn't support	Sometimes	Always supports		

Evaluative criteria may be numerical, descriptive, or both.

Hands-on Exercise

Evaluative Criteria

- Once the components of the student learning outcome(s) have been identified, then identify at least **two** evaluative criteria.
 - **Characteristics or criteria of the effective, accurate, successful, or levels that demonstrated what was learned.**

Examples

Level or degree:

- Accurate, Correct
- Depth, Detail
- Coherence, Flow
- Complete, Thorough
- Integration
- Creative, Inventive
- Evidence based, supported
- Engaging, enhancing
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Presence, Absence

*Please refer to handout
for more examples*

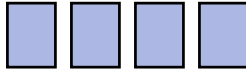
Degree Program

Outcome

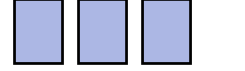
Outcome

Outcome

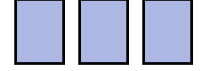
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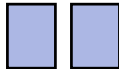
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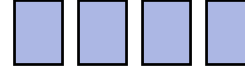
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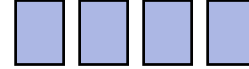
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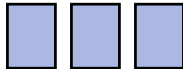
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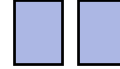
Component



Component



Component



Component



List of possible sources of evidence (objects)

Assignments

Practicum

Word Problem

Work of Art

Recital

Presentation

Speech

Lab report

Essay

Memo

Journal

Literature
Review

Letter

Writing
(student learning
outcome)

Poster

Pamphlet

*Mechanics
*Style
*Voice
*Structure

Essay

Post
Analysis

Application
Paper

Critique

Tasks for Follow-up Workshop

We will meet again in two weeks, Tuesday April 20th.

Be prepared to share the:

- » 1. Components you have identified for the 2 – 4 student learning outcomes for your degree program.
- » 2. Evaluative criteria you have developed for these learning outcomes.
- » 3. Experiences your department has had with these exercises.