

An Introduction to Performance Standards

“aka Benchmarks”

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Learning Outcomes

- At the conclusion of today's presentation, the participant will:
 - Define local benchmarks.
 - Discern the appropriate use of grades in setting local benchmarks.
 - Describe at least two strategies for setting specific and appropriate local benchmarks.
 - Explain how benchmarks are used.

Types of Benchmarks or Standards

- Suskie (2009) identifies 10 types of benchmarks or standards.
- Today's presentation will focus on local benchmarks.
- Also known as competency-based or criterion-referenced standards, local benchmarks tell us whether or not students are meeting our own expectations.

Local Benchmarks

Advantages

- Faculty ownership
- Employers, legislators, and other stakeholders tend to support these standards

Potential Pitfalls

- Need to be clearly defensible

Defensible? Why or Why Not?

- N 593 Research Methodology
- SLO: The graduate student will articulate a comprehensive overview of the research process in nursing.
- Artifact: Quizzes
- Benchmark: All of the students will achieve a grade of B- or better on every quiz.



Is this Benchmark Defensible? Why or Why Not?

- N 593 Research Methodology
- SLO: The graduate student will critique qualitative and quantitative research.
- Benchmark: 80% of students will attain a grade of B or better on the research critique assignment.



Specific and Appropriate Local Benchmarks

- Consider the implications of your decisions.
 - Take context into account.
 - Ask yourself if the benchmark is too high or too low.
 - Benchmarks should be challenging but attainable (AACSB, 2013).
 - How high are the stakes?
 - Is it acceptable if only 80% of accounting majors can correctly file a tax return?
 - Is it acceptable if only 80% of nursing majors can calculate medication doses?
 - Consider the “embarrassment factor” (Suskie, 2015a).

Specific and Appropriate Local Benchmarks

- Know how the results will be used.
 - Improvement vs. status quo
 - If improvement, then incremental benchmarks will be necessary
 - If status quo, then a lower benchmark is likely indicated
- Do some research.
 - Bring in external information
 - Look for disciplinary standards
 - Disciplinary organizations
 - Peer programs

Specific and Appropriate Local Benchmarks

- Involve others in the process.
 - We have to talk to each other!
- Use samples of prior student work
- Consider rubric criteria instead of grades.
 - Minimum standard for every trait
 - Minimum standard for the sum of all traits
 - Minimum standard for certain traits
- Revisit and refine benchmarks on a cycle.

Use Benchmark Results to Close the Loop!

- If students do not consistently meet the benchmark, then curricular or pedagogical changes may be warranted.



References

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- Suskie, L. (2015 b, November 6). *Linda Suskie at University of Dayton* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y860yBacpo>