

Shaping a Theological Curriculum and Syllabus

What is the purpose of the curriculum or programme? What are the desired outcomes or results for this curriculum? Determine if it is meeting the need. What is the market? What has been the success rate, and how has that been measured? Have there been any problems? If so, identify them. Develop a plan to achieve the desired outcomes. Identify political issues that must be navigated in order to win approval and implement the curriculum.

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- I. **Typically, curricula fit relatively traditional patterns.** Until recently, they seldom addressed outcomes, and then primarily in response to external demands. Unless you know the purpose and desired results of a curriculum, any effort to shape it will likely not produce maximum results. It reminds me of the answer the cat gave Alice (*Alice in Wonderland*) when she asked which road she should take.
 - A. What is the purpose of the curriculum? What are the desired outcomes or results? How comprehensive are the outcomes? Will they produce satisfactory results?
 1. One way to approach the task is to ask: What does the student need to know? What does the student need to know how to do? What kind of person should the student be? How should it shape the student's character?
 - B. How well is the current curriculum functioning? What deficiencies are apparent?
 1. Is it meeting the need in the market, whether church or other Christian organizations?
 2. What is the success rate? How has that been determined? How does it compare to other schools?

II. Develop a plan to achieve the desired result.

- A. Appoint a committee to revise the curriculum, giving careful attention to the composition of the committee.
 - 1. Appoint only those who will work constructively together to accomplish the task. Be sure they have the expertise to address deficiencies.
 - 2. Clarify the task and the expected results or outcomes from the curriculum that will be developed. The interrelatedness and integrative nature of the curriculum should be clear.
 - 3. Plan how the recommended curriculum will be presented for approval to ensure the best possible result.
 - 4. Curricular revisions or development are always political processes. Unless that is understood (and even when it is understood), there may be undesirable results.

- B. Acknowledge that the curriculum will not achieve the desired results unless the right faculty members teach it. Unless there is an alignment between the faculty and the curriculum, the priorities of the faculty will prevail in regard to the final outcome.
 - 1. The institution needs to give careful attention to the hiring of faculty in terms of developing an institutional culture and achieving the goals of the institution.