

The PEARL Cycle

By Jeremy Penn and Jessica Jonson
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Office of Undergraduate Studies

An overview of the PEARL cycle is shown in Figure 1.

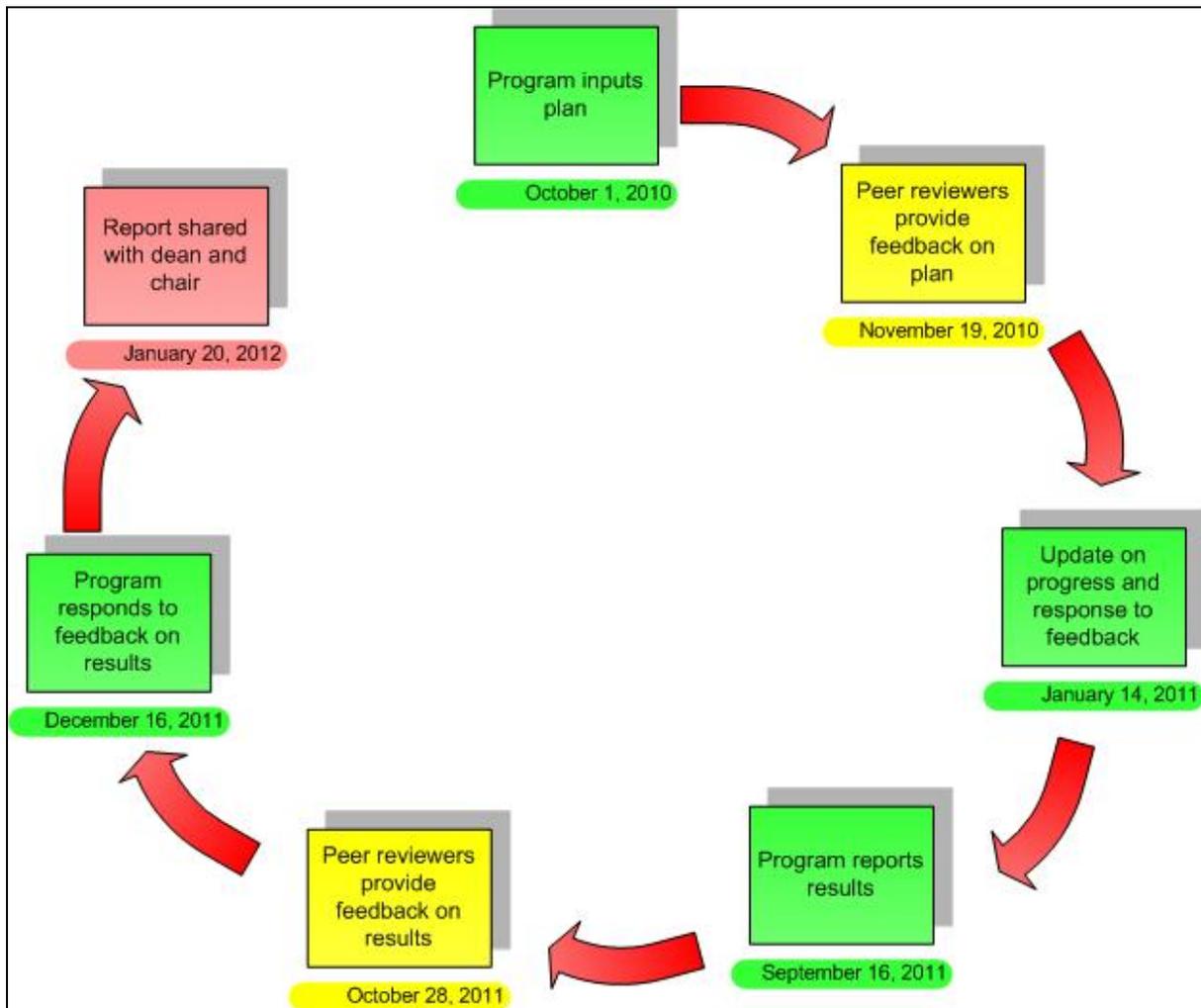


Figure 1: The PEARL cycle.

In the first step, “Programs input plan,” PEARL Program Leaders work together with the faculty or staff members, department chairs and accreditors (as applicable) to identify the learning outcomes and assessment measures to be used in this assessment cycle. Programs are asked to select about 3 student learning or development outcomes for each PEARL cycle (outcomes can be repeated in consecutive cycles if desired). The Program Leader enters this information, called the “PEARL Plan,” into the PEARL software.

Next, the PEARL Peer Reviewers use the PEARL Rubric – created and modified by the Peer Reviewers – to provide coaching and feedback on the assessment plans. Peer review is not intended to be an approval process. Rather, feedback is provided to provide suggestions and spur

discussion on ways the assessment activity might be improved. Therefore, programs may implement assessment plans immediately, without needing to wait for the feedback from the Peer Reviewers.

The third step in the process has been revised in response to feedback received from a number of participants. In this step Program Leaders are asked to provide an update on the progress of their assessment plans for that assessment cycle. This update will be included in the report of activity that is shared with the deans and department chairs each February. This will provide deans and chairs with information regarding progress in assessment from the previous academic year and in the current academic year. During this step Program Leaders also have the opportunity to respond to the feedback from the Peer Reviewers. Program Leaders are not required to respond to every piece of feedback and may use the response process as a way to store and archive thoughts and reflections about how well the assessment process is working and decisions or discussion that were held regarding these processes.

At the end of the spring semester, programs finish their data collection and begin analyzing, interpreting, and sharing those data to identify potential program improvements and may begin developing the report of results. Results should be entered into PEARL by the middle of September.

The Peer Reviewers review the PEARL Results and provide coaching and feedback. Program Leaders have one additional opportunity to respond to feedback. Again, Program Leaders are not required to address every piece of feedback and can use this opportunity to reflect on the assessment process and archive reflections and thoughts about the assessment experience.

Finally, completed reports are shared with the deans and department chairs and are summarized for inclusion in institutional-level reports.