Approach to Identifying Program Outcomes

When identifying the proposed curriculum for the new program, a series of questions should be asked as related to the learning outcomes for the curriculum:

- How will the learning outcomes for the proposed curriculum be decided?
- Does a body of knowledge exist for the subject matter in the curriculum and does it provide guidance as to the learning outcomes to be covered?
- If no body of knowledge exists, how will learning outcomes be identified?
- If the learning outcomes exist, how will the appropriate learning outcomes be selected and validated?

One method of research that can help provide answers to these questions is a Delphi Study (a three-round survey method) to assist with identification and narrowing the possible learning outcomes for a program. In the Delphi methodology, the first questionnaire is open-ended and developed based on a literature review and preliminary conversations with possible program stakeholders. Possible learning outcomes are identified based on the information gathered in the first open survey. These identified learning outcomes for the new curriculum for undergraduates are placed in a Likert-type survey instruments in round two and three. In two, stakeholders are asked to rate importance of each outcome that was identified in round one and add any additional learning outcomes that are missing from the instrument. The results of round two allows a ranked list to be prepared, which is then placed in the round three survey. Per the Delphi method, the items that will be included in survey three will be those items with rankings that fall in the interquartile range. Those items not in the interquartile range from the second survey will be removed from survey three. In survey three, the respondents will be asked to confirm the ratings and hours of study that should be devoted to each item and/or re-rank and provide detailed explanations as to why the change in the ratings. In round three, stakeholders are asked to again rank the list based on most important outcomes to least. By the end of round three, a consensus should be reached as to the top learning outcomes, which should be included in the curriculum.

The Delphi Study technique can confirm and provide validation as to the learning outcomes, which should be included in a new or revised curriculum.

See a sample survey for the BSTOM program on the pages 47-52.