



## The Residential Curriculum Self-Assessment Instrument



# Assessing A Residential Curriculum

A residential curriculum represents a new way of thinking and doing the work of student affairs and residence life professionals. As such, there is a need to identify common sets of best practices by which a department, division, or institution can self-assess their progress in becoming a learning-centered organization. The following instrument was developed to aid individuals in this process.

## What is a Residential Curriculum?

A “residential curriculum” is an intentional process used in college and university residence life and education programs that borrows from classroom curricular methods to structure learning opportunities for residential students. First implemented at the University of Delaware in the early 2000s, the idea of a residential curriculum was detailed in a **2006 article, “Beyond seat time and student satisfaction: A curricular approach to residential education,” in *About Campus* magazine by Kerr and Tweedy**. This approach led to the establishment of **ACPA’s Residential Curriculum Institute (RCI)** in 2007. Since then, the curricular approach has become increasingly common and popular. In his 2015 work, ***Student Learning in College Residence Halls***, Blimling provides an overview of the curricular approach and related models for designing residential education initiatives. A follow up article in 2017, **“Shifting to curricular approaches to learning beyond the classroom,”** by Kerr, Tweedy, Edwards, and Kimmel, further refined the approach. Although initially focused on the residential environment, a curricular approach can be utilized in any co-curricular environment, including across an entire student affairs division.

## How the Instrument Was Developed

Combined with our in-house expertise, these criteria and areas of assessment were developed from the “10 Essential Elements” outlined by Kerr, Tweedy, Edwards, and Kimmel (2017). They also represent some of the common “best practices” seen at several of the schools with which RoomPact works. As knowledge develops in this area, we hope to continually revise and update these standards. If you have feedback or suggestions, please reach out to us at [team@roompact.com](mailto:team@roompact.com).

## Share and Share Alike

RoomPact is committed to helping the student affairs and housing profession by providing free tools and resources. As such, this guide is provided for free. You can distribute it, modify it, and use it as you see fit. We only ask that you give us credit and use it for non-commercial purposes.

## References

- Blimling, G. S. (2015). *Student learning in college residence halls: What works, what doesn't, and why*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kerr, K. G., & Tweedy, J. (2006, November/December). Beyond seat time and student satisfaction: A curricular approach to residential education. *About Campus*, 11(5), 9-15.
- Kerr, K. G., Tweedy, J., Edwards, K. E., & Kimmel, D. (2017, March-April). Shifting to curricular approaches to learning beyond the classroom. *About Campus*, 22(1), 22-31.  
doi:10.1002/abc.21279

# The Residential Curriculum Self-Assessment Instrument

The following Self-Assessment Instrument was developed by the educational professionals at Roompack to provide a free resource for schools implementing a curricular approach to their work. This document is intended for use by institutions to assess the strength of their current curricular efforts and identify areas for improvement. It is our hope that it will provide a standard by which schools can benchmark their efforts.

*The following scale can be used in completing the self-assessment. Data and supporting documentation should be available to justify assigned scores. Given differing institutional contexts, it may be decided that certain criteria may not apply.*

## Rating Scale:

1 = No Development

2 = Minimal Development

3 = Partial Development

4 = Substantial Development

5 = Full Development

Unk = There is not enough data available to make a determination. This status is unknown.

N/A = Due to institutional or contextual factors, or because of alternative curriculum design, this standard is not applicable.

## 1. Foundations

*Curricula are grounded in theory and developmental research and are also a product of the institutional contexts in which they are taught.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
1-1 Theories and research that support the curriculum are clearly identified and articulated.							
1-2 Institutional values and philosophy, as defined through institutional documents and statements, are present throughout the curriculum.							
1-3 The curriculum accounts for unique institutional characteristics and student demographics and composition. <i>(ex. urban/rural spaces, popular majors, student identities, etc.)</i>							

## 2. Educational Priority

An educational priority is an overall statement of student learning. The ultimate goal of a curriculum if it is successful.

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
2-1 There is a written statement of educational priority that clearly articulates what students will learn and/or be able to do.							
2-2 There is a clear distinction between a departmental mission statement ( <i>services, delivery, environment, etc.</i> ) and the educational priority ( <i>statement of learning</i> ).							
2-3 Is brief while providing all of the necessary information. ( <i>Typically 1-2 sentences.</i> )							

## 3. Learning Goals and Narratives

Learning goals identify components of an educational priority. If learning goals are achieved, they will lead to achievement of the educational priority. Narratives are brief paragraph descriptions of these goals that identify the reasoning, theory, and philosophy behind the goals.

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
3-1 Learning goals are tied to and aligned with the educational priority.							
3-2 There are a manageable number of learning goals identified that can be put into practice. ( <i>Typically 3-5 goals.</i> )							
3-3 Learning goals are clearly articulated statements of learning in 1-2 sentences and are not solely 1-2 word categories.							
3-4 Narratives are developed that provide (1) the reasoning behind why the goal is included, and (2) any theoretical or philosophic underpinnings.							

## 4. Learning Outcomes and Rubrics

*Learning outcomes further define each learning goal area into more measurable and discrete objectives. If learning outcomes are achieved, they reflect progress in achieving the overall learning goal area. Rubrics for each learning outcome define successive stages of knowledge as a student develops towards achievement of that outcome.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
4-1 Specific and measurable learning outcomes are written and defined for each learning goal area. <i>(Typically 3-6 learning outcomes per learning goal.)</i>							
4-2 Assessment measures and methods are identified for each learning outcome.							
4-3 Rubrics are developed that outline developmental learning stages for a student, through time, for each learning outcome.							
4-4 Defined learning outcomes are reasonably achievable within a student's time in residence.							

## Ways To Use This Instrument

There are a number of ways to use this instrument for continuous improvement. You may ask staff members to complete this assessment individually and then meet together as a team to discuss areas of agreement or divergence. This tool can also be useful for an external review team or as a part of a department's ongoing peer review process. Although some standards may not apply in all instances, nearly all are required for the full implementation of a true curriculum.

## Roompack Consulting and External Review

The educational professionals at Roompack provide many services that can help residential life departments. With special expertise in approaches to student learning and co-curricular life, our experts can help you in determining key strengths and areas for improvement in accordance with nationally accepted standards in the field. In addition, our training workshops provide everything one needs to train a staff to implement a residential curriculum.

## 5. Strategies and Lesson Plans, Sequencing and Scaffolding

Strategies are different methods for achieving learning outcomes and goals. Lesson plans articulate how to execute these strategies to achieve the desired strategy learning outcomes. The strategies should be sequenced and scaffolded to promote an iterative and cumulative learning process.

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
5-1 Learning strategies that go beyond just programmed events are identified and utilized, (ex. intentional conversations, floor meetings, newsletters, etc.)							
5-2 Lesson plans that reach towards the achievement of curriculum learning goals and outcomes are developed for each execution of a strategy.							
5-3 Each lesson plan articulates strategy-level learning outcomes that will be achieved and include measures and indicators of successful learning achievement.							
5-4 Properly trained professional educators are leaders in the development and implementation of lesson plans.							
5-5 The design and execution of lesson plans is sequenced to the time of year and level of development for the targeted audience of students.							
5-6 Lesson plans are scaffolded such that successive lesson plans build off of prior knowledge and skills acquired.							
5-7 Lesson plans include strategy-level assessment plans to determine if desired student learning is achieved.							
5-8 Lesson plans are revised based off of assessment data and feedback to be improved upon for future implementation.							
5-9 There is a plan in place to promote community development and cohesion alongside any curricular learning efforts.							

## 6. Assessment and Review

*Assessment occurs on a curriculum-wide basis, as well as on a student level basis. Through analysis and use of assessment data, a curriculum and its components can be improved. A peer review process allows inside and outside experts to help evaluate the effectiveness of the overall curriculum and provide suggestions for its improvement.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
6-1 Formative assessment data is collected about the overall curriculum planning and execution process and its effectiveness.							
6-2 Summative assessment data is collected about student achievement of stated learning goals and outcomes in order to gauge student learning success.							
6-3 Assessment data and analysis is regularly communicated to campus partners and other relevant educational partners.							
6-4 Assessment data and analysis is regularly communicated to the professional staff members and educators who design and execute the curriculum.							
6-5 Assessment data and analysis is regularly communicated to student staff members who execute the curriculum.							
6-6 Assessment data is regularly analyzed and used to enhance the effectiveness of the curriculum as a part of a commitment to continuous improvement.							
6-7 A curriculum review process is developed whereby the entire curriculum is reviewed by educational experts who provide guidance on its improvement.							
6-8 Suggestions for improvement made through a review process are acted upon and incorporated into future curricular planning.							

## 7. Branding and Communication

*Through branding and communication, institutions can promote buy in and investment from students, staff, and partners in the curriculum.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
7-1 Accessible marketing materials and documents are developed that articulate the purpose and goals behind the curriculum for various constituencies.							
7-2 The curriculum, its purpose, and its goals are communicated to students in accessible language that promotes investment and involvement.							
7-3 The curriculum, its purpose, and its goals are communicated to a student's family members, parents, and/or guardians in accessible language to promote investment and involvement.							
7-4 The curriculum, its purpose, and its goals are communicated to campus partners to promote investment and involvement.							
7-5 Staff members can articulate the purpose, goals, and philosophy behind the institution's curriculum development process and the curriculum itself.							

### About Roompact

Roompact is a software and consulting company that designs and creates solutions for residential education professionals. Our software is used by administrators and students alike to communicate, collaborate, and accomplish tasks more efficiently. Our consulting services enable schools to enhance student learning through the development of educational programs and residential curricula.

### Request A Demo or Inquire About Consulting

Reach out to us with questions, inquire about our software and consulting services, or just let us know what you think! You can email us at [team@roompact.com](mailto:team@roompact.com).



## 8. Partnerships and Special Programs

*A successful curriculum identifies partnerships with relevant offices and departments to promote seamless learning experiences for students. Not all educational opportunities in a curriculum need to be initiated and executed by the curriculum planners themselves.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
8-1 Partnerships are sought with departments that provide educational opportunities relevant to the achievement of the goals and outcomes of the curriculum.							
8-2 Campus partners are involved in the curriculum development process in a meaningful way.							
8-3 Any living learning communities or programs are integrated into the curriculum and may have their own supplementary curriculum.							
8-4 Residence hall associations and student leadership groups are advised and included in the execution of curriculum and in community development aims.							

## RoomPact Software Features

There are a number of features incorporated into RoomPact's software that can help housing and residential education professionals in their work.

- **Student Learning.** Designed with intentional learning models in mind, our software includes planning, management, and assessment features that are compatible with a range of approaches to student learning including programming, community development, and curricular models.
- **Management.** In addition to providing enhanced learning features, the RoomPact software also helps improve staff efficiency by reducing time spent on administrative tasks, freeing up staff to focus on what's most important. The RoomPact software reduces reliance on paper-based processes and makes real time information available on demand.
- **Technology.** When the RoomPact engineers design and update our software, they make sure it utilizes the most cutting-edge technologies and platforms. We are also committed to helping you get the most out of your data and integrating with the systems you already use across campus.

## 9. Staff Roles, Training, and Hiring Practices

*Because curriculum development requires a special set of skills, staff members should be involved in all aspects of curriculum development. Furthermore, staff members should be hired for and continuously trained on the requisite skills they need to be successful. Position descriptions and expectations should align with these needs.*

	1	2	3	4	5	Unk	N/A
9-1 Staff members are included and invested in the institution's curriculum development process.							
9-2 Student staff members are utilized in roles that capitalize on their strengths as peer educators and leaders.							
9-3 Student staff members are utilized in roles that capitalize on their strengths as experts in educational delivery and design.							
9-4 Staff member position descriptions are written to align with the necessary skills and duties required to successfully execute one's role in a curriculum.							
9-5 Staff members are hired for and evaluated on the skills necessary to execute their roles in the curriculum.							
9-6 Adequate training on the curriculum and curricular design principles is provided on an annual basis. <i>(Through in-house training and/or attendance at RCI.)</i>							
9-7 Ongoing professional development opportunities are provided for staff that train on relevant educational skills. <i>(ex. assessment, learning outcome construction, etc.)</i>							

[www.ResidentialCurriculum.com](http://www.ResidentialCurriculum.com)

Roomcompact produces additional resources and helpful eBooks on residential life, education, and curricular approaches that may be helpful to you. Follow us on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and visit our website.