A Guide to Department Improvement: Effective Practices for Physics Programs (EP3)

Theodore Hodapp, American Physical Society
Effective Practices for Physics Programs: The EP3 Guide

APS, in collaboration with AAPT, is creating a guide to help physics departments improve, review and assess their programs ... and to help them meet challenges they may face.

The EP3 Project is bringing together research and information about practices for building successful and effective physics programs from experts across the American physics community.
Who are we?

Task Force Membership

Co-Chair: David Craig, Oregon State University
Co-Chair: Michael Jackson, Millersville University of Pennsylvania
• Noah Finkelstein, University of Colorado Boulder
• Courtney Lannert, Smith College and UMass Amherst
• Ramon Lopez, University of Texas at Arlington
• Willie Rockward, Morgan State University
• Gay Stewart, West Virginia University
• Gubbi Sudhakaran, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
• Kathryn Svinarich, Kettering University
• Carl Wieman, Stanford University
• Lawrence Woolf, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc.

Editorial Director: Sam McKagan
Staff Liaison: Ted Hodapp
AAPT Liaison: Bob Hilborn
Research: C. Turpen, J. Corbo

Project Manager: Kathyne Woodle
Project Coordinator: Sean Costillo
External Evaluator: Stephanie Chasteen
Community Engagement: Joel Corbo
EP3 Guide Audiences

Who is it for?

• Physics department chairs
• Program leaders
• Programs undergoing a self-study and being reviewed
• Program reviewers
• Departments & faculty facing program challenges or interested in improving their programs
• Anyone in physics involved with student learning assessment
• Administrative leaders
Goals of the EP3 Guide

Help department chairs (& other program leaders)

• Bring together known literature on topics
• Collect practices recognized by the community as effective when there is insufficient evidence-based literature
• Collect information for departments to use in advocating for resources to improve their program
• Encourage discussions in departments on continuous improvement of physics programs using evidence
• External program assessment / departmental review
• Improve usefulness of assessment
• Engage PER community on departmental needs
Structure of the Guide

Chapters:

• **Introduction**: how to navigate and use the guide
• **How to be an Effective Chair**
• **How to create and sustain effective changes in your department or program**
• **Effective Practices** (~25 “sections”)
• **Assessment of Student Learning**: developing a useful and efficient culture of assessment
• **Program Review** and a Departmental Culture of Continuous Self-Improvement: Preparing for a self-study and program review as well as a Guide to reviewers
• **Ancillary material**: Creating foundational documents; examples of student learning goals and program learning goals; assessment instruments; additional resources
Students

- Recruiting (in 1st release)
- Retention
- Advising and Mentoring of Students
- Internships (to be included in 2nd release)
- Undergraduate research
- Career preparation

Curriculum

- Implementing research-based instructional practices in your program (overarching)
- Introductory courses for physical science and engineering majors
- Introductory courses for life sciences majors
- Upper-level physics courses
- Introductory courses for Non-STEM majors
- Communication skills
- Laboratory / experimental skills

- Computational skills
- Capstone experiences
- Online education

Programs

- Individuated degree tracks: engineering / applied physics
- Institutional partnerships: dual-degree physics / engineering programs
- High school physics teacher preparation
- Undergraduate Instructional Assistants
- Community engagement / outreach

Departmental

- Physical environment: encouraging collaboration and learning
- Departmental climate
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Ethics
To date: approx. 80 contributors submitted materials with another approx. 15 pending.
What the EP3 Guide Is

Is:

• Collection of community knowledge and evidence-based practices
• Authored, reviewed, approved by physics community (>200!)
• *Living* document (not static), with stewardship by an Editorial Board
• Primarily online
• Ethics and diversity included throughout
• Effort to encourage evidence-based pedagogy
• Transform mandatory assessment into useful exercise
• Suggestions on how to improve all aspects of a program
• Opportunity to extend reach of education research
What the EP3 Guide Is & Isn’t

Is:

• **Key**: flexible, not prescriptive; mindful of local contexts
• Tool to help departments understand who they are and what they want to be, and then provide community-based knowledge and information to help them achieve this

Is NOT:

• Accreditation or program certification
• Mandate to conform
• A checklist of required actions
• Every possible idea for what to do (e.g., the ‘kitchen sink’)
• At the smallest level of detail to assist with implementation

• Finished (yet)… Join our mailing list at [ep3guide.org](http://ep3guide.org)
Co-chairs:
  • David Craig (craigda@oregonstate.edu)
  • Mike Jackson (Michael.Jackson@millersville.edu)

Editorial Director: Sarah “Sam” McKagan (mckagan@aps.org)

APS Lead: Theodore Hodapp (hodapp@aps.org)

AAPT Liaison: Bob Hilborn (rhilborn@aapt.org)

External Evaluator: Stephanie Chasteen (stephanie@chasteenconsulting.com)

Community Engagement: David Craig, Joel Corbo, Sam McKagan

Research Team: Chandra Turpen, Joel Corbo

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