

Glossary

Academic Degree Program—Title of a given program within an academic department that results in a degree (Bachelor of Architecture, Master's in Media Studies, Certificate of Advanced Studies in School Counseling, Doctorate in Geography, etc.).

Accountability—Using the results of assessment to demonstrate the quality of a program or university to concerned audiences. (Suskie, 2009)

Action Research—Purpose is to inform and improve one's own practice rather than make broad generalizations. Assessment is a form of action research. (Suskie, 2009)

Assessment (of Institutional Effectiveness)—Institutional assessments are essential to identifying gaps in performance of organizations that may be used to inform plans for improvements. Efforts to identify strengths and weaknesses within the organization of the institution via measures of performance will inform improvements to efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of organizations.

Assessment (of Learning)—The ongoing process of: (1) establishing clear, measureable expected outcomes of student learning, (2) ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes, (3) systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well learning matches our expectations, and (4) using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning. (Suskie, 2009)

Criteria (as a standard for assessment)—The values assigned to different levels of qualities, skills, and attributes found through the assessment, or how the work is valued and judged.

Curriculum Map—A grid that shows an academic degree program's courses as row headings and expected outcomes as column headings. If a particular outcome is getting too much or too little coverage, the curriculum map will reveal the imbalance. (Banta & Palomba, 2015); a table that compares key learning goals and course requirements that is used to assess the breadth of learning goals throughout a program's curriculum. (Suskie, 2009)

Degree—Degree awarded to student of a given academic department (e.g., BS, BA, MS, MA, CAS, Ph.D.).

Direct Measure of Assessment—Methods that involve direct display of knowledge and skills (text results, written assignments, presentations, classroom assignments) resulting from learning experience in the class/program. (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Evaluation—The use of assessment findings (evidence/data) to judge program effectiveness; used as a basis for making decisions about program changes or improvement. (Allen, Noel, Rienzi & McMillin, 2002)

Formative Assessment—Assessment conducted during the life of a program (or performance) with the purpose of providing feedback that can be used to modify, shape, and improve the program (or performance). (Banta & Palomba, 2015)

Goals—The general aims or purposes of a unit that are consistent with its mission. Goals should be broadly stated, meaningful, achievable, and provide a framework for identifying outcomes.

Grading—The process by which a teacher assesses student learning through classroom tests, assignments, observations, interactions, performances and other forms of work; the context in which teachers establish that process; and the dialogue that surrounds grades and defines their meaning to various audiences. (Walvoord, 1998)

Indirect Measure of Assessment—Methods that involve perceptions of learning or improvement rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement (alumni surveys, employer surveys, exit interviews).

Institutional Effectiveness—The degree to which an institution successfully achieves its mission and goals and is in compliance with accreditation standards. The effectiveness of an institution rests upon the contribution that each of the institution’s programs and services makes toward achieving the goals of the institution as a whole.¹ System and processes used to determine how well Syracuse University is accomplishing its mission.

Metrics—Quantitative measures summarizing outcomes related to performance.

Objectives—Statements of what the unit strives to achieve. They are specific, measureable, achievable, results-oriented, and time bound.

Operational Objectives—Statements describing what the overall goal is intended to achieve. They should be written using active verbs that describe what unit will do ensure the goal is attainable.

Outcomes Assessment—Contributing systems and processes measuring academic, co-curricular, non-academic, and administrative unit success

Program Review—Comprehensive evaluation of an academic degree program that is designed both to foster improvement and demonstrate accountability. (Suskie, 2009)

Rubric—A scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment or activity. (Stevens & Levi, 2013)

Standard—The minimal level elements, characteristics, and qualities that must be followed. In the context of curriculum, standards are the minimal level of material within a curriculum that must be taught to students. An accrediting body typically develops standards.

Student Development Outcomes—Statements describing the affective dimensions to be instilled or enhanced; assess affective dimensions or attitudes and values (not cognitive abilities); and consider growth in ethical, spiritual, emotional, and social responsibility dimensions (Bresciani, 2001; Denny, 2009 as cited in Culp & Dugny, 2012). These outcomes may detail how students exhibit an increase in self-discipline, become more respectful of others’ values, involve themselves in community service, engage in reflective spirituality, etc.

Student Learning Outcomes—Statements describing specific student behaviors that evidence the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes, or dispositions. They should be written using active verbs that describe what students should be able to do, know, or produce over time as a result of participation in the program.

Summative Assessment—Assessment conducted after a program has been in operation for a while, or at its conclusion, to make judgments about its quality or worth compared to previously defined standards for performance.

Target—A metric that provides an indication of performance of specific objectives. It can be used as a driver for improvement. A target is quick measure of how well a program or unit is doing.

¹ Encouraging and supporting campus wide involvement in improving instructional effectiveness. Presented by Andrea A. Lex, Ph.D., Vice President, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, April 2014, Philadelphia, PA.