



## **Tuskegee University Institutional Effectiveness Glossary**

**Accreditation:** The designation that an institution earns indicating that it functions appropriately with respect to its resources, programs, and services. The accrediting association, often comprised of peers, is recognized as the external monitor.

**Accountability:** The demand by stakeholders for schools to demonstrate that money invested in education is being efficiently utilized. This demand is met through measured learning and outcomes assessment. The process includes reporting to stakeholders the degree to which expected results have been achieved.

**Action plan:** A statement of what will be done to change or improve the program, unit, or assessment process based on the analysis of assessment results, when level of achievement is not met.

**Analysis of findings:** Examination of the data gathered during the assessment cycle, including reflective consideration about what actions, if any, should be taken.

**Annual Planning & Assessment Report:** An evaluation tool completed using a standardized reporting template by designated persons in academic programs, administrative support services units, and academic and student support services units. This document describes how assessment results are used in planning and to inform the continuous improvement cycle.

**Assessment:** an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (Thomas A. Angelo, *AAHE Bulletin*, 1995, p. 7).

**Assessment Cycle:** refers to the *calendar cycle* of planning and assessment that includes annual submittal of plans from academic and administrative units and the follow-up

assessment review. It also includes the calendar cycle review of the college's mission statement, strategic plan and institutional effectiveness process.

**Assessment of student learning:** The systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning. There are two terms used to describe the method of assessment along the continuum of learning.

**Assessment instrument:** Also referred to as an assessment or measurement tool used to evaluate assignments, activities, artifacts, or events that support outcomes or objectives. These can be measurement tools such as standardized tests, locally designed examinations, rubrics, exit interviews, or student, alumni, or staff surveys.

**Assessment plan:** A document that outlines and describes assessment activities, including identifying outcomes, methods, and criteria. The plan should include enough detail that anyone could read it and know exactly what to do to implement the plan. The plan should be reviewed frequently and revised any time new learning or operational goals are identified.

**Attrition:** loss of students through means other than graduation.

**Baseline:** the condition or situation prior to an intervention.

**Benchmark:** To collect data for use in comparison to similar data studies.

**Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Levels:** six levels in which cognitively-related objects can be categorized by levels of increasing complexity; the levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

**Capacity:** Our ability to seek solutions to our challenges so that we can achieve our goals and objectives.

**Capacity building:** Providing faculty and staff with the skills and tools needed and strengthening our ability to work together.

**Closing the loop:** The phrase indicates the ability to demonstrate the use of data to drive improvement, i.e., the use of data in the next year's planning process.—through a cycle of collecting, analyzing, and reporting on data— for the continuous improvement of curricular, programmatic, or operational efforts. Closing the loop calls for using assessment results to improve programs and operations.

**Commission on Colleges (COC):** The regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states that award associate, baccalaureate, master and doctoral degrees. The COC accredits universities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Latin America. (SACS)

**Continuous improvement:** Most accrediting bodies require institutional commitment to the concept of quality enhancement through continuous assessment and improvement. The assessment process is considered cyclic. (SACS)

**Criteria:** Standards by which student performance is evaluated; help assessors maintain objectivity and inform students about expectations.

**Culture of assessment:** An institutional characteristic that shows evidence for valuing and engaging in assessment for ongoing improvement.

**Culture of evidence:** According to Michael Middaugh, “Accrediting agencies – both at the institutional level and the programmatic level – are now operating in a culture of evidence that requires institutions to qualitatively and quantitatively demonstrate that they are meeting student learning goals and effectively marshalling human and fiscal resources toward that end.”

**Curriculum mapping:** The process of scoping and sequencing content to identify gaps and redundancies. The mapping is used to improve the coherence of course content for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of a program of study.

**Direct measure:** An assessment tool that provides tangible confirmation of student learning where it is clear that a specific learning competency is attained through visible and compelling evidence. Among the direct measures most commonly used are:

- external examiner
- capstone projects, senior these
- embedded questions in examinations or quizzes
- behavioral observations
- oral exams
- portfolios
- simulations
- performance appraisal
- standardized or local examinations (including licensure tests)
- student writing (e.g. essays or papers)

**Effectiveness:** The degree to which programs, events, or activities achieve intended results. Effectiveness indicates how well the curriculum, program, and even the university, achieves their purpose.

**Embedded assessment:** A means of gathering information about student learning that is already existing in courses/curriculum has been built into a course’s curriculum. Can assess an individual student’s performance or the performance of the whole class.

**E-portfolio:** A systematic and organized collection of a student's work that exhibits to others the direct evidence of a student's efforts, achievements, and progress over a period of time. The collection should involve the student in selection of its contents, and include assessment or grading information for the projects included in the portfolio. Portfolios are electronic and can be accessed online by the student, school officials, and others who have been granted permission, such as potential employers.

**Evaluation:** To determine the value of an instructional program, educational support service, or student learning outcome; interchangeable with assessment (Nichols).

**Evaluation Plan:** detailed description of how the evaluation will be implemented that includes resources available for implementing the plan, the data that will be gathered, the research methods to be used to gather the data, a description of the roles and responsibilities of the evaluators, and a timeline for accomplishing tasks.

**Evaluation of results:** The process of interpreting or making meaning of the data. The evaluation compares the results to the intentions and explains how they correlate.

**Expected level of achievement:** A statement of how well students will meet expectations of what they should know and be able to do. Could be a numeric or descriptive standard against which performance is judged.

**Fact Book:** The annual compilation of high-level University data serving as a resource to internal and external stakeholders.

**Feedback:** Providing information to students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders about how they performed in light of a goal, objective or outcome. Feedback also entails providing assessment results and analysis to interested constituents in order to increase transparency.

**Formative Assessment:** The repetitive gathering of information about student learning throughout a course or program with the purpose of improving student learning from the beginning to the end of the course or program in real-time.

**Goal:** A broad statement about what the program, unit, or institution is trying to accomplish to meet its mission. These are usually not measurable and are primarily used for general planning.

**Indirect measure:** Assessment tools/measures that show some signs that students are likely learning or engaging in the educational experience. An indirect measure produces evidence that is less clear and less convincing than direct evidence.

**Institutional Effectiveness (IE):** The term used to describe the degree to which the institution accomplishes its Mission through the systematic, comprehensive and continuous assessment of its educational strategic plan and annual initiatives. It focuses largely on SACS-COC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 that states: The institution identifies expected outcomes for its academic programs, its administrative support services, and its academic and student support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

**Institutional Profile:** Presents select data on an institution.

**Instrument:** An assessment tool that is used for the purpose of quantifying someone's knowledge or perception of something.

**IPEDS:** The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. These data are made available to students and parents through the College Navigator college search Web site and to researchers and others through the IPEDS Data Center.

**Key Performance Indicator (KPI):** A performance measure used to assess progress on strategic goals. High-level metrics such as retention and default rate that can be used over the life of the strategic plan (usually 5 years) and are also recognized among peers as acceptable metrics.

**Learning outcome:** The specific, measureable knowledge, skill, or ability that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of their studies. These are also called student learning outcomes and can be defined at the institutional, school, program, or course level.

**Method:** Describes the procedures used to collect data for assessing an outcome, including identifying the assignment or activity and the process for measuring or scoring it.

**Mission statement:** Explains why a program, department, or institution exists and identifies its purpose. It articulates the organization's essential nature, its values, and its work and should be aligned with institutional mission.

**Nichols Assessment Model:** A widely used Assessment Reporting Model designed by James O. Nichols of Institutional Effectiveness Associates.

**Objective:** Smaller in scope than a goal, it is a measurable statement that, in general, one must achieve in order to obtain a goal and thus, be successful.

**Objective measure:** A score, grade, or evaluation that relies on a consistent, valid, and predetermined range. It does not depend on subjective opinion.

**Operational Outcome:** A short-term goal whose attainment moves a unit towards achieving strategic or long-term goals. It is a clear, often measurable outcome of an operation or process typically expected to be achieved within a single calendar or fiscal year.

**Outcomes:** Administrative / Academic & Student Support areas typically have outcomes that focus on the critical functions, services, and processes that impact the student learning environment with an emphasis on satisfaction, efficiency and quality.

**Peer assessment:** The process of evaluating or assessing the work of one's peers.

**Planning:** A process of thinking about and organizing to achieve a result or goal.

**Program-level Assessment:** Goals and assessments which are broader than those of individual courses, but are comprised or built by the courses that the program encompasses.

**Program review:** An in-depth process of reviewing most aspects of a program, including operational, financial, programmatic, and academic inputs, outputs, and outcomes.

**QEP:** The Quality Enhancement Plan is based upon an analysis of the effectiveness of the learning environment for supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution through engagement of the academic community. (SACS)

**Qualitative Assessment:** Comprised of collected data that are not easily quantified mathematically, but are subjective in nature and rely on interpretive criteria.

**Quantitative Assessment:** Comprised of collected data that can be analyzed using objective, mathematical methods.

**Qualitative data:** Non-numeric information such as conversation, text, audio, or video.

**Quantitative data:** Numeric information including quantities, percentages, and statistics.

**Results:** Report the qualitative or quantitative findings of the data collection in text or table format. They convey whether the outcomes were achieved at desired levels of performance.

**Rubric:** A systematic, relatively objective scoring guideline used to evaluate student performance (e.g., papers, speeches, exams, portfolios) using a detailed description of performance standards. When students are made aware of rubrics prior to instruction and assessment, they know the level of performance expected and are more motivated to reach those standards.

**Sample:** A defined subset of the population chosen based on 1) its ability to provide information; 2) its representativeness of the population under study; 3) factors related to the feasibility of data gathering, such as cost, time, participant accessibility, or other logistical concerns.

**Self-assessment:** The process of evaluating or reflecting on one's own learning and development.

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools–Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC):** This is the accrediting agency of higher education institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Maintaining fully accredited status ensures that ASU remains in compliance with federal expectations and continues to receive federal funding.

**Standards:** Requirements of competency from an accrediting body. Standards set a level of accomplishment that students are expected to meet or exceed. Meeting assessment standards does not imply standardization of programs, but rather that students were able to learn certain required skill sets through multiple pathways in a program before graduation.

**Standard of performance:** A specific expectation of student performance that shows progress toward a criterion.

**Strategic goal:** A statement, often general, about what an organization want to achieve.

**Strategic Planning:** An organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Key components of strategic planning include mission statement or vision statement, values, and goals.

**Student Learning Outcome:** Criteria for determining whether overall program goals are being successfully met and whether students are learning a program's curriculum to a satisfactory level. What a student is expected to DO as a result of a learning activity.

**Summative Assessment:** The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course or program to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. The results are applied to the next cohort in the course or program.

**Triangulation:** (a.k.a. multiple measures) Using multiple research methods to gather information or multiple sources of information on a topic usually with the intent of improving reliability and/or validity.

**Use of Results:** Explains how specific results from assessment activities will be used for decision-making, strategic planning, program evaluation and improvement; assists in documenting changes and the reasons for the changes.

**Vision Statement:** Articulates the organization's values and intended contribution to society and shares how the organization should look in the future by presenting the ideal, or an ambitious, long-term goal.

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