



Office of Institutional Research & Assessment

Glossary of Institutional Effectiveness Terms

Glossary of Institutional Effectiveness Terms at Centenary

Academic program (External) - any Centenary undergraduate, graduate, or certificate program that has been assigned a unique Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code with the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Academic program (Internal) - For the purposes of assessment at Centenary, each program level (undergraduate, graduate and/or certificate) is considered its own academic program and may have its own set of student learning outcomes.

Action plan – steps a unit or program is going to take to improve when assessment results do not meet pre-established expectations.

Activities- the specific actions we take to make a strategy happen. See **Strategy**

Annual report – a unit or program's report on assessment activities, achievements, and challenges over the past year. All academic programs and campus units are required to submit these to Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) for posting on the OIRA website.

Assessment - the annual process of critical self-examination with the aim of program or unit improvement. The assessment process involves gathering evidence about a selected outcome, making meaning of the gathered evidence, determining if results are satisfactory, implementing any necessary action plans, and reassessing an outcome to determine if changes were effective.

Assessment (Design Thinking definition)- observing behavior and drawing conclusions about what people want and need.

Assessment plan – a program or unit's declaration of what it will assess for the current cycle, including goals, outcomes, measures, and numeric criteria.

Assessment report – a unit's report on assessment results and any necessary action plans if an expected criteria was not met.

Balanced Scorecard – a system of strategic mapping that focuses faculty and staff on four main perspectives and questions.

Financial Perspective – Question: “What resources do we have now, what will we likely have in the future, and how well do we use what we have?”

Constituent Perspective – Question: “Whom do we serve, and how do they perceive us?”

Internal Processes Perspective – Question: “What do we do, and how well do we do it?”

Innovation and Learning Perspective – Question: “Who does our work, and are they getting better at it?”

This format allows for greater transparency to stakeholders, an intentional focus on strategy and continual improvement, as well as a formal integration of common questions for all reporting units at Centenary.

Closing the loop – when a unit makes a change in response to assessment results revealing that a criterion has not been met, measures the effect of those changes, and determines that the unit has now achieved the expected criterion.

Criterion - part of an assessment plan that establishes a threshold of acceptable performance level.

Curriculum map – a table that demonstrates where in a curriculum a program's student learning outcomes are addressed.

Direct measure – a performance-based indicator of success. Direct measures include exams/tests, course-embedded assessments, portfolios, capstone projects, performances, presentations, exhibits, internship evaluations, and clinical evaluations.

External review – part of a periodic comprehensive review that provides an external perspective regarding the quality and effectiveness of a unit's programs, services, resources, processes, and operations. Its purpose is to assure an objective, unbiased assessment of the unit. The external review must consist of reviewers from outside of the department and may include reviewers from off-campus.

Goal – a broad statement meant to relate one of the main aims of a campus unit or department. See also *Strategic Goals*.

Implementation plan - a plan developed after a unit has completed a self-study and external review, in the form of a set of operational goals and outcomes that sets the agenda for change and quality enhancement for the unit until the next periodic comprehensive review.

Indirect measure – a non-performance based indicator of success. Indirect measures include results from surveys, focus groups, interviews, retention and graduation rates, involvement records, and graduate school and job placement rates.

Innovation- doing something new that will make the organization better. Producing a result that cannot be achieved by business as usual.

Institutional effectiveness - the on-going, comprehensive process that integrates strategic planning, assessment, periodic unit comprehensive review, annual reporting, and resource allocations for the purpose of improvement.

Method – the evidence, or measure, a unit uses to determine whether an outcome has been met.

“**Middle States**” – See **MSCHE**

Milestones- points along the way that will tell us how we are progressing toward the result.

MSCHE – The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Operational outcome – a specific, measurable statement about a program's efforts to improve.

Periodic comprehensive review - an ongoing process through which units evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of programs and services to facilitate decision-making and quality enhancement. At least once every 5 years, units and programs will prepare a self-study, undergo an external review, and develop an implementation plan.

Prototype- An activity that can be done quickly to test and improve the strategy's critical concepts.

Result- a desired new outcome that produces a measurable gain for the organization and/or its constituents.

Rubric – scoring tools developed to help evaluate qualitative data by providing a specific set of criteria to be rated and what is needed to achieve each level of performance for each criterion.

Self-study – part of a unit's periodic comprehensive review that involves an in-depth self-examination of all aspects of the unit, including mission, demand, quality, faculty/staff competence and resources.

Strategic Goals- Goals are considered *strategic* when they do not simply reflect current habits or activities, are lifted out of one's job description, mirror department or unit level minimal criteria, or are based on tradition. Strategic goals involve a change in current behavior/thinking and are focused on clear measurable results and move the institution forward.

Strategic plan – Centenary's current strategic plan, *Celebrating Our History: Forging Our Future*, provides direction for the campus between 2013 and 2018.

Strategy- Behavior-changing means to the result. A strategy is needed when the result cannot be produced by current habits and tradition.

Student learning outcome (SLO) - a concise, measureable statement about what students will be able to do as a result of participating in a program. All academic programs are required to maintain an updated list of student learning outcomes, which are shared publicly on the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment website.

Reporting unit – the organizational level at which assessment or periodic comprehensive review happens. Units include all organizational entities that provide educational and administrative programs or services; includes departments, programs, offices, centers, and operational units.