

## Operational Definitions

*A-Team Training Session Fall 2007*

**Accountability:** The demand by a community (public officials, employers, and taxpayers) for school officials to prove that money invested in education has led to measurable learning.  
<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

**Accreditation:** A certification awarded by an external, recognized organization, that the institution or program meets certain requirements overall, or in a particular discipline.  
<http://people.jmu.edu/yangsx/AlphaTerm.asp>

**Achievement Test:** A standardized test designed to efficiently measure the amount of knowledge and/or skill a person has acquired, usually as a result of classroom instruction. Such testing produces a statistical profile used as a measurement to evaluate student learning in comparison with a standard or norm. <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

**Affective:** Outcomes of education involving feelings more than understanding; likes, pleasures ideals, dislikes annoyances, values.  
<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

**Assessment:** Is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

**Backload (--ed, --ing):** Amount of effort after the data collection.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm> (See frontloading)

**Benchmark:** A criterion-referenced objective; "Performance data that are used for comparative purposes. A program can use its own data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future performance. It can also use data from another program as a benchmark. In the latter case, the other program often is chosen because it is exemplary and its data are used as a target to strive for, rather than as a baseline." (p. xv) Hatry, H., van Houten, T., Plantz, M., & Greenway, M.T. (1996). <http://people.jmu.edu/yangsx/AlphaTerm.asp>

**Bias:** A situation that occurs in testing when items systematically measure differently for different ethnic, gender, or age groups. Test developers reduce bias by analyzing item data separately for each group, then identifying and discarding items that appear to be biased.  
[http://www.k2kid.net/assessment/assessment\\_terms.html](http://www.k2kid.net/assessment/assessment_terms.html)

**Cohort:** A group whose progress is followed by means of measurements at different points in time. <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

**Competency:** Level at which performance is acceptable.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Core Element(s):** Are the basic everyday functions that are essential components of individual departments. In previous years they have been known as critical processes, continuous objectives and basic operations. (UGA Specific)

**Course Assessment:** Using direct and indirect measures to determine if the student outcomes at the course level have been met and using this data to enhance student learning.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**"Closing the Loop:"** Taking the assessment of your outcome and using it to inform and improve future practice(s).

**Criterion-referenced:** Criterion-referenced tests determine what test takers can do and what they know, not how they compare to others. Criterion-referenced tests report how well students are doing relative to a pre-determined performance level on a specified set of educational goals or outcomes included in the curriculum. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Direct Measurements:** Standardized or non-standardized objective measures demonstrating competency in specific areas. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Effectiveness** (results of operations) is how well an approach, a process, or a measure addresses its intended purpose. <http://www.cnu.edu/admin/assess/about/plans/glossary.htm>

Assessing effectiveness can include assessing: (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Student Outcomes            | Meeting needs            |
| • Cost-effectiveness          | Faculty, administrators  |
| • Client Satisfaction         | Alumni, funding agencies |
| • Client growth & development | The competing market     |
| • Type of user(s)             | The physical environment |

**Enhancement:** An Enhancement can be the improvement of a core element (process, service or program that is essential to daily operation, formerly called an enhancement), or the creation of a new program (formerly called an innovation). Any improvement made to your operation is considered an enhancement. (UGA Planning Model Specific)

**Evaluation:** Any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional or unit effectiveness. (UGA Planning Model Specific)

**Forced-choice:** The respondent only has a choice among given responses (e.g., very poor, poor, fair, good, very good). <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Formative Assessment:** Intended to assess ongoing program/project activity and provide information to improve the project. Assessment feedback is short term in duration. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Frontload (--ed, --ing):** Amount of effort required in the early stage of assessment method development of data collection. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Human Subjects Office:** The Human Subjects Office provides administrative and secretarial support for the IRB, and assists researchers through the application and approval process. The Administrator acts on behalf of the IRB and the University when providing assurance of human subjects approval to sponsoring agencies, or when dealing with regulatory agencies. The Human Subjects Office staff is responsible for regularly monitoring IRB compliance, and updating IRB procedures with current and/or new relevant federal or state regulations. <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelines.html#1>

**Indirect Measurements:** Opinion surveys, interviews, and other subjective data combined with enrollment analyses, retention rates, graduation rates, employment data, transfer data, and other measures that provide data that can be analyzed as indicators of student learning. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Institutional Assessment:** Assessment of institutional mission and goal statements including student services, financial stability, business and industry training, adult education, as well as academic programs. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Institutional Review Board:** The IRB is charged with the responsibility of protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research. (See Human Subjects Office).  
<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelines.html#1>

**Longitudinal Studies:** Data collected from the same population at different points in time.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Norm-reference:** A norm-referenced test is designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students to produce a dependable rank order of students across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Objective:** Broad, general statements of what the department, unit, or team hopes students will accomplish; often referred to as a goal.

**Observer Effect:** The degree to which the assessment results are affected by the presence of an observer. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Open-ended:** Assessment questions that are designed to permit spontaneous and unguided responses. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Outcome:** Specific statement derived from the objective that can be measured.

**Service:** Assessment is often characterized as customer satisfaction; however for the purpose of our model, the term is one that incorporates other dimensions such as client opinion, characteristics of users, use of facilities, patterns of office/facility use, examining the needs and wants of clients.

**Learning:** Learning assesses educationally purposeful activities. Examples include: critical thinking skills, knowledge acquisition, knowledge transfer, knowledge application, collaborative learning, etc. (Philosophies which may guide learning include Bloom's Taxonomy, Kolb Learning Typologies, Learning Reconsidered, Powerful Partnerships, etc.)

**Development:** Involves multiple dimensions of student growth which typically include moral, ethical, psychosocial, racial identity, and spiritual development.

**Departmental Plan:** This document is created within each individual department. Previous Departmental Plans have been called Annual Strategic Plans, and Yearly Plans. Previously this was a document that required departments to report on Critical Processes, Innovations, Enhancements and Assessments. (UGA Planning Model Specific)

**Program Assessment (Program Review):** The program outcomes are based on how each part is interacting with the rest of the parts, not on how each part is doing individually. The knowledge, skills, and abilities that students achieve at the end of their programs are affected by how well courses and other experiences in the curriculum fit together and build on each other throughout the undergraduate years. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Program Objectives:** Reflects student learning outcomes and achievements related to the academic program as a unit rather than an individual course.  
<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Reliability:** Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Rubrics:** A rubric is a set of categories that define and describe the important components of the work being completed, critiqued, or assessed. Each category contains a gradation of levels of completion or competence with a score assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria need to be met to attain the score at each level.

<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Stakeholder:** Anyone who has a vested interest in the outcome of the program/project.

<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Summative Assessment:** An assessment that is done at the conclusion of a course or some larger instructional period (e.g., at the end of the program). The purpose is to determine success or to what extent the program/project/course met its goals.

<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Third Party:** Person(s) other than those directly involved in the educational process (e.g., employers, parents, consultants). <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Triangulation:** The use of a combination of assessment methods in a study. An example of triangulation would be an assessment that incorporated surveys, interviews, and observations.

<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Utility:** The usefulness of assessment results. <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Validity:** Refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Validity has three components: relevance (direct measurement), accuracy (how precise are the measurements), and utility (how clear are the implications for improvement). <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

**Variable:** Observable characteristics that vary among individual responses.

<http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>

#### Reference Sites:

- <http://www.ozarka.edu/assessment/glossary.cfm>
- <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>
- <http://people.jmu.edu/yangsx/AlphaTerm.asp>
- <http://www.cnu.edu/admin/assess/about/plans/glossary.htm>
- <http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelines.html#1>