**The Language of Assessment at OSU:**

This glossary was developed to provide a common understanding of assessment language at Oregon State University.

**Mission:** The mission describes the purpose of the organization and the constituents served. The mission of the Department or unit will support the missions of the College or division and the University.

**Goals: Program goals** are overarching statements that describe what a program is trying to accomplish. **Educational goals** are broad statements describing what learners are expected to learn; sometimes they describe a state of being. While educational goals should be stated as specifically as possible, sometimes it’s difficult to do so; as a result, goals are often a bit vague and open to interpretation. Key words that typify educational goals are: know, appreciate, understand, etc.

**Outcomes:** Outcomes are specific statements derived from goals; they help clarify and define the meaning of the goal. **Learning outcomes** articulate the measurable expected results of an instructional activity or program effort. Outcomes are not knowing, thinking and understanding, but rather a demonstration of knowing, thinking or understanding. Outcomes describe measurable behaviors achieved using active verbs such as: arrange, define, explain, calculate, design, synthesize, evaluate, etc. **Operational/Business outcomes** describe those elements of a program or activity that can be counted such as: research dollars per faculty, number of students served, level of satisfaction, number of advisees, number and type of appointments with students, etc.

**Assessment Methods:** Assessment methods include the criteria, process, and tools used to determine if the intended outcomes were reached. Assessment methods articulate the target audience of the assessment, the methods and tools for data collection, criteria or targets that specify that the outcome has been met, and how the data will be analyzed. A combination of methods to measure outcomes is desirable. Assessing the effectiveness of instructional methods (lecture, team learning, discussion, etc) and student learning methods (note taking, reading, computer lessons, etc.) are critical components of the assessment process.

**Implementation of Assessment Plan:** This describes who is responsible, what is being assessed, how data are collected, and the timeline for assessment activities. Not all assessments must be conducted annually. A table is often useful for visualizing the process.

**Results:** Report results for each outcome based on established criteria.

**Decisions and Recommendations:** Based on the results, describe any decisions made or actions taken regarding programs, policies, and services as well as improvements/refinements to the assessment process. Include a plan for assessing the effectiveness of these decisions or actions.

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