Guide to Program Outcomes & Assessment Terms
~Portland Community College Student Services~

A common language for PCC student services planning & assessment practice

Assessment
The systematic and on-going practice of determining the impact of educational interventions and services for the purposes of: 1) improving program quality and 2) reporting on program outcomes.

Cycle of Assessment
The stages of outcomes-based assessment, defined as:
1) Establish Program mission, goals, and intended outcomes
2) Verify that practice or Program activities align with intended outcomes – mapping is helpful!
3) Plan for assessment: a) identify outcomes to assess, b) identify assessment methods
4) Conduct assessment: a) gather & interpret evidence, b) pose questions for practice
5) Document and report findings and planned/recommended changes to practice
6) Re-Affirm stage 1 – adjust and affirm outcomes, goals, mission as necessary

Program (Department)
Used interchangeably with “Department,” a Program is intended to define a unit of service with a common mission, goals, and intended outcomes. Examples of Programs within PCC student services include: Academic Advising, Admissions and Registration, ROOTs Programs, Multicultural Centers/Services, Bursary, etc. Some Programs are district wide, others campus specific. Some Program areas have multiple affiliated Programs within their unit.

Mission
Why the Program exists. The mission is a statement describing the core purpose of the Program. It is an overarching vision, most often tied to the mission of the parent program, division, campus, or institution’s mission.

Goals
What the Program aspires to do. Broad statements that generally describe what a Program intends to accomplish or deliver. Goals are used for general planning and are not intended to be directly measurable. They help to define the mission, reflect values, and serve as a starting point for specific outcome development. Goals should be tied directly to the Program’s mission, as well as appropriate division and institutional mission and goals.

Learning Outcomes
What the Program intends students to learn/develop. Often referred to as Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), these refer to what students are able to do outside of our Program or the institution as a result of our Program. Learning Outcomes specifically describe intended cognitive and affective abilities and development that our Program seeks to instill. These outcomes must be measurable (must be able to identify or observe how you know students are able to do what you said they would be able to do).

Service Outcomes
What the Program intends to deliver and/or standards to be met. Distinguished from learning outcomes, service outcomes measure how effective a program is at accomplishing its overall service or progress goals, such as customer satisfaction, timeliness of services, numbers served, demographic representation of student served, etc.
**Program Activities**

*What the Program does: day-to-day, term-to-term, year-to-year.* These are the components and service areas of a Program. Most Programs are responsible for multiple activities, which support the specific achievement of intended outcomes.

**Annual Assessment Reports**

Annual Program reports within the Document phase of the Cycle of Assessment. Annual reports document ongoing assessment practice, including findings and resulting changes to Program activities and/or outcomes. Annual Assessment Reports are submitted to the District Student Services Leaders for review, as well as for reporting on institutional level outcomes.

**Program Reviews**

Capstone Program reports, completed every 4-5 years, within the Document phase of the Cycle of Assessment. Program Reviews are more evaluative, in that they focus on the overall quality and the cumulative contribution of a Program with the college. Program Reviews also represent an opportunity for a broader external review of a Program. Program Reviews are presented to college wide administration.

**Research**

Although similar to assessment, research informs the development of theories vs. informing practice. Research has broad implications in a field as opposed to assessment, which is applicable to an individual institution, program, practice, or process. Often, our assessment practice will not involve methodologically sound “research” because it does not have to!

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**Example of Terms in Action:** *Academic Advising*