
Assessment Common Language

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

Reflects that there will be an observed effect during statistical testing.

Assessment

A three-step process which includes the systematic collection, analysis, and use of information to improve department and/or program effectiveness and/or student learning and development.

Assessment Plan

A written document, outlining an intentional commitment that gives direction for actions, and provides a means to determine if goals and objectives are being accomplished (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

AUinvolve (Software)

Institutionally branded name for Anthology/Campus Labs' Engage product. Anthology/Campus Labs' Engage (AUinvolve) provides the tools for managing student organizations and encouraging growth and development as students engage in co-curricular activities. AUinvolve is also used for staff to register for the assessment curriculum.

AU Planning (Software)

Institutionally branded name for Anthology/Campus Labs' Planning product. This is the strategic planning, accreditation, and annual reporting software for Student Affairs. Planning can organize planning documents and reports at the institutional, divisional, or departmental level. Planning can aid in documenting assessment efforts and providing detailed information about methods, results, and action plans. It also creates role-based reports that showcase division achievements and effectiveness.

Baseline Data

Information that serves as a basis for comparison in assessing a program's impact or effectiveness.

Baseline Assessment Tool (Software)

Anthology/Campus Labs' Baseline is the assessment software used by Student Affairs at Auburn University. Baseline provides a centralized, accessible location for Division assessment activities and data. Baseline contains data collection and reporting tools for surveys and rubrics that provide direct measures of student learning. Baseline provides the ability to create dashboards that show progress over time and document key performance indicators.

Campus Labs/Anthology (Software)

Campus Labs (now Anthology) can be used to collect information from students to assess the impact of programs and services. Anthology/Campus Labs serves over 650 institutions combining data collection, reporting, organization, and campus-wide integration. Student Affairs (SA) has the following Anthology/Campus Labs' products: Baseline, Compliance Assist Program Review, Engage (AUinvolve), and Planning (AU Planning).

Central Tendency

Locates the distribution by various points and is used to show an average or most commonly indicated response. Measures of central tendency include the mean, median, and mode.

Closing the Loop

Using findings for improvements and sharing findings with stakeholders.

Compliance Assist – Program Review (Software)

Anthology/Campus Labs' Compliance Assist is the Program Review software used by Student Affairs at Auburn University. Compliance Assist allows departments to connect and manage program review efforts using the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards through a self-study process. The Student Affairs Program Review process is designed to enhance organizational performance via the systematic review of data pertaining to department activities, service delivery and use, resource management, and contributions to the advancement of the Student Affairs mission and the University's strategic plan.

Confidence Interval

A range of values so defined that there is a specified probability that the value of a parameter lies within it.

Confidence Level

The probability that the value of a parameter falls within a specified range of values.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The process of implementing changes based on new knowledge or data to achieve goals and enhance the functioning of a department, program, or service.

Control Group

The group in an experimental design that receives either no treatment or a different treatment from the experimental group. This group can thus be compared to the experimental group.

Correlation

A common statistical analysis, usually abbreviated as "r", that measures the degree of relationship between pairs of interval variables in a sample. The range of correlation is from -1.00 to zero to +1.00. Also, a non-cause and effect relationship between two variables.

Crosstab

Allows you to view the number and/or percentages of responses in a particular combination based on answers from two questions.

Dashboard

Provides a summary view of key performance indicators relevant to a particular objective.

Dependent Variable (DV)

The event studied and expected to change when the independent variable is changed. Example: Researcher wants to know the impact of student involvement on grades. The dependent variable is the impact on grades.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are the main aspects of a collection of quantitative data. Descriptive statistics include measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), measures of variation (standard deviation, variance), and relative position (quartiles, percentiles).

Direct Methods

Methods of collecting information that require the students or other stakeholders to display their knowledge and skills (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Distribution

The range of values of a particular variable.

Engage (AUinvolve) (Software)

Anthology/Campus Labs' Engage is referred to as AUinvolve within Student Affairs at Auburn University. AUinvolve provides the tools for managing student organizations and co-curricular activities. AUinvolve connects learning and involvement by aligning involvement opportunities with institutional, divisional, or departmental learning outcomes. Through AUinvolve, students are empowered to manage and grow their organizations through tools designed by experts. Functions such as organization registration and event management help to enhance organizations' processes. AUinvolve is also used for staff to register for the assessment curriculum.

Evaluation

The analysis and use of information collected in the assessment process.

Generalizability

The extent to which research findings and conclusions conducted on a specific study to groups or situations can be applied to the population at large.

Hypothesis

A tentative explanation based on theory to predict a causal relationship between variables; see definition for alternative hypothesis (H_1) and null hypothesis (H_0).

Independent Variable (IV)

A variable that is intentionally changed to observe its effect on the dependent variable. Example: Researcher wants to know the impact of student involvement on grades. The independent variable is level of involvement.

Indirect Methods

Provide opportunities for students or other stakeholders to reflect on their learning and inform the reviewers on their perceptions of their learning experience (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Assures both in advance and by periodic review that appropriate steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in research.

Mean

A measurement of central tendency which is a type of descriptive statistic; It is computed by adding the values and dividing by the number of values.

Median

A measurement of central tendency which is a type of descriptive statistic; It is the middle value of the set when the values are ordered by rank or the point in a series of numbers above or below which is half of the scores.

Mode

A measurement of central tendency which is a type of descriptive statistic; is the most frequent value in a set of data.

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

Reflects that there will be no observed effect during statistical testing.

Open-Ended Questions

Consists of questions posed by the researcher in which the participant provides his or her own responses to questions rather than selecting from a set list of options.

Population

An entire group of individuals who comprise the same characteristics (Creswell, 2009, p. 646). Often written as “N”.

Program Review - Compliance Assist (Software)

Program Review (Anthology/Campus Labs' Compliance Assist) is the software used by Student Affairs at Auburn University. Compliance Assist Program Review allows departments to connect and manage program review efforts using the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards through a self-study process. The Student Affairs Program Review process is designed to enhance organizational performance via the systematic review of data pertaining to department activities, service delivery and use, resource management, and contributions to the advancement of the Student Affairs mission and the University's strategic plan.

Qualitative Research

The detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors, the use of direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and the analysis of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories (Patton 1990 as in Upcraft & Schuh 1996, p. 21). Qualitative methods include: focus groups, observations, case studies, oral histories, interviews, document reviews, and personal accounts.

Quantitative Research

A means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables that are measured on instruments so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures to identify trends or explain the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative methods include: numerical data obtained by surveys, archival numeric data, participation or attendance figures, test scores, grade point averages, etc.

Random Sampling

A process used in research to draw a sample of a population strictly by chance, yielding no discernible pattern beyond chance.

Reliability

The degree to which a measure yields consistent results; there are several different types of reliability, inter-rater (degree of agreement among raters), test and retest (measure of the consistency of an assessment), parallel forms (administering different versions of an assessment tool), and internal consistency (correlations between different items on the same test).

Representative Sample

Sample in which the participants closely match the characteristics of the population, and thus, all segments of the population are represented in the sample.

Sample

A subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for the purpose of making generalizations about the target population (Creswell, 2009, p. 646). Often written as “n”.

Standard Deviation

A measure of variation that indicates the typical distance between the scores of a distribution and the mean.

Standard Error

Standard error is a statistical term that measures the accuracy with which a sample represents a population.

Statistical Significance

Is the probability that the difference between the outcomes of the control and experimental group are great enough that it is unlikely due solely to chance. The probability that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a predetermined significance level [0.05 or 0.01].

Statistical Tests

Researchers use statistical tests to make decisions about whether a study's data indicate a significant effect from the intervention and allow the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. That is, statistical tests show whether the differences between the outcomes of the control and experimental groups are great enough to be statistically significant. If differences are found to be statistically significant, it means that the probability [likelihood] that these differences occurred solely due to chance is relatively low. Most researchers agree that a significance value of .05 or less [i.e., there is a 95% probability that the differences are real] sufficiently determines significance. Examples are t-Tests, ANOVA's, and regression.

Strategic Plan

A document used to communicate and connect an organization's goals, objectives, outcomes, and action steps to its vision, mission, and values.

Validity

The degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting.

Vennage (Software)

Vennage is a software that allows users to create infographics in 3 easy steps: choose a template, add charts and visuals, customize your design. Student Affairs staff members may request log-in information for this product from Assessment & Strategic Planning.