

Dominican University of California
Glossary of Assessment Terms

Assessment: the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.
T. Marchese, 1987

Assessment Plan: a document that outlines what empirical data will be collected, by whom, for the assessment each of the learning outcomes (typically in a multi-year cycle); the process for reviewing the data, policies and procedures to guide discussion and feedback of the results; and the process for modifying the course, program or curriculum to improve student learning.

Benchmark: a detailed description of a specific level of student performance expected of students. A defined measurement or standard serves as a point of reference by which process performance is measured.

Bloom's Taxonomy: commonly used discussion of the six levels of learning that occur. According to Bloom, knowledge increases as one progresses through the levels of learning, where knowledge is the most surface level and evaluation represents the deepest form of learning.

- *Knowledge* - to know specific facts, terms, concepts, principles or theories;
- *Comprehension* - to be able to understand, interpret, compare and contrast, explain;
- *Application* - to apply knowledge to new situations, to solve problems;
- *Analysis* - to identify the organizational structure of something; to identify parts, relationship and organizing principles;
- *Synthesis* - to create something, to integrate ideas into a solution, to propose an action plan, to propose a new classification scheme;
- *Evaluation* - to judge the quality of something based on its adequacy, value, logic or use.
- The Taxonomy has been considered very useful in defining learning-outcome statements.

Course-based Assessment: a process of gathering data on student learning during the educational experience, designed to help the instructor determine which concepts or skills the students are not learning well, so that steps may be taken to improve the students' learning while the course is still in session.

Closing the Loop: assessment results that are acted upon and are turned back into program improvement.

Curriculum Alignment: curriculum and learning objectives are aligned or matched to ensure that students are provided appropriate learning opportunities in order to achieve the identified learning objectives or outcomes.

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Direct Assessment: assessments that involve examination of student work or performance, such as embedded test questions, written papers, oral presentations, student projects, competence interviews, performances, or portfolios. Assessment results will be even more convincing if different assessment strategies triangulate to support the same conclusion.

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Embedded Assessment: a means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching and learning process. Often used for assessment purposes in classroom assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Can assess individual student performance or aggregate the information to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course, expecting each senior to complete a research paper that is graded for content and style, but is also assessed for advanced ability to locate and evaluate Web-based information (as part of a college-wide outcome to demonstrate information literacy).
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Empirical Data:

- Qualitative Data - ways of collecting information that are concerned with understanding or conveying meanings or contexts, rather than making statistical inferences. Common forms: participant observations, focus groups, in-depth interviews, etc.
- Quantitative Data - information that is collected or represented numerically; typically focuses on counting occurrences or measuring characteristics or behavior rather than meanings; easy to analyze statistically. Common forms: surveys, experiments, questionnaires, etc.

Evaluation: There is some confusion between the terms “assessment” and “evaluation” as these terms seem to be used interchangeably by some authors. However, the two terms are not synonymous. Evaluation is a judgment regarding the quality or worth of the assessment results. This judgment is based upon multiple sources of assessment information. The evaluative process goes beyond just collecting information; evaluation is concerned with making judgments based upon the collection.

Goals: broad statement about the types of learning desired and facilitated within a course, department or curriculum.

Holistic Scoring: evaluating student work in which the score is based on an overall impression of student performance rather than multiple dimensions of performance (analytic scoring).
Glossary of Useful Terms, SABES Home Page

Indicator: a piece of information about the performance of a student that can be used to gauge the level of student learning (e.g., test score, GPA)

Indirect Assessment: assessments that supplement and enrich what faculty learn from direct assessment studies, such as alumni surveys, employer surveys, satisfaction surveys and interviews. This is sometimes referred to as indirect evidence because it is based on opinions or perceptions.
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Institutional Assessment: an on-going process designed to monitor and determine the extent to which curricular, co-curricular and institutional areas and processes support the achievement of student learning outcomes as defined by the mission of the college.

Learning Outcomes: (sometimes referred to as objectives) – statements that describe specific behaviors a student is expected to demonstrate to assure the stated goal has been achieved; knowledge, skills and values students should demonstrate upon completion of a course,

program or curriculum.

Mission: description of the unifying purpose of the goals of the institution, department, or general education curriculum.

Outcomes: target measures that demonstrate achievement of mission and goals.

Performance Criteria: the standards by which student performance is evaluated. Performance criteria help assessors maintain objectivity and provide students with important information about expectations.

Portfolios: collections of multiple student work samples usually compiled over time and rated using rubrics. The design of a portfolio is dependent upon how the scoring results are going to be used.

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Program Assessment: an ongoing process designed to monitor and improve student learning. Faculty develop explicit statements of what students should learn, verify that the program is designed to foster this learning, collect empirical data that indicate student attainment, and use these data to improve student learning.

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Rubric: a set of scoring criteria used to determine the value of a student's performance on assigned tasks. The criteria are written so students are able to learn what must be done to improve their performance in the future.

Scaffolding: an instructional technique whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task, then gradually shifts responsibility to the students.

Scaffolding by North West Regional Lab

Student Learning Outcomes (AKA student learning objectives): statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they complete the major or degree. They may be stated in terms of expected knowledge, skills or attitudes. These outcomes must be consistent with the mission of the department, college, and university.

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Summative Assessment (sometimes referred to as outcomes assessment): process for measuring the overall level of student learning at the end of a course or educational experience for the purpose of assessing students' knowledge, skills and values. It can be used to help the instructor improve a course and/or appropriate committees to improve curriculum development and offerings.

Triangulation: Multiple lines of evidence pointing to the same conclusion. It refers to the collection and comparison of data or information from three different sources or perspectives.

Glossary of Useful Terms, SABES Home Page