

## Glossary of Assessment Terms

**Assessment-** In general, assessment is the process of asking and answering questions that seek to test if documentable realities align with stated intentions/expected outcomes.

- For student learning, it is the systematic process of determining educational objectives, gathering, using, and analyzing information about student learning outcomes to make decisions about programs, individual student progress, or accountability.

**Benchmark-** A criterion-referenced objective performance datum that is 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.

### **Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives-**

Six levels arranged in order of increasing complexity (1=low, 6=high)

1. Knowledge: Recalling or remembering information without necessarily understanding it. Includes behaviors such as describing, listing, identifying, and labeling.
2. Comprehension: Understanding learned material and includes behaviors such as explaining, discussing, and interpreting.
3. Application: The ability to put ideas and concepts to work in solving problems. It includes behaviors such as demonstrating, showing, and making use of information.
4. Analysis: Breaking down information into its component parts to see interrelationships and ideas. Related behaviors include differentiating, comparing, and categorizing.
5. Synthesis: The ability to put parts together to form something original. It involves using creativity to compose or design something new.
6. Evaluation: Judging the value of evidence based on definite criteria. Behaviors related to evaluation include: concluding, criticizing, prioritizing, and recommending.

**Classroom Assessment-** The systematic and on-going study of what and how students are learning in a particular classroom; often designed for individual faculty who wish to improve their teaching of a specific course. Classroom assessment differs from tests and other forms of student assessment in that it is aimed at course improvement, rather than at assigning grades.

**Direct Assessment-** Direct measures of student learning require student to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself. Objective tests, essays, presentations, and classroom assignments all meet this criterion.

**Embedded Assessment-** A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching-learning process. Often uses for assessment purposes 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).

**Evaluation-** The use of assessment findings (evidence/data) to judge program effectiveness; used as a basis for making decisions about program changes or improvement.

**Formative Assessment-** The gathering of information about student learning-during the progression of a course or program and usually repeatedly-to improve the learning of those students. Example: reading the first lab reports of a class to assess whether some or all students in the group need a lesson on how to make them succinct and informative.

**Indirect Assessment-** Acquiring evidence about how students feel about learning and their learning environment rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement. Examples include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and reflective essays.

**Learning Outcomes-** Operational statements describing specific student behaviors that evidence the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions. Learning outcomes can be usefully thought of as behavioral criteria for determining whether students are achieving the educational objectives of a program, and, ultimately, whether overall program goals are being successfully met. Outcomes are sometimes treated as synonymous with objectives.

**Longitudinal-** Data collected on the same individuals over time for use in a longitudinal study. A study that investigates development, learning, or other types of change in individuals over time.

**Norm-Referenced Assessment-** An assessment where student performance or performances are compared to a larger group. Usually the larger group or “norm group” is a national sample representing a wide and diverse cross-section of students. Students, schools, districts, and even states are compared or rank-ordered in relation to the norm group. The purpose of a norm-referenced assessment is usually to sort students and not to measure achievement towards some criterion of performance.

**Objectives-** Refers to the specific knowledge, skills, or attitudes that students are expected to achieve through their college experience; expected or intended student outcomes.

**Outcomes-** Refers to the specific knowledge, skills, or developmental attributes that students actually develop through their college experiences; assessment results.

**Percentile-** The percentage of examinees in the norm group who scored at or below the raw score for which the percentile rank was calculated.

**Performance-based-** Assessment technique involving the gathering of data through systematic observation of a behavior or process and evaluating that data based on a clearly articulated set of performance criteria to serve as the basis for evaluative judgments.

**Portfolio-** A systematic and organized collection of a student’s work that exhibits to others the direct evidence of a student’s efforts, achievements, and progress over a period of time. The collection should involve the student in selection of its contents, and should include representative work, providing a documentation of the learner’s performance and a basis for evaluation of the student’s progress. Portfolios may include a variety of

demonstrations of learning and have been gathered in the form of a physical collection of materials, videos, CD-ROMs, reflective journals, etc.

**Qualitative-** Data in which the values of a variable differ in kind (quality) rather than in amount.

**Quantitative-** Data in which the values of a variable differ in amount rather than in kind.

**Rubric-** Specific sets of criteria that clearly define for both student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like. Criteria define descriptors of ability at each level of performance and assign values to each level. Levels referred to are proficiency levels which describe a continuum from excellent to unacceptable product.

**Standards-** Sets a level of accomplishment all students are expected to meet or exceed. Standards do not necessarily imply high quality learning; sometimes the level is a lowest common denominator. Nor do they imply complete standardization in a program; a common minimum level could be achieved by multiple pathways and demonstrated in various ways.

**Summative Assessment-** The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. When used for improvement, impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program. Example: examining student final exams in a course to see if certain specific areas of the curriculum were understood less well than others.

**Triangulation-** The building of multiple sources of information or ideas to support a central finding or theme.

**Value Added-** The effects educational providers have had on students during their programs of study. The impact of participating in higher education on student learning and development above that which would have occurred through natural maturation, usually measured as longitudinal change or difference between pretest and posttest; A comparison of the knowledge, skills, and developmental traits that students bring to the educational process with the knowledge, skills and developmental traits they demonstrate upon completion of the educational process.