

Chapter 9. Assessment Vocabulary

The definitions in this list were derived from several sources, including:

- *Glossary of Useful Terms Related to Authentic and Performance Assessments*. Grant Wiggins
- *SCASS Arts Assessment Project Glossary of Assessment Terms*
- *The ERIC Review: Performance-Based Assessment*. Vol. 3 Issue 1, Winter, 1994.
- *Assessment: How Do We Know What They Know?* ASCD. 1992.
- *Dissolving the Boundaries: Assessment that Enhances Learning*. Dee Dickinson
- <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

Accountability – The demand by a community (public officials, employers, and taxpayers) for school officials to prove that money invested in education has led to measurable learning. "Accountability testing" is an attempt to sample what students have learned, or how well teachers have taught, and/or the effectiveness of a school's principal's performance as an instructional leader. School budgets and personnel promotions, compensation, and awards may be affected. Most school districts make this kind of assessment public; it can affect policy and public perception of the effectiveness of taxpayer-supported schools and be the basis for comparison among schools. It has been suggested that test scores analyzed in a disaggregated format can help identify instructional problems and point to potential solutions.

Action Plans – The statement that indicates the specific changes that a given area plans to implement in the next cycle based on assessment results. "The biology faculty will introduce one special project in the introductory class that will expose the students to the scientific method." "Career Services is implementing a software program called '1st Place'. This software will allow better tracking of job openings."

Action Research – Classroom-based research involving the systematic collection of data in order to address certain questions and issue so as to improve classroom instruction and educational effectiveness.

Affective Outcomes – Outcomes of education that reflect feelings more than understanding; likes, pleasures, ideals, dislikes, annoyances, values.

Annual Report: A report from each academic program based on its assessment plan that is submitted annually, which outlines how evidence was used to improve student learning outcomes through curricular and/or other changes or to document that no changes were needed.

Assessment – The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. In general

terms, assessment is the determination of a value, or measurement, based on a "standard." We often refer to this standard as a "target." Standard-based measurement, or assessment, is useful in education for both the placement of students in initial course work and ascertaining the extent of students' acquisition of skills/knowledge.

Assessment Cycle – The assessment cycle in higher education is generally annual and fits within the academic year. Outcomes, targets and assessment tools are established early in the fall semester; data is collected by the end of spring semester; results are analyzed during the summer and early fall.

Assessment Tool – An instrument that has been designed to collect objective data about students' knowledge and skill acquisition. An appropriate outcomes assessment test measures students' ability to integrate a set of individual skills into a meaningful, collective demonstration. Some examples of assessment tools include standardized tests, end-of-program skills tests, student inquiries, common final exams, and comprehensive embedded test items.

Assessment Literacy – The possession of knowledge about the basic principals of sound assessment practice, including terminology, the development and use of assessment methodologies and techniques, familiarity with standards of quality in assessment. Increasingly, familiarity with alternatives to traditional measurements of learning.

Authentic Assessment – A circumstance in which the behavior that the learning is intended to produce is evaluated and discussed in order to improve learning. The concept of model, practice, feedback in which students know what excellent performance is and are guided to practice an entire concept rather than bits and pieces in preparation for eventual understanding. A variety of techniques can be employed in authentic assessment.

Benchmark – Student performance standards (the level(s) of student competence in a content area).

Cohort – A group whose progress is followed by means of measurements at different points in time.

Course-embedded assessment – A method in which evidence of student learning outcomes for the program is obtained from assignments in particular courses in the curriculum.

Course-level assessment – Assessment to determine the extent to which a specific course is achieving its learning goals.

Course mapping – A matrix showing the coverage of each program learning outcome in each course. It may also indicate the level of emphasis of each outcome in each course.

Criterion Referenced Tests – A test in which the results can be used to determine a student's progress toward mastery of a content area. Performance is compared to an expected level of

mastery in a content area rather than to other students' scores. Such tests usually include questions based on what the student was taught and are designed to measure the student's mastery of designated objectives of an instructional program. The "criterion" is the standard of performance established as the passing score for the test. Scores have meaning in terms of what the student knows or can do, rather than how the test-taker compares to a reference or norm group.

Curriculum Map – A matrix showing where each goal and/or learning outcome are covered in each program course.

Direct Assessment – Assessment to gauge student achievement of learning outcomes directly from their work.

Educational Goals – The knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions students are expected to acquire as a result of completing your academic program. Goals are sometimes treated as synonymous with outcomes, though outcomes are the behavioral results of the goals, and are stated in precise operational terms.

Formative assessment – The assessment of student achievement at different stages of a course or at different stages of a student's academic career. The focus of formative assessment is on the documentation of student development over time. It can also be used to engage students in a process of reflection on their education.

General Education Assessment – Assessment that measures the campus-wide, general education competencies agreed upon by the faculty. General education assessment is more holistic in nature than program outcomes assessment because competencies are measured across disciplines, rather than just within a single discipline.

Holistic Scoring – In assessment, assigning a single score based on an overall assessment of performance rather than by scoring or analyzing dimensions or traits individually. The product is considered to be more than the sum of its parts and so the quality of a final product or performance is evaluated rather than the process or dimension of performance. A holistic scoring rubric might combine a number of elements on a single scale. Focused holistic scoring may be used to evaluate a limited portion of a learner's performance.

Indirect Assessment – Assessment that deduces student achievement of learning outcomes through the reported perception of learning by students and other agents.

Institutional assessment – Assessment to determine the extent to which a college or university is achieving its mission.

Learning outcomes – Operational statements describing specific student behaviors that evidence the acquisition of desired goals in 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 goals of a program, and, ultimately, whether overall program goals are being successfully met. Outcomes are sometimes treated as synonymous with objectives, though objectives are usually more general statements of what

students are expected to achieve in an academic program.

Measurable Criteria – An intended student outcome, or administrative objective, restated in a quantifiable, or measurable, statement. "60% of biology students will complete an experiment/project using scientific methods in fall 2003;" "75% of responding MU students will indicate on a survey in fall 2003 that they have read materials about career opportunities on campus."

Metacognition – The knowledge of one's own thinking processes and strategies, and the ability to consciously reflect and act on the knowledge of cognition to modify those processes and strategies.

Norm – A distribution of scores obtained from a norm group. The norm is the midpoint (or median) of scores or performance of the students in that group. Fifty percent will score above and fifty percent below the norm.

Performance-Based Assessment – Direct, systematic observation and rating of student performance of an educational objective, often an ongoing observation over a period of time, and typically involving the creation of products. The assessment may be a continuing interaction between teacher and student and should ideally be part of the learning process. The assessment should be a real-world performance with relevance to the student and learning community. Assessment of the performance is done using a rubric, or analytic scoring guide to aid in objectivity. Performance-based assessment is a test of the ability to apply knowledge in a real-life setting or performance of exemplary tasks in the demonstration of intellectual ability.

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 information about the performance criteria, the rubric or criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection or evaluation.

Portfolio Assessment – Portfolios may be assessed in a variety of ways. Each piece may be individually scored, or the portfolio might be assessed merely for the presence of required pieces, or a holistic scoring process might be used and an evaluation made on the basis of an overall impression of the student's collected work. It is common that assessors work together to establish consensus of standards or to ensure greater reliability in evaluation of student work. Established criteria are often used by reviewers and students involved in the process of evaluating progress and achievement of objectives.

Primary Trait Method – A type of rubric scoring constructed to assess a specific trait, skill, behavior, or format, or the evaluation of the primary impact of a learning process on a designated audience.

Process – A generalizable method of doing something, generally involving steps or operations which are usually ordered and/or interdependent. Process can be evaluated as part of an assessment, as in the example of evaluating a student's performance during prewriting exercises

leading up to the final production of an essay or paper.

Program assessment – Assessment to determine the extent to which students in a departmental program can demonstrate the learning outcomes for the program.

Reliability – An assessment tool’s consistency of results over time and with different samples of students.

Rubric – A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of a learning outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic.

Self-efficacy – Students’ judgment of their own capabilities for a specific learning outcome.

Senior Project – Extensive projects planned and carried out during the senior year as the culmination of the undergraduate experience. Senior projects require higher-level thinking skills, problem-solving, and creative thinking. They are often interdisciplinary, and may require extensive research. Projects culminate in a presentation of the project to a panel of people, usually faculty and community mentors, sometimes students, who evaluate the student's work at the end of the year.

Summative assessment – The assessment of student achievement at the end point of their education or at the end of a course. The focus of summative assessment is on the documentation of student achievement by the end of a course or program. It does not reveal the pathway of development to achieve that endpoint.

Triangulation – The collection of data via multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome

Validity – The degree to which an assessment measures (a) what is intended, as opposed to (b) what is not intended, or (c) what is unsystematic or unstable