

Assessment Terms and Definitions

Accountability: Reporting to the College's stakeholders on educational process to show trends within and relationships among school data (e.g., institutions are held accountable for the use of public funds, institutions must demonstrate that they are efficient and effective in serving the needs of the state).

Summative data is used for making decisions about resources, people, and institutions. AAHE Assessment: *Frequently Asked Questions*, http://www.aahe.org/assessment/assess_faqs.htm#define

Actionable: useful for learning what the students can do and what they can't do well; helps you to identify what needs to be acted upon.

Analytical Scoring: Evaluating student work across multiple dimensions of performance rather than from an overall impression (holistic scoring). In analytic scoring, individual scores for each dimension are scored and reported. *Glossary of Useful Terms*, SABES Home Page

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

Authentic: a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate application of essential knowledge and skills.

Benchmark: 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.

Calibrate: process designed to help faculty to apply the grading criteria in the same way.

Closing the loop: Assessment results are acted upon. Assessment data are turned back into program improvement. This is part of the assessment process. <http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/dacol/assessment/glossary>

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

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

Criterion referenced assessment: assessment results are used to determine a student's progress toward mastery of a content area. Performance is compared to an expected level of mastery rather than to other students' scores.

Curriculum alignment: Curriculum, course competencies and/or program SLOs are aligned or matched to ensure that students are provided appropriate learning opportunities in order to achieve the identified learning objectives or outcomes. Definition from *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

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. *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

Embedded assessment: A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching 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 sophomore 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). *Assessment Terms Glossary*, Northern Illinois University, <http://www.niu.edu/assessment/resourc/gloss.shtml>.

Focus group: a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a course, program, project etc.. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting. Indirect assessment.

Formative assessment: collecting evidence from students who are part way into a program.

Halo effect: a bias affecting judgements of performance. If an individual does well in one aspect then this is likely to trigger favorable reports on other aspects.

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

Indirect assessment: Assessments that supplement and enrich what faculty learn from direct assessment studies, such as employer surveys, satisfaction surveys and interviews. *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

Institutional assessment: assessing the impact of the entire college experience.

Inter-rater reliability: the extent to which two or more individuals agree.

Measurable criteria – an intended student outcome or administrative objective, restated in a quantifiable, or measurable, statement. 60% of biology students will complete a project using the scientific methods.

Norm-referenced: a distribution of scores obtained from a norm group. The norm is the midpoint of scores or performance of the students in that group. Fifty percent will score above and fifty percent below.

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. *Assessment Terms Glossary*, Northern Illinois University, <http://www.niu.edu/assessment/resourc/gloss.shtml>.

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. *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

Reliability: an assessment tool's consistency of results over time and with different samples of students. Test-retest, parallel forms, inter-rater, internal consistency (coefficient alpha, split halves).

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. *Music Assessment Glossary* by Edward P. Asmus, Ph.D., <http://www.music.miami.edu/assessment/glossary.html>

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, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr1scaf.htm>

Self-Assessment: Analyzing and making decisions about one's own performance or abilities. *Music Assessment Glossary* by Edward P. Asmus, Ph.D., <http://www.music.miami.edu/assessment/glossary.html>

Signature assignments: assignments designed to assess specific learning outcomes

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. *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

Summative assessment: collecting evidence from students done or almost done with program or course.

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

Validity: the degree to which an assessment measures what is intended. Construct, criterion-related, face (based on expert judgement), formative, sampling.

Value Added: The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Requires a baseline measurement for comparison.