

Glossary of Assessment Terms

ARTIFACT: An object produced to indicate mastery of a skill or component of knowledge. It is often stored for future use.

ASSESSMENT: The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT: The assessment instrument refers to the specific tool or means of collecting the desired information. Example **assessment instruments** include but are not limited to interviews, portfolio evaluations, scoring rubrics, standardized tests, and surveys.

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: An assessment approach that has been designed to provide a realistic task, simulation, or problem related to that attribute or performance being measured. It engages students in challenges that closely represent what they are likely to face as everyday workers and citizens.

BENCHMARK: A point of reference for measurement; a standard of achievement against which to evaluate or judge one's own performance. A program can use its own past performance data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future data/performance. Additionally, data from another (comparable, exemplary) program can be used as a target benchmark.

CLOSING THE LOOP: Assessment results are acted upon. Assessment data are turned back into program improvement. This is part of the assessment process.

CRITERIA: Measures or characteristics that are used to determine or verify student knowledge, attitudes and performance.

CURRICULUM MAPPING Process of evaluating curriculum in relation to intended outcomes to ensure that students are receiving appropriate instruction and to enable the program/department to identify gaps in the curriculum and provide an overview of program accomplishments.

DIRECT MEASUREMENT: Measures that require the student to demonstrate his/her knowledge and skills in response to the instrument. Examples of **direct measurement** include 1) achievement tests such as objective tests; 2) student academic work such as essays, presentations, portfolios, and course assignments; 3) observations or case studies.

EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT: A means of gathering information about student learning that is integrated into the teaching-learning process. Results can be used to assess individual student performance or they can be aggregated to provide information about the course or program. It can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: Refers to assessment that is carried out throughout the course, project, or time-frame to provide feedback regarding whether the objective is being met. Formative assessment may be conducted for the following reasons: program improvement; to provide feedback to improve teaching, learning, and curricula; to identify students' strengths/weaknesses and to assist in placing students based on their needs.

INDIRECT MEASUREMENT: Measures that ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it. Examples of **indirect measurement** include self-report methods such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

LEARNING OUTCOME Specific, observable, and measurable knowledge or skill that the student gains/develops as a result of a specific course or participation in an academic program.

MULTIPLE MEASURES: Assessment data gathered from a variety of sources and/or through a variety of means.

OBJECTIVE TEST: A test for which the scoring procedure is completely specified and not subjective, enabling agreement of the correct answer among different scorers.

PROGRAM OUTCOME: A measure of student achievement evaluated at the program level. Examples include retention and graduation rates, job placement, graduate/professional school enrollment, and licensure exam pass rates.

QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT: Measures that assess objectives by collecting numeric data and analyzing the data using statistical techniques. Examples of quantitative data include GPA, grades, exam scores; forced-choice survey responses; demographic information; standardized teaching evaluations.

QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENT Measures that rely on and evaluate descriptions rather than numeric data. Examples of qualitative data include responses to open-ended survey or interview questions; evaluations of writing samples, portfolios, or formal recitals; participant observations; ethnographic studies.

RUBRIC A scoring key. Typically a rubric is a grid that outlines identified criteria for successfully completing an assignment or task and establishes levels for meeting those criteria. Rubrics provide an efficient and reliable way to evaluate complex products or performances and to define precise outcomes and expectations. Rubrics can be used to score everything from essays to performances and portfolios.

SAMPLING: Method to obtain information about characteristics of a population by examining a smaller, randomly chosen selection (the sample) of the group members. If conducted correctly, sampling results will be representative of the population as a whole.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Analyzing and making decisions about one's own performance or abilities.

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT: An assessment where the impression or opinion of the assessor contributes to the determination of the score or evaluation of performance.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: Refers to assessment that is carried out at the end of a course, project, or time-frame to evaluate whether the objective was achieved (i.e., the overall performance).