

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.

Benchmark: A description or example of candidate or institutional performance that serves as a standard of comparison for evaluation or judging quality.

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.

Course Embedded Assessment: Reviewing materials generated in the classroom. In addition to providing a basis for grading students, such materials allow faculty to evaluate approaches to instruction and course design.

Direct Measures of Learning: Students (learners) display knowledge and skills as they respond directly to the instrument itself. Examples include: objective tests, essays, presentations, and classroom assignments.

Formative evaluation: Improvement-oriented assessment. The use of a broad range of instruments and procedures during a course of instruction or during a period of organizational operations in order to facilitate mid-course adjustments.

Goals for Learning: Goals are used to express intended results in general terms. The term goals are used to describe broad learning concepts, for example: clear communication, problem solving, and ethical awareness.

Indirect Measures of Learning: Students (learners) are asked to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it. Examples include: exit surveys, student interviews (e.g. graduating seniors), and alumni surveys.

Institutional Effectiveness: The measure of what an institution actually achieves.

Learning Outcomes (Outcome Behaviors): Observable behaviors or actions on the part of students that demonstrate that the intended learning objective has occurred.

Measurements: Design of strategies, techniques and instruments for collecting feedback data that evidence the extent to which students demonstrate the desired behaviors.

Methods of Assessment: Techniques or instruments used in assessment.

Modifications: Recommended actions or changes for improving student learning, service delivery, etc. that respond to the respective measurement evaluation.

Objectives for Learning: Objectives are used to express intended results in precise terms. Further, objectives are more specific as to what needs to be assessed and thus are a more accurate guide in selecting appropriate assessment tools. Example: Graduates in Speech Communication will be able to interpret non-verbal behavior and to support arguments with credible evidence.

Performance Assessment: The process of using student activities or products, as opposed to tests or surveys, to evaluate students' knowledge, skills, and development. Methods include: essays, oral presentations, exhibitions, performances, and demonstrations. Examples include: reflective journals (daily/weekly); capstone experiences; demonstrations of student work (e.g. acting in a theatrical production, playing an instrument, observing a student teaching a lesson); products of student work (e.g. Art students produce paintings/drawings, Journalism students write newspaper articles, Geography students create maps, Computer Science students generate computer programs, etc.).

Portfolio: An accumulation of evidence about individual proficiencies, especially in relation to learning standards. Examples include but are not limited to: Samples of student work including projects, journals, exams, papers, presentations, videos of speeches and performances.

Quantitative Methods of Assessment: Methods that rely on numerical scores or ratings. Examples: Surveys, Inventories, Institutional/departmental data, departmental/course-level exams (locally constructed, standardized, etc.).

Qualitative Methods of Assessment: Methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers. Examples: Ethnographic field studies, logs, journals, participant observation, and open-ended questions on interviews and surveys.

Reliability: Reliable measures are measures that produce consistent responses over time.

Rubrics: (Scoring Guidelines) Written and shared for judging performance that indicate the qualities by which levels of performance can be differentiated, and that anchor judgments about the degree of achievement.

Student Outcomes Assessment: The act of assembling, analyzing and using both quantitative and qualitative evidence of teaching and learning outcomes, in order to examine their congruence with stated purposes and educational objectives and to provide meaningful feedback that will stimulate self-renewal.

Summative evaluation: Accountability-oriented assessment. The use of data assembled at the end of a particular sequence of activities, to provide a macro view of teaching, learning, and institutional effectiveness.

Teaching-Improvement Loop: Teaching, learning, outcomes assessment, and improvement may be defined as elements of a feedback loop in which teaching influences learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes is used to improve teaching and learning.

Validity: As applied to a test refers to a judgment concerning how well a test does in fact measure what it purports to measure.

References

Bloom, B.S. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman.

Commission on Higher Education. Framework for Outcomes Assessment. (1996) Philadelphia: Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Palomba, C.A & Banta, T.W (1999). Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education . Jossey – Bass: San Francisco.

National Council on Accreditation of Teachers of Colleges of Teacher Education. (2000) NCATE 2000 Standards: Glossary of NCATE Terms . Washington, DC: Author.