

GLOSSARY OF ASSESSMENT TERMS

(Linda Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*, 3rd ed.)

Term	Definition	Page
<i>Action Research</i>	A distinct type of research whose purpose is to inform and better one's own practice rather than make broad generalizations	11
<i>Add-on Assessments</i>	Ungraded assessments that are not course or program requirements	157
<i>Aims</i>	Aspirations that we value but that may not be achievable	41
<i>Analysis</i>	Capacity to break a complex concept apart to understand the interrelationships among its components; identifying the elements, relationships, and underlying principles of a complex process	43
<i>Application</i>	Capacity to use knowledge and understanding in a new context	43
<i>Assessment</i>	Deciding what we want our students to learn and making sure they learn it	8
<i>Backwards Curriculum Design</i>	Develops a course, program, or other learning experience by first articulating its key learning goals, then designing the course or program so students achieve and demonstrate those learning goals	65
<i>Bloom's Taxonomy</i>	Divides learning into three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor; cognitive skills are organized into a hierarchy of six categories	52
<i>Capstone</i>	A holistic activity that students complete as they approach the end of a learning experience; gives students the opportunity to integrate, synthesize, apply, and reflect on what they have learned throughout their studies	68
<i>Ceiling</i>	The highest possible score or rating on an assessment	29
<i>Closing the loop</i>	The fourth step of the teaching-learning-assessment cycle where evidence of student learning is used to understand and improve student learning by improving the other steps in the cycle: Establishing learning goals, ensuring sufficient learning opportunities, and assessing learning	8
<i>Co-curricular Experiences</i>	Out-of-classroom experiences that help students achieve meaningful learning goals in concert with academic study	19
<i>Coherence</i>	Activities in a course or courses in a program integrate with one another to fulfill their purpose	66
<i>Competencies</i>	Used to describe learning goals or objectives that involve skills rather than knowledge or attitudes	41
<i>Competency-Based Programs</i>	Students progress through the program not by completing courses but by completing the learning activities	65
<i>Consequential Validity</i>	How well the evidence can be used to inform meaningful, substantive decisions and solve problems	28
<i>Content Validity</i>	How well the assessment yields meaningful evidence of student achievement of the learning goals it is intended to assess	28
<i>Creativity</i>	Producing new and good ideas or products through imaginative skills	44
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	Umbrella term for many kinds of thinking skills that go beyond basic understanding, including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, problem-solving, information literacy, and some habits of mind	43
<i>Curriculum Alignment</i>	Ensuring that courses, programs, and general education curriculum are designed to give every student enough opportunity to achieve the key learning goals	64
<i>Curriculum Map</i>	Chart identifying the key learning goals addressed in each of the curriculum's key elements or learning activities	76
<i>Degree Qualifications Profile</i>	Developed by the Lumina Foundation to define what students should be expected to know and be able to do once they earn their degrees at the associate, bachelor's, and master's levels; http://degreeprofile.org/	51
<i>Direct Evidence</i>	The kind that would convince a skeptic that students indeed have learned what they need to persist, graduate, transfer, obtain jobs, and otherwise succeed	26
<i>Embedded Assessments</i>	Course assignments and learning activities that can provide evidence of student achievement of program, general education, or institutional learning goals	157

<i>Error Margin</i>	An estimate of the maximum difference between the percentage observed in the sample and the true percentage of all students from whom the sample was taken (see formula)	159
<i>Evaluation</i>	1. Using assessment information to make an informed judgment; 2. Determining the match between intended and actual outcomes; 3. Investigating and judging the quality or worth of a program, project, or other endeavor	12
<i>Flipped Classrooms</i>	Students first learn basic content outside of the classroom, and then they reinforce and deepen their learning in the (face-to-face or online) classroom.	81
<i>Floor</i>	The lowest possible score or rating on an assessment	29
<i>Formative Assessments</i>	Those undertaken while student learning is taking place rather than at the end	157
<i>General Education</i>	The part of a liberal arts education that is shared by many or all undergraduates at a college; also called “liberal arts core” or “core curriculum”	18
<i>Goals</i>	What the faculty and the college aim to achieve	40
<i>Hard Skills</i>	Career-specific skills required for a specific occupation	46
<i>High-Impact Practices (HIPs)</i>	Educational experiences that make a significant difference in student learning, persistence, and success because they engage students actively in their learning: www.aacu.org/resources/high-impact-practices	69
<i>Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)</i>	Skills that go beyond basic understanding; may be a synonym for critical thinking	43
<i>Indirect Evidence</i>	Less compelling evidence of student learning	26
<i>Institutional Learning Goals</i>	Learning goals that every student at a college, regardless of program, is expected to achieve by graduation	57
<i>Internal Consistency</i>	The consistency among items in a test or survey that are all supposed to assess the same thing	30
<i>Interrater Reliability</i>	The consistency between two raters	30
<i>LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes</i>	An initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to identify what all college students should learn in order to be prepared for 21 st -century challenges; https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes	51
<i>Learning Goals</i>	Intended or expected learning outcomes as opposed to actual learning outcomes or results	41
<i>Learning Objectives</i>	(1) Synonym for learning goals; (2) detailed aspects of learning goals; (3) the tasks to be accomplished to achieve the learning goal, the process leading to the outcome	41
<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	Goals that describe what students will be able to do as the result of a learning experience; the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience	41
<i>Liberal Arts</i>	Those studies addressing knowledge, skills, and competencies that cross disciplines, yielding a broadly educated, well-rounded individual; also referred to as “arts and sciences”	18
<i>Measurement Error</i>	Fluctuations in human performance beyond our control that can affect the outcome of an assessment	28
<i>Metacognition</i>	Learning how to learn and manage one’s own learning by understanding how one learns, thereby preparing for a lifetime of learning	44
<i>Meta-majors</i>	Focused pathways offered by community colleges that aim to increase student success by preparing students for a cluster of four-year college majors rather than just one specific major	69
<i>Outcomes</i>	Goals that refer to the end rather than the means, the result rather than the process; explains why we do what we do	41
<i>Program</i>	Studies that lead to a degree, certificate, or other credential	18
<i>Program Learning Goals</i>	Every student in the program must take at least two courses that help him or her achieve the program learning goal	55
<i>Reliability</i>	The consistency or dependability of an assessment tool	30

<i>Soft Skills</i>	Generalizable, transferable skills that are applicable to a wide range of careers and are often required to advance beyond a specific position	46
<i>Summative Assessments</i>	Those completed at the end of a course, program, or other learning experience	157
<i>Synthesis</i>	Capacity to put what one has learned together in a new, original way	44
<i>Transcript Analysis</i>	Reviewing a sample of transcripts of graduating students to learn which courses they chose and when they took them	82
<i>Validity</i>	The usefulness of information on whatever an assessment is intended to assess	28
<i>VALUE Rubrics</i>	Developed by the AAC&U's LEAP initiative to describe and evaluate the 16 Essential Learning Outcomes; https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics	51