

Academic Outcomes Assessment A Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition	Example
Assessment	The systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data about student learning and the use of that information to document and improve student learning.	
Benchmark	A number or description of student or institutional performance that serves as a standard of comparison for evaluation and for judging quality.	The goal is to achieve the benchmark of having 70% of developmental students successfully transition into college-level work.
Competency	Level at which student performance is acceptable.	“Successfully completes” means passing the course with a grade of C or above.
Criterion-referenced tests	Tests that evaluate what a student can do and what he/she knows, based on specific course objectives. Students are not compared to one another.	Sally is able to graph a linear equation in Standard Form using intercepts; 76% of the class can graph lines.
Direct evidence	Students show their mastery of learning objectives through demonstration of knowledge or skills.	Licensure/certification scores and pass rates, capstone experiences, pre/post test scores.
Direct measure	Use performance or product created by the student, results of which can be compared to expected outcomes.	Exam questions which align to specific course objectives. • See table below.
Evaluation	The use of assessment information to make an informed judgment about student achievement, strengths and weaknesses of teaching strategies, appropriate changes in curriculum and/or pedagogy.	Evaluation follows assessment in the process. It can also be used to judge the quality or worth of a project, program or other entity.
Formative Assessment	A type of assessment that provides information concerning teaching and learning. These are often informal and ongoing.	Classroom assessment techniques (CATS).
Indirect evidence	Perception or comparison data that allows one to make inferences about learning, but does not demonstrate mastery.	Course grades, placement data, graduate/professional school acceptance rates.
Indirect measure	Use of information that does not directly link learning to expected outcomes.	Graduation rates, survey results, grade distributions. • See table below.
Institutional effectiveness	The measure of what an institution actually achieves, measured for the purpose of continual improvement.	

Norm-referenced tests	Tests designed to highlight achievement differences between students or between groups of students.	Tests scored by percentiles. A student scoring in the 98 th percentile performed better than 98% of those taking the test, but the score does not indicate how many questions were answered correctly.
Objective	A specific skill or task learned by a student at the completion of an activity or course.	The student will demonstrate the ability to factor trinomials.
Outcome	The level of mastery expected at the completion of an activity or course.	At least 70% of students will correctly answer questions X and Y on the departmental final exam.
Qualitative assessment tool	An assessment that conveys an idea or that implies a characteristic, without actual numerical data.	Surveys, interviews, anecdotal evidence.
Quantitative assessment tool	An assessment that provides numerical data which can be analyzed statistically.	A multiple-choice final exam, a standardized licensure exam.
Reliability	The extent to which an experiment or test yields the same result on repeated trials.	The College Algebra final exam is a reliable instrument since the average score was between 62% and 65% for three consecutive semesters.
Rubric	A set of scoring guidelines that can be used to evaluate students' work.	All developmental English faculty use the same scoring rubric to grade essays.
Summative Assessment	A type of assessment that provides information concerning students' knowledge base at the end of a unit or course.	A final exam, a certification exam.
Validity	The degree to which an instrument accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept for which it was developed.	Is the instrument valid as to its relevance, accuracy, and utility?

<p>Direct Measures of Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardized tests • Locally developed tests • Portfolios • Simulations • Performance appraisal • External examiner • Oral exams • Behavioral examinations 	<p>Indirect Measures of Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written surveys and questionnaires • Entrance interviews • Exit interviews • Archival records • Focus groups
---	--