



Definitions of General Assessment Terms (in alphabetical order)

Term	Definition
Assessment	The systematic process of determining educational objectives, gathering, using, and analyzing information about student learning outcomes to make decisions about programs, individual student progress, or accountability.
Direct Measure	Direct measures of student learning require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself. Objective tests, essays, presentations, and classroom assignments all meet this criterion.
Elements of SLO (Sub-competencies)	The individual criterion used to evaluate a Student Learning Outcome (SLO).
Formative Assessment	Formative assessment refers to the gathering of information or data about student learning during a course or program that is used to guide improvements in teaching and learning. Formative assessment activities are usually low-stakes or no-stakes. For example: turning in a research proposal for early feedback.
High Stakes Observable Activity	An activity such as an exam, essay, presentation, etc. that occurs at or near the end of the program when students are expected to master criterion identified as the sub-competencies of the Student Learning Outcome (SLO).
Indirect Measure	Indirect methods such as surveys and interviews ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it.
Longitudinal Assessment	Data collected on the same individuals over time for use in a longitudinal study. A study that investigates development, learning, or other types of change in individuals over time.
Performance-based Assessment	Assessment technique involving the gathering of data through systematic observation of a behavior or process and evaluating that data based on a clearly articulated set of performance criteria to serve as the basis for evaluative judgments.
Qualitative Data	Data in which the values of a variable differ in quality rather than in amount.
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Rubric	A scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work, or “what counts”; it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Refers to the specific knowledge, skills, or developmental attributes that students develop through their college experience; assessment results.
Summative Assessment	The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. When used for improvement, impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program. For example: a capstone project or midterm project.
Triangulation	The building of multiple sources of information or ideas to support a central finding or theme.