

Glossary of Assessment Terms

assessment. Systematic collection, review, and use of information undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

benchmarking. Measurement of group performance against an established standard administered at a specific point along the path toward accomplishing the standard.

criterion-referenced assessment. Tests created to measure student understanding against a specific set of concisely written criteria that tells whether a student is proficient at his or her grade level.

end-of-course classroom assessment. An ongoing collection of what students have learned and designed to examine a course to provide improvement.

embedded assessment. An authentic means of collecting evidence of student learning that is a natural part of the teaching and learning cycle; can be both formative and summative in nature.

direct assessment. A means of collecting evidence of student learning through performance, using criteria to determine value aligned to the standards.

evaluation. The use of assessment findings (evidence or data) to judge program effectiveness; used as a basis for making decisions about program changes or improvement (Allen, Noel, Rienzi, & McMillin, 2002).

formative assessment. The gathering of information about student learning during the progression of a course or program, usually repeatedly, to improve the learning of those students (Leskes, 2002).

indirect assessment. The gathering of information that tells how students feel about learning through surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and reflective essays.

learning outcomes. Statements describing specific student behaviors that show knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes (Allen, Noel, Rienzi, & McMillin, 2002).

norm-referenced assessment. An assessment that compares and ranks student, school, district, or state performance in relation to a larger *norm group*.

performance criteria. Standards that evaluate student performance and provide students with expectations in order to hit their learning targets.

portfolio. An organized collection of student work that provides direct evidence of a student's efforts and progress over time. It can include numerous student-selected artifacts that demonstrate knowledge and understanding, such as assignments, projects, multimedia, reflections, and so on.

qualitative assessment. Data that is collected through observation, surveys, case studies, and interviews and that is used in depth to find how individuals feel, think, and exist but is never numerically measured.

quantitative assessment. Data collected through statistical comparisons and facts, composed of objective information that can be easily measured (for example, the baby weighs five pounds, seven ounces).

rubric. Set of criteria that define acceptable and unacceptable performance descriptors and assign values to each level.

standards. Levels of tasks students are expected to do, show, and tell about their knowledge and skills.

summative assessment. Collection of concrete information at the end of a learning cycle (usually reported by grades, percentages, or rubrics), which determines levels of proficiency and what to do next instructionally.

References

Allen, M., Noel, R. C., Rienzi, B. M., & McMillin, D. J. (2002). *Outcomes assessment handbook*. Long Beach: California State University, Institute for Teaching and Learning.

Leskes, A. (2002). Beyond confusion: An assessment glossary. *Peer Review*, 4(2/3). Accessed at www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/beyond-confusion-assessment-glossary on March 7, 2017.

Palomba, C. A., & Banta, T. W. (1999). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.