

## Glossary of Assessment Terminology

*Adapted from Kansas University Student Affairs*

**Assessment:** any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, or divisional effectiveness, and has the purpose of improving student learning and development.

**Cognitive Development:** the construction of thought processes, including remembering, problem solving, and decision-making through the lifespan.

**Content/Document Analysis:** method that uses documents to glean meaning, perspective, and/or growth/change. Can use training manuals, notes, portfolios, discussion boards, Twitter, blogs, emails, papers, agendas, flyers, policies, meeting minutes, logs, etc.

**Culture of Assessment:** an environment in which continuous improvement through assessment is expected and valued.

**Direct Assessment:** In direct assessment, students display knowledge or skills as the result of an assessment measure (presentation, test, etc.). Direct measures of student learning require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the assessment measure. Examples include tests, presentations, and essays.

**Focus Group:** a semi-structured discussion among individuals who are deemed to have some knowledge of, or interest in, the issue associated with the study. Focus groups can be used to gather large amounts of information. These can be especially valuable to use when creating surveys or to follow-up on surveys or interviews. Themes can be identified within the data in order to easily summarize the feedback.

**Formative Assessment:** Formative assessment is done during a program or service to provide information useful in improving learning or teaching while it is still occurring. An assessment which is used for improvement (individual or program level) rather than for making final decisions or for accountability.

**Goals:** broad, general statements of what the program or service intends to accomplish. Goals should provide a framework for determining the more specific educational objectives of a program, and should be consistent with the mission of the program and the mission of the institution.

**Indirect Assessment:** In indirect assessment, learning is inferred instead of being supported by direct evidence. Captures students' perceptions of their learning. Students reflect on learning rather than demonstrate it. Examples include surveys, focus groups, and document analysis.

**Interview:** a data collection procedure in which one person (an interviewer) asks questions of another (a respondent). Interviews can be assessed through the use of criteria checklists, rubrics, and note taking (where themes are later identified). Short quizzes or surveys could be administered following an interview to incorporate quantitative measurements.

**Journaling/Student Reflections:** a practice of reflective writing where the student records their thoughts and feelings. Journaling can also be directed by guiding questions. Student reflections can be used to identify themes in students' self-reported learning. Rubrics can also be used to assign numerical value to outcomes being measured by the reflection.

**Method of Assessment:** Method of assessment highlights the way(s) in which the learning outcome will be measured (i.e. survey, focus group, interview, etc.). Multiple methods will yield richer data.

**Mixed Methods:** mixed methods are procedures for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study.

**Observations:** Observations allow you to actually see students demonstrating achievement of learning outcomes. Observations can be measured through the use of rubrics, checklists, or note taking.

**Objectives:** Objectives are concrete ways goals are met through program processes and student learning and development. They will describe what the program will do or what the student is to do. Objectives are often written more in terms of teaching intentions and typically indicate the subject content that the teacher(s) intend to cover.

**Open-ended (responses and questions):** Open-ended question format allows respondents to form their responses to questions.

**Outcomes:** Outcomes essentially take an objective and bound it to a place, time, group of participants, and a level for performance. Outcomes are specifically about what you want the end result of your efforts to be, the changes you want to occur. Learning outcomes are changes in students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that result from involvement in a program or activity. It describes what you want the student to know and do. Program outcomes, on the other hand, are the changes you want to see in programs and services. Outcomes are statements of what you will assess.

**Population:** a group of individuals or entities from which a sample is drawn or about which a conclusion is stated.

**Portfolio Assessment:** Portfolio assessment has students create portfolios by gathering a body of evidence of their own learning and competencies.

**Posttest:** assessment of an individual's command of knowledge or skills following a learning experience. A pretest typically precedes this for comparison to determine if there was an acquisition of knowledge or skill.

**Pretest:** assessment of an individual's command of knowledge or skills preceding a learning experience. A posttest typically follows for comparison to determine if there was an acquisition of knowledge or skill.

**Qualitative:** Qualitative assessment methodology is primarily characterized by words and descriptions. Examples include observations, focus groups, interviews, student reflections, case studies, portfolios, and open-ended questions.

**Quantitative:** Quantitative assessment methodology is primarily characterized by the use of numbers. Examples include pre/posttests and surveys.

**Random Sample:** a sampling method in which each participant or element has an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in a study.

**Response Rate:** the number of people participating in a survey divided by the number selected in the sample, in the form of a percentage.

**Results of Assessment:** Results of assessment include the overall findings of assessments. It is not necessary to include every finding of the assessment; instead, focus on findings related to the identified program/service outcomes.

**Rubrics:** A rubric is a scoring tool used to assess student learning after a lesson. Using a set of criteria and standards (directly tied to the stated learning objectives), educators can assess each student's performance on a wide variety of work, ranging from written essays to group projects. When a rubric is agreed-upon and communicated prior to the student's work being completed, the grading process is very clear and transparent to all involved. Often, it is helpful to have more than one evaluator grade each piece of work. Then the rubric scores can either be averaged or added together for a final score.

**Sample:** A sample is a subgroup of a population selected to participate in an activity, program or service. The assessment results from the sample are used to generalize to the larger population from which the sample was drawn.

**Summative Assessment:** Summative evaluation is conducted at the end of a program, service, or experience to make determinations of quality, worth, and meeting targeted outcomes. An example is a final grade at the end of a course.

**Student Learning Outcome:** Student learning outcomes describe the knowledge/skills/abilities/attitudes etc. a student should display after participating in a program, activity, service, or interaction. Based on their participation in a learning experience, students will demonstrate what they know or are able to do upon being assessed. This demonstration should be measurable.

**Survey/Questionnaire:** A survey or questionnaire is a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis.

## References

Duke University *Glossary of Assessment Terms* online at <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/sites/default/files/u110/Page%2016%20Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf>

Portland State University *Assessment in Student Affairs Glossary of Terms* online at <https://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.studentaffairs/files/PSUStudentAffairsTerminology.pdf>

The University of Iowa *Tools for Assessment* online at <http://vp.studentlife.uiowa.edu/assessment/tools-for-assessment/>

University of Connecticut *Assessment Primer: Goals, Objectives and Outcomes* online at <http://assessment.uconn.edu/primer/goals1.html>

Weber State University *Introduction to Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* online at [http://www.weber.edu/SAAssessment/SSA\\_CreatingEval\\_Outcomes.html](http://www.weber.edu/SAAssessment/SSA_CreatingEval_Outcomes.html)