

ASSESSMENT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

It is important that faculty across general education areas agree on the meaning of terms that will be used in assessing courses and programs. Selected assessment terms are defined below. Faculty should dialogue about these definitions and make changes to them until there is a common understanding about assessment.

Assessment

"Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance." (Tom Angelo, 1995)

"Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development." (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Capstone Assessment

Assessment of outcomes structured into learning experiences occurring at the end of a program. The experiences involve demonstration of a comprehensive range of program outcomes through some type of product or performance. The outcomes may be those of the major and of the general education program or of the major only. (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Criteria/Standards:

Performance descriptors that indicate how well students will meet expectations of what they should be able to think, know or do. They are descriptive benchmarks against which performance is judged. These criteria or standards may be described in varying gradients of success as in rubrics or in grades. Often they are stated in terms of percentages, percentiles, or other quantitative measures (Nichols, 2000).

Direct Assessment Methods

These methods involve students' displays of knowledge and skills (e.g. test results, written assignments, presentations, classroom assignments) resulting from learning experiences in the class/program. (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Evaluation

Decisions made about assessment findings; deciding about the value of programs/program outcomes; may involve recommendations for changes.

Formative Assessment

Assessment conducted during a performance/course/program with the purpose of providing feedback that can be used to modify, shape, and improve a performance/course/program. (Palombra & Banta, 1999)

Goals

Description of intended results of learning stated in global, general terms, e.g. clear communication, problem solving.

Grading

Values placed on varying levels of achievement in course assignments and/or examinations. Course assignments and tests can be used for assessment if they are clearly linked to course/program goals and if the assessment is based on established criteria and standards.

Holistic Scoring

A type of grading in which an assignment is given an overall score. Possible scores are described in a rating scale. A high score indicates achievement of all aspects of the assignment, while a low score means few if any of the desired outcomes have been achieved. The score levels need to be specific enough to reveal meaningful, diagnostic information when the scores are aggregated. (Ewell, 1991; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Indirect Assessment Methods

Assessment methods that involve perceptions of learning rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement (e.g. alumni surveys, employer surveys, exit interviews).

Objectives

Synonymous with outcomes. Statements that describe measurable expectations of what students should be able to think, know or do when they've completed a given educational program. Each statement should describe one expectation; should not bundle several into one statement. The statements must be clear and easily understood by all faculty in the area/department.

Outcomes

Statements that describe qualitative or quantitative measurable expectations of what students should be able to think, know or do when they've completed a given educational program. Synonymous with learning objectives. Each statement should describe one expectation; should not bundle several into

one statement. The statements must be clear and easily understood by all faculty in the area/department. (Nichols, 2000)

Portfolio Assessment

A type of direct measure, a performance measure, in which students' assignments are carefully reviewed for evidence of desired learning outcomes. The portfolios contain work selected over a period of time, with materials added as the student progresses through the course/program. In addition, the portfolios usually include students' reflective learning/outcome analysis statements. (Lyons, 1998)

Primary Trait Analysis

Factors or traits (assignment specific) that are considered in scoring an assignment generally stated in a hierarchical scale of three to five incremental levels of achievement quality. For each level on the scale there is a specific statement that describes expected behavior (criterion) at that level. (Palomba & Banta, 1999; Walvoord & Anderson, 1998).

Scoring Guide/Rubric

A kind of holistic or primary trait scoring in which detailed criteria are delineated and used to discriminate among levels of achievement in assignments, performances, or products.

Summative Assessment/Evaluation

Assessment conducted after a program has been implemented and completed to make judgments about its quality or worth compared to previously defined standards. (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Resources:

Angelo, T. (1995). Improving Classroom Assessment to Improve Learning", *Assessment Update*, 7(6), 1-2, 13-14.

Nichols J, & Nichols K. (2000). *The Departmental Guide and Record Book for Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness*. NY: Agathon Press.

Ewell, P.T. (1991). To Capture the Ineffable: New Forms of Assessment in Higher Education. In G. Grant (ed.), *Review of Research in Education*, no. 17, Washington D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

Lyons, N. "Portfolios and Their Consequences: Developing as a Reflective Practitioner". In N. Lyons (ed.), *With Portfolio in Hand: Validating the New Teacher Professionalism*, New York: Teacher's College Press.

Palomba, C & Banta T. (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Walvoord, B. and Anderson V.J., (1998). *Effective*

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement (ASAA)

Assessment Glossary

accreditation: the designation that an institution functions appropriately in higher education with respect to its purpose and resources (FRCC=s accrediting agency is NCA - North Central Association)

AIC: Assessment Implementation Coordinator. Each department or program has one or two AICs that coordinate all assessment activities. They facilitate data collection and reporting.

ASAA: Assessment of Student Academic Achievement.

assessment: a careful evaluation of patterns in students= learning that is used to plan for future instruction or used to modify instructional processes

assessment plan booklet: the document which describes the details of the assessment plan: objectives, means of assessment, results, program modifications and timeline

benchmark: a sample of work that illustrates a category or score on a scoring rubric OR a level of achievement desired.

closing the loop: this step in the assessment process ensures that the decisions made to change/modify the curriculum/delivery are put into the strategic plan and executed.

criteria: the specific observable characteristics of a behavior or skill

effective assessment: a truly helpful, well thought-out, reliable, valid assessment that leads to positive changes or modification in curriculum or delivery that increase student learning.

GAC: Goal Area Chair. There are six goal areas in FRCC ASAA structure: Career/Tech Ed, Transfer Ed, Basic Skills, Student Services, Continuing Ed, and General Ed.

grading: a process of faculty review and evaluation of student learning that is used as a basis for rating performance

holistic scoring: a scoring process in which a score is based on an overall impression of a finished product compared to an agree-upon standard for the task

open-response items: items requiring short written answers

performance-based assessments: behaviors or tasks that require students to apply knowledge in real world situations

performance events: assessment tasks that require students to apply what they have learned

portfolio: a representative collection of a student=s work, including some evidence that the student has evaluated the quality of his or her own work

prompt: a short statement or question that provides students a purpose for writing, also used in areas other than writing

rubric: a set of scoring guidelines that can be used to evaluate students= work

SAAAC: Student Assessment of Academic Achievement Committee. SAAAC is comprised of all GAC=s, campus faculty representatives, student representatives, an Institutional Research representative, administration representatives and the Faculty Chair of Assessment. This committee guides assessment activities at the college

ASSESSMENT GLOSSARY

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Assessment criteria

Are the defined basis on which students' submissions will be judged. They are for use by staff in assessing students' work and may also be given to students in advance.

Assignment

Is any task set for students which they have to complete away from the classroom and hand in to the lecturer. Examples of assignments are essays, reports, mathematical problems. Assignments are usually written, though they may not be. A computer programming assignment for example may require the handing in of a disk

containing the program.

Competence

Is the ability to carry out certain tasks or functions. In vocational or professional education it is often considered important that students' competence is assessed.

Continuous assessment

Takes place throughout a student's course of study. For example during a semester a student may be required to complete two laboratory reports, a small design project and a statistics test. Normally students would receive feedback on pieces of continuous assessment shortly after they were handed in.

Criterion-referenced assessment

Means that learners are assessed against pre-defined criteria or standards. An example of this is the assessment of learners against specific competencies in some professional area such as nursing.

Dissertation

An extended assignment undertaken individually which usually takes the form of a research project or investigation and requires the submission of a lengthy report of at least 10 000 words.

End-point assessment

Occurs at the end of the course, often in the form of an examination. It is difficult for this to serve any purpose other than summative assessment.

Examination

Is a form of assessment where students are required to answer a range of questions not known to them in advance, in writing, in a limited period of time without using reference materials or other information or consulting other people.

However they are also:

Open-book exams

Where students are allowed to take some reference materials, sometimes a restricted set, sometimes anything they wish into the exam room to consult during the exam.

Take-away exam papers

Where students are given the exam question or questions in advance so that they can prepare before going in to the exam room to write their answer under restricted conditions.

Feedback

Includes oral comments made to students on their achievements. Its purpose is to help learners to improve their performance. It can be part of a formal assessment system (when it might be called formative assessment) or it can be informal.

Formative assessment

Is undertaken to assess achievement and identify shortcomings. Its purpose is to help learners to improve their performance.

Grades

Are the way in which the standard of a student's achievement is described in the form of a category (A, B, C+ etc.)

Learning outcomes/ achievements

Are broader than competence. They describe what students are able to understand or do at the end of a course of study or after one stage of a course of study. Where learning outcomes are specified this helps in devising teaching, learning and assessment methods.

Marks

Are the way in which the standard of a student's achievement is described in the form of a number (1, 2.5, 3 or 50%, 55% etc.).

Marking scheme

Is an outline of the response expected from students to an assessment task with an indication of the division of marks between sections or topics. It is for use by staff when marking work.

Model answer

Is a very precise marking scheme where the response from students can be specified exactly. This may be the case with some mathematical questions.

Norm-reference assessment

Produces a mark or grade based on each student's achievement in relation to the rest of the group. For example, the best ten performers may receive a Grade A, the next ten Grade B and so on.

Pass/Fail

Most summative assessment systems consider certain marks or grades to be a pass, and others to indicate that the student has failed

the course. Some assessment systems based on competence use the terms "competent" or "not yet competent". The students then usually has further opportunities to demonstrate that he/she has reached the competent standard.

Peer assessment This is where students are involved in assessing the performance of their fellow students. As for self-assessment, it may involve helping to devise criteria, giving feedback or allocating marks.

Refer Is a term used when a student has failed part of a course but is allowed to retake some aspects of the assessment, perhaps re-sit an exam, or do another assignment. If successful, the student will then be able to pass the course.

Reliability Assessment methods which are fair, consistent and as objective as possible, can be considered to be reliable.

Self-assessment Is the involvement of the student in the assessment process. This may involve the student in helping to devise the criteria by which their work will be assessed. It may involve the student in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of what he or she has achieved or in attributing marks to the work.

Summative assessment Produces a measure which sums up someone's achievement and has no other real use except as a description of what has been achieved.

Test Usually means a short exam. It may be conducted under conditions which are less rigorous than an exam. Sometimes the distinction between a test and an exam is that the marks from a test are not counted towards the student's final result. The purpose of the test is to enable students and their lecturers to see how much they understand, that is, its purpose may be formative.

Validity Assessment methods which genuinely assess what you believe to be the most important things that your students are learning can be considered to be valid.

Viva This is a form of oral assessment where a student is questioned by one or more lecturers.

