

GLOSSARY OF ASSESSMENT TERMS

*Formal definitions are literature-based. *Practical definitions are also included.*

Alternative Assessment – Assessment of student learning through performance based and authentic assessment rather than through traditional assessments, such as objective tests, essay questions, and oral examinations. Unlike traditional assessments, alternative assessments provide students with a learning opportunity in addition to collecting information on which to base course grades. Examples of alternative assessment include field experiences, laboratory experiments, studio assignments, case studies, projects, presentations, performances, and term papers (Suskie, L. 2004).

*Not tests. Students grades are determined by student activities where students learn at the same time the instructor is checking for understanding. Examples: projects, presentations, performances, etc.

Assessment – *How instructors determine if students are learning. However, it should be noted that grading is not considered assessment. Rather, the activities and projects instructors use to gauge students' mastery of learning outcomes are defined as assessment.

Assessment of Student Learning – An ongoing process involving four steps; 1) identify expected outcomes to be accomplished by students (What will students be able to do at the end of the course?), 2) design opportunities for students to interact with multiple sources of content appropriate to the stated expected outcomes, 3) systematically gather, analyze and interpret evidence from a variety of measures to determine how well actual student learning matches the stated expectations, and 4) Utilize the results to determine student learning and improve student learning (Suskie, L. 2004).

*Determine what you want students to know, have students work with course content, check to see if students know the information and/or have the skills, then, as the instructor, make changes to improve student learning.

Authentic Assessment – A form of performance assessment that requires students to utilize knowledge and skills learned in a course to problem solve, think critically and think creatively to generate responses similar to those they will be expected to generate when they become professionals in their fields (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Evaluating students with real-world activities (Allen, 2004) as opposed to more traditional assessments, such as multiple choice tests.

*Not tests. Use of real world type activities to see if students will be able to use course information when they are in the workforce. Also referred to as alternative assessment or performance assessment. Examples: case studies, laboratory experiments, simulations, etc.

Capstone – A culminating project, experience or course, in which students demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. A capstone provides students with an opportunity to problem-solve and create by integrating learning from multiple sources (Bresciani, 2007).

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*End project requiring students to use previously learned material.

Class – *One section of a general course. (e.g. English 101 is a general course, but Susan Todd's English 101 at 8:00 MWF is a class.)

Classroom Assessment – A “learner centered, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context specific, ongoing” effort to determine what students are learning and to what extent students are learning course concepts with the purpose of increasing the instructor's ability to promote learning and to help students become better learners (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

*Instructor's effort to continually determine how well students are learning course concepts so the instructor can make changes to help students learn better.

Classroom Assessment Technique – A simple procedure or activity, focused on a specific question about student learning, designed to collect information about “how much, how well, and even how students are learning” what faculty are trying to teach (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

*How the instructor finds out whether students understand the days' material.

Collective Portfolio – Collections of student work compiled by faculty to document student achievement of learning outcomes. Samples of student work collected from whole classes, or random samples from students within classes, are assessed to determine the extent to which learning outcomes are being met (Allen, 2004).

*Collection of samples of student work from different sections of a course which are used to determine whether most students learned a specific concept.

Course – *All sections of a course (e.g., all English 101 sections taught at Jefferson College constitute a course).

Course Embedded Assessment – Measures of learning, included as part of specific courses within a program, which address overall outcomes of the program, including general education goals. More efficient and cost effective than out-of-course assessments layered onto a program, embedded assessments not only provide information related to program effectiveness, but also are used to provide feedback to individual students and to determine course grades for students. Typically, samples of student work are taken randomly from sections of a course and reviewed separately to determine program effectiveness and whether changes need to be made to the program (Huba & Freed, 2000).

*A faculty agreed upon assessment (assignment and/or test questions) included in all sections of a course. The assessment is used to partially determine students' grades and is also used to determine course effectiveness across sections. Results are used to make changes to the course.

Culture of Evidence – “An environment in which important decisions are based on the study of relevant data” (Banta, 2005).

*A campus where changes are based on an analysis of student performance.

Department – *A group of faculty who work together within a specific discipline.

Direct Assessment – Asking students to demonstrate “what they know or can do with their knowledge,” typically through projects, papers, presentations, case studies, portfolios, etc. (Huba & Freed, 2000).

*Students show how well they know course content, rather than comment on how well they know the material.

Discipline – *An academic area of study (e.g. Nursing, English).

Expected Learning Outcomes – Statements of the knowledge and skills students are projected to acquire from a learning experience. Expected learning outcomes use action verbs to “describe what students should be able to do in explicit, observable terms” (Suskie, 2004).

*The overall concepts students need to master to achieve success in a course.

Formative Assessment – Measurement of learning during the learning process, with the purpose of improving teaching and increasing learning. The instructor checks for student understanding while learning is taking place, provides prompt feedback to students, and immediately modifies classroom activities to increase student learning (Suskie, 2004).

*Checking for student understanding with the purpose of making changes to instruction, with increased student learning as the goal.

Indirect Assessment – Measures which provide an indication that learning is taking place, but details of what is being learned are not clear. Course grades (Suskie, 2004) and opportunities for self-reporting of learning by students and/or employers of graduates, such as surveys, are types of indirect assessment (Huba & Freed, 2000).

*General indications of how well students are learning course content, such as surveys completed by employers of Jefferson College graduates or Jefferson College student GPA’s at transfer institutions.

Learning Objectives – *Smaller, more focused unit goals instructors use to prepare students to master the larger outcomes of the course.

Performance Assessment - Evaluating students’ knowledge and skills through the process of using student activities or products rather than tests or surveys. As part of the process, faculty members provide an assignment or prompt telling students what is expected, then rate students’ performance or completed work with a scoring guide or rubric, and provide feedback to students (Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004).

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*Projects that require students to apply course concepts.

Portfolio – Student created compilation of work that documents achievement of expected learning outcomes. Portfolios are used for both course grading and program assessment. Portfolios “engage students in the assessment process and encourage them to take responsibility for and pride in their learning” (Allen, 2004).

*Collection of student assignments/projects, often with a reflection on the progress of learning over a set period of time.

Program – *A set group of courses that students take to fulfill the requirements for a degree or certificate.

Qualitative Assessments – Measures of student learning that can be summarized with verbal descriptions of recurring themes or patterns. Student reflections, online class discussion threads, and notes from observations are examples of qualitative evidence of learning (Allen, 2004; Suskie, 2004).

*Descriptions of observations of student learning.

Quantitative Assessments – Measures of student learning that can be summarized with numbers and can be analyzed statistically. Rubric scores, test scores, and survey ratings are examples of quantitative evidence of learning (Allen, 2004; Suskie, 2004).

*Using numbers to convey evidence of student learning.

Rubric – A table that explicitly states, for both the students and the instructor, the scoring rules for an assignment, which is typically made available to students at the time an assignment is given. Rubrics serve as both a guide for students as they develop and revise their work and as a tool for judging their own work prior to submitting it for a grade. Effective rubrics include the following elements: levels of mastery, dimensions of quality, organizational groupings, commentaries, and descriptions of consequences (Huba & Freed, 2000).

*A written explanation of how an instructor assigns a grade or awards credit for a particular assignment. The written explanation is given to students when the assignment is given. The explanation guides students as they complete assignments and is used by the instructor when grading the students’ assignments. Examples of varying levels of performance are included.

Scoring Guide – A list of items an instructor looks for when grading an assignment. The term scoring guide is sometimes used synonymously with the term rubric; however a rubric typically provides more detailed guidelines for evaluating each of the items on the list (Suskie, 2004).

*A list of what is to be included in an assignment.

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Summative Assessment – Measurement of learning at the end of a course or unit, with the purpose of documenting student learning, such as for an overall grade or score. Students typically receive little or no detailed information on their performance (Suskie, 2004).

*Checking for student understanding with the purpose of determining student grades.

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