

Glossary of Assessment Terms

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Terms

Accountability Paradigm: “reflects external impetus from state governments and accreditation agencies for institutions to demonstrate compliance with standards of performance and expectations for return on investments by documenting student learning through standardized measures and comparisons across intuitions” (Jonson, et al. 2016:34).

Applied Assessment: “used as a follow up to course or university experiences, measures the application of student learning in a specific context, such as the workplace” (Pedersen and White 2011:139).

Assessment Audit: “systematic review to determine whether and to what degree (1) student learning outcomes have been established; (2) appropriate instruments have been created to measure the outcomes; (3) the measures are used to gather assessment data; and (4) improvements have been made as a result of the assessment data” (Loughman and Thomson 2006:44).

Assessment Feedback: This is an umbrella concept that is used to “capture the diversity of definitions and types of feedback” given to students (Evans 2013:71). It includes all feedback exchanges. This may vary for different professors. For some, it is seen as “an end product, as a consequence of performance” and for others it is seen as “an integral part of learning” (Evans 2013:21).

Assessment for Learning: This is an approach to teaching and learning which “creates feedback which is then used to improve students' performance” (Cambridge Assessment International Education).

Assessment Movement/Learning Outcomes Assessment Movement (LOA): Involves teachers and administrators at colleges and universities articulating the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the educational process at every level; a contentious movement (Bennett and Brady 2012).

Assessment of Interdisciplinary Integration: This type of assessment assesses the student's ability to demonstrate integration of knowledge in more than one discipline. An assessment of interdisciplinary integration would evaluate if the student can “integrate knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more disciplines in order to create new products, raise questions, solve problems and offer explanations of the world around them in ways that would not have been possible through single disciplinary means” (Boud 2017:122).

Assessment of Learning: An assessment of learning entails an emphasis on “procedures for end of course grading and certifying of students' performance” (Quality Assurance Assistance Agency for Higher Education).

Assessment Practitioner: “individuals who are responsible for coordinating and leading institution-wide, program- and course-based assessment efforts and who contribute to reporting assessment activities and results to a variety of internal and external stakeholder (Jankowski and Slotnick 2015:79).

Assessment: A process that requires the articulation of learning outcomes and the evaluation of how those outcomes were or were not met through some sort of data collection on student attainment on various levels (course, program, institutional). For instance, a valid assessment “measures to what extent the students have reached all the intended learning outcomes” (Boud 2017:121).

Authentic Assessment: “includes the holistic performance of meaningful, complex tasks in challenging environments that involve contextualized problems... can involve the examination of the process as well as the product of learning” (Montgomery 2002:35).

Authentic Tasks: “often multidimensional and require higher levels of cognitive thinking such as problem solving and critical thinking” (Montgomery 2002:35).

Content Outcomes: student learning outcomes that are “usually understood as ‘facts’ (or ‘results’) and methodological knowledge—for example, the mode of inquiry—of a discipline” (Weisler 2015:124).

Continuous Assessment: Comprises of a combination of grading and reporting student achievements as well as supporting students in their learning. Continuous assessment practices usually have a “formative function for learning and a summative function for certification” (Hernandez 2012:490).

Culture of Accountability: “rising demands in the higher education community for accountability by generating information that can inform internal planning and quality improvement efforts” (Welsh 2003b:446).

Culture of Assessment: “deeply embedded values and beliefs collectively held by members of an institution influencing assessment practices at their institution... system of thought and action reinforcing what ‘good’ conduct of assessment looks like” (Fuller and Skidmore 2014:10).

Culture of Teaching: A culture of teaching involves a shared “campus commitment to teaching excellence and meaningful assessment of teaching” (Cox et al. 2011).

Curving Grades: “[A] particularistic practice invoked when a substantial number of students perform poorly on an examination, thus impelling some teachers to convert un- acceptable scores into more acceptable” (Gordon and Fay 2010:94).

Direct Assessment: This type of assessment focuses on student-oriented goals such as the mastery of a concept and requires a measure of student learning, such as an exam, assignment, or work-related task (Pedersen & White 2011:138). See also “Indirect Assessment”.

Evaluability Assessment (EA): evolved from pre-evaluation activity used to determine program readiness for outcome evaluation to a decision-orientated evaluation approach, with varying EA models all including four elements: involving program stakeholders, developing a program theory, gathering feedback on program theory, and using the EA (Walser 2015:61). Used for program-level assessment activity.

Faculty Culture: This encompasses the shared “beliefs, values, understandings, and underlying assumptions” of faculty members (Cox et al. 2011:809).

Fair Assessment: “‘Fair assessment’ can be seen in terms of the two main concepts used to describe measurements in social science – namely, reliability and validity – with the implication that the grades awarded in assessment should be consistent, irrespective of the marker and the conditions under which the assessment has taken place, and that they should validly reflect what they are intended to assess” (Hailikari 2014:100).

Formative Assessment: A form of assessment with the goal to “monitor student progress and to help students adjust and correct during the learning process” (Boud 2017:121). Boud explains that the metaphor that helps explain this is the chef tasting the soup (see also “Summative Assessment”). Also defined as “assessment of changes in student skills and knowledge” (Clark and Filinson 2011:131).

Fully Informative Grading: With this type of grading, evaluators perfectly observe graduate ability. This may result from an institutions' commitment to “strong grading standards, or from rules imposed by university accreditation agencies. It could also be a consequence of requiring university exit exams, graduate school admissions exams or industry licensing exams given to all graduates applying for a position” (Boleslavysky and Cotton 2015:261).

General (or liberal learning) Outcomes: one of two general categories noted by Weisler. Include student learning outcomes that “typically include critical thinking and problem-solving,” as opposed to more content-based outcomes such as facts and methodological knowledge pertaining to a discipline (Weisler 2015:124).

Grading Rubrics: An assessment tool that “tells the professor how well a student has accomplished a specific skill” (Jackson 2018).

Improvement Paradigm: “internal impetus to foster engagement and a culture of evidence by establishing multiple feedback loops for the continuous use of assessment findings to improve teaching and learning” (Jonson et al. 2016:34).

Indirect Assessment: This type of assessment does not gather information about student performance/learning through looking at actual samples of student work, rather, other methods are employed such as surveys or interviews (Pedersen & White 2011:138). Given this, indirect assessment relies on students' self-reports of their strengths, limitations, and levels of engagement with the materials (AASCU 2006). See also “Direct Assessment”.

Institutional Effectiveness Activities: “interchangeable with a number of monikers for continuous improvement processes, such as ‘quality assurance’ and ‘quality enhancement’ The specific initiatives included under these rubrics typically encompass activities such as student outcomes assessment, academic program review, strategic planning, performance scorecards, benchmarking, and quality measurement” (Welsh and Metcalf 2003b:446).

Institutional Structures: Institutional structures include procedures, data usage, and accountability (Holzweiss, et al. 2016). In a survey of U.S. higher education administrators, analysis revealed institutional structures as a meta-theme after analyzing the administrator’s responses to questions regarding the primary reasons they conducted on campus as well as how they would characterize their campus assessment cultures.

Institutional Student Assessment Efforts: This is a “self-reported measure of how often faculty engage in institution-wide committees, policy setting, program and curricular evaluations, institutional workshops, and departmental activities related to student assessment” (Grunwald & Peterson 2003:183).

Learning Outcomes Assessment/Student Learning Outcome Assessment: A type of assessment that helps faculty understand if students are achieving the intended learning outcome goals. Evaluating what students know by the end of a course or program; constitutes an intersection between individual faculty prerogative and institutional interest (Katz 2010:19).

Learning Paradigm: “In the learning paradigm, faculty focus less on transferring factual knowledge to students and more on creating a learning environment that empowers students to construct knowledge for themselves. The learning paradigm positions the learner, rather than the instructor, at the center of undergraduate education” (Webber 2012:202).

Meritocratic Grading Rules: When evaluators “distribute grades based on academic achievement” (Gordon and Fay 2010:94).

Meta-Assessment: “method for conducting assessment discussions, recognizing that faculty members are likely to hold sharp divisions over theoretical commitments and methodological perspectives in an interdisciplinary context” (Rosaen, et al. 2013:35).

Organizational Culture: Administrators’ descriptions of rituals, artifacts, discourse, values, and change related to assessment (Holzweiss, et al. 2016)

Particularistic Grading Rules: When evaluators “evaluate students on the basis of the individual characteristics or personal circumstances” (Gordon and Fay 2010:94). For example, if a student needs to pass a course in order to graduate some professors may give students a “C” out of courtesy.

Process Feedback: This type of feedback “focuses on what a student can do to proceed with a learning task” (Evans 2013:71).

Program Assessment: “used synonymously with the phrase ‘program review’ to indicate a process through which institutions evaluate and take stock of the overall health and effectiveness of individual academic programs... variation on ‘assessment of student learning’ to describe the collection and use of student learning data to inform improvement at program level” (Haviland et al. 2010:262).

Self-Feedback: This type of feedback focuses on “personal attributes, for example, how well the student has done” (Evans 2013:71).

Self-Regulating Feedback: This type of feedback focuses on “metacognitive elements including how a student can monitor and evaluate the strategies he or she uses” (Evans 2013:71).

Specious Learning Outcome: “appears when faculty—perceiving the syllabus as a preserve of academic freedom—passively resist the assessment bureaucracy by composing outcomes that claim too little, or are scarcely plausible, or are simply the shortest route between point A (the request for SLO) and point B (the moment folks stop pestering you about said SLO)” (Ennis 2008:1).

Student Evaluations: Typically, this includes a series of questions via an anonymous survey that ask students about the positives of different aspects of the course as well as ways that other aspects of the course could be improved (Tucker 2014:348).

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Capacity Framework: A SLO assessment capacity framework is comprised of the “optimal infrastructures, practices, personnel characteristics, institutional context and disciplinary support factors needed to undertake useful student learning outcomes assessment” (Davis 2016:382).

Strategic Grading: With strategic grading, schools assign grades that convey some information about graduate ability without perfectly revealing the student’s ability. These grades are less informative and “evaluators rely less on grades and more on a school’s quality when assessing graduates” (Boleslavsky et al. 2015:248).

Summative Assessment: This type of assessment is “meant to evaluate student learning and compare it to some benchmark (with grading)” (Boud 2017:121). Boud explains that the metaphor that helps explain this is the guests tasting the soup (see also “Formative Assessment”). Also defined as an “assessment of what skills and knowledge students have at the end point in their undergraduate programs” (Clark and Filinson 2011:131).

Task Feedback: This type of feedback is “seen as emphasizing information and activities with the purpose of clarifying and reinforcing aspects of the learning task” (Evans 2013:72).

Teacher Learning: “involves the movement of teachers from peripheral (novice) to full (expert) participation in the specific practices and ways of knowing, thinking and valuing that define effective participation in the community of teachers” (Cowie and Cooper 2017:2).

Value-Added Assessment: The goal of this type of assessment is to “document the development of student learning from the beginning of the university experience to the end” (Pedersen & White 2011:138).

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