

# Assessment Terms/Concepts at a glance

This is an unofficial document to serve as a kind of cheat sheet for AC members.

Assessment is the ongoing process of:

Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning. Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes. Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations. Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

It is not the assessment itself but how faculty, staff, and institutional leaders use it that leads to improvements in student learning.

When in doubt, choose simpler assessment strategies....you don't immediately need to assess everything that you want students to learn. It's better to do a few assessments well than many poorly. Start small.

Quotes above are from *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* by Linda Suskie (2009).

**The whole purpose of assessment is to understand and to improve student learning outcomes. If we are not focused on that, we need to regroup!**

## Terms

Course Objective is a learning experience that the course offers to students

Student Learning Outcome SLO is what the student should be able to demonstrate upon completion of a course.

Assessment Tool or Instrument is a test or performance task designed to assess SLOs.

Learning Opportunities are the course experiences and assignments that provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.

Assessment Plan is a systematic process for defining outcomes, designing tools, collecting data, analyzing data, making recommendations in order to understand and improve student learning.

Unit-level assessment is the assessment of any unit of study including multiple sections of one course, a sequence of courses, a certificate, a degree, or general education.

## **Process of Assessment: an abbreviated version of the 6 stages of assessment**

1. Identify and write Student Learning Outcomes for a unit of study (one course, multiple sections of one course, a series of courses, a certificate, or a degree).
  2. Research scholarly work, and search for assessment tools that others have designed that may relate to your SLOs.
  3. Design and pilot a tool to assess the SLOs. This can be in the form of a test, or a performance task such as a lab experience, a written work, a presentation, a project, a performance, a clinical observation, etc.
  4. To collect data, use a scoring guide, rubric, or checklist to assess whether or not students achieved the outcome.
  5. Analyze the data – discuss the findings
  6. Based on the findings, make recommendations in order to understand and improve student learning
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**Formative Assessment:** Conducted as learning is taken place, midway through a learning unit (like a course semester or program) to inform teaching and learning goals for the remainder of the semester

“Faculty can give students prompt feedback on their strengths and weaknesses and make immediate modifications to classroom activities and assignments” (95).

**Summative Assessment:** Conducted at the end of a learning unit (like a semester course or program) to ascertain how student performance compares to the stated learning outcomes in order to document it.

“Students may not receive any feedback on their performance other than possibly an overall grade or score” (95).

**Internal Assessment:** Designed, selected and controlled by faculty member(s) operating within the unit of learning (course, program, etc.).

*Example:* Test written by instructor

**External Assessment:** Designed, selected and controlled by external group; implemented by faculty members within the unit of learning.

*Example:* Standardized test

**Comparative Assessment:** Compares results between class sections, between online and face-to-face, between beginning and end of a unit of learning, between our campus and comparable external college, etc.

***IMPORTANT:*** The HWC Assessment Committee does not use its findings to evaluate instructors or compare results tied to individual students or instructors. Data is compiled and interpreted in the aggregate.

Quotes above are from Linda Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc., 2004).