

Assessment Glossary

Accountability: “the public presentation and communication of evidence about performance in relation to goals” (ACE, 2004, p. 9).¹

Artifacts: assignment-driven, student-produced piece of work

Assessment: ... “an analytical tool for evaluation of performance” (ACE, 2004, p. 9).¹

...is a systematic process of 1) setting goals or asking questions about student learning, 2) gathering evidence about what and how well students have learned what we have said is important, 3) interpreting the evidence to formulate answers to our questions, and 4) using the results to improve the effects of college on students’ learning and intellectual growth. Because assessment is an improvement process, it cannot claim to be assessment until all of these steps are completed. Therefore, this is necessarily an ongoing cyclic process (Leskes & Wright, 2005).⁵

...is the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning (UMass Amherst, 2001, p. 5).²

Competencies:

Based on 21-1B NMSA 1978 as amended (SB161, 2005), the HED was required to “establish a process to identify courses as substantially equivalent” ...[to] “include a procedure for each course whereby faculty from each segment teaching the academic discipline will reach mutual agreement on the material to be taught and the competencies to be gained.”⁴

Discipline-based groups of faculty statewide convened to develop four-to-six broadly-stated competencies to be gained from the courses in each of five broad discipline areas. Between Fall 2005 and Aug. 2006 UNM convened faculty in the seven areas of its core curriculum to develop learning goals for the courses in the university’s undergraduate core curriculum (including faculty who had participated in the HED process) resulting in the adoption of a modified version of the HED competencies.

Core Curriculum: UNM defines its core curriculum as “several groups of courses designed to enhance each student’s academic capabilities. Its goal is to give all students at the University a grounding in the broad knowledge and intellectual values obtained in a liberal arts education and to assure that graduates have a shared academic experience. The required courses encourage intellectual development in seven areas of study: writing and communication, social and behavioral sciences, mathematical reasoning, scientific methods in the physical and natural sciences, the humanities, the fine arts, and languages.”³

The New Mexico Commission on Higher Education (now Higher Education Dept. or NMHED), for the purpose of articulation of programs and the facilitation of transfer of students between institutions, has codified in statute: “‘general education core’ means the grouping of lower division general education

courses of at least thirty-five hours that are established by the commission for transfer and that are accepted by all institutions for transfer purposes.”⁴

Course-based assessment of learning: “The instructor identifies specific goals and objectives for each course, systematically gauges the extent to which these anticipated outcomes actually occur and determines to what degree learning takes place”(UMass Amherst, 2001, p. 6).²

Embedded assessment, or “in context” assessment: “means to make it part of the regular business of a course, requiring nothing more than students’ completion of the assignments in the syllabus” (Leskes & Wright, 2005, p. 36).⁵

Evaluation: "Assessment does differ from evaluation in that it neither assigns a grade to any individual nor carries specific rewards or punishments" (Leskes & Wright, 2005, p. 18).

Evidence:

Direct Evidence of student learning: “student work and performances that can be examined to determine what students know and can do”

Indirect Evidence of student learning: responses to surveys, self-reports as well as descriptive data such as employment rates, graduation rates, time to degree. Indirect methods cannot answer fundamental questions about learning.

Useful Evidence: “agreed upon, relevant, lending itself to appropriate analysis, and expected to produce concrete improvements" (Leskes & Wright, 2005,p. 24).

Formative Assessment: “Formative assessment is most usefully understood to mean that it occurs ‘along the way,’ providing feedback to improve the learning of individual students (or programs) as they progress toward a goal” (Leskes & Wright, 2005, p. 18). *Contrast with Summative Assessment.*

Learning Goals: ...”describe broad learning outcomes and concepts (what you want students to learn) expressed in general terms (e.g., clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.)” (OAPA, 2001, p. 10).

Learning Objectives: ... are what the instructor intends to teach.

“...describe specific learning behaviors that students should exhibit in the context of the course [or the program of study]. Objectives are the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader goals (e.g., for students in a freshman writing course, this might be ‘students are able to develop a cogent argument to support a position’). Often in the assessment literature, ‘objectives’ and ‘outcomes’ are used interchangeably.”²

Faculty draft student learning objectives (SLOs) to reflect the areas of learning they most deeply care about in a course or program of study. These are the areas of learning they will hold students accountable for and will assess for mastery. In the courses in the General Education core curriculum, each SLO is linked to one or more UNM/HED competencies.

Learning Outcomes: are what students have learned (knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, habits) as demonstrated in their academic work. This is expressed as a level of mastery demonstrated by the student(s) on a given learning objective by the end of the course/program. A learning outcome is supported by documented evidence systematically collected from student work.

Learning Outcomes Statement: “When statements of intended outcomes are written in terms of what the students will be able to do, know, or think, the minimum conditions for an ‘acceptable’ outcome statement have been met” (J. Denton, 2007, p. 3).⁶

Liberal education: “‘Liberal education’ should not be understood narrowly, as describing either specific subject matter or a particular type of college. Rather it refers to an approach to learning in which students grapple with complex issues and develop the ability to think for themselves and question their beliefs... ‘General education’ and an expectation of in-depth study in at least one field normally comprise liberal education” [emphasis added] (Leskes & Wright 2005, p. 2).

Liberal arts: “Specific disciplines (the humanities, social sciences, and sciences)” (Leskes & Wright 2005, p. 2)

Liberal arts colleges: “A particular institutional type—often small, often residential—that facilitates close interaction between faculty members and students, while grounding its curriculum in the liberal arts disciplines” (Leskes & Wright 2005, p. 2).

General Education: “The part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities. General education can take many different forms” (Leskes & Wright 2005, p. 2).

Portfolio: “a collection of items selected for the purpose of achieving an explicit goal⁷” Commonly, “students collect examples of their work, select items to illustrate specific kinds of learning, write a reflective essay on the learning process, and connect their insights to past or future experiences.”⁵

Rubric: ● a tool that merges the criteria for the goal (the “what”) with a rating scale (the “how well”). Rubrics offer consistent sets of descriptors to which student work can be compared by both professors and students themselves”.

- At its simplest, a rubric is a scoring aid in the form of a grid with the critical components of a work as rows and the levels of achievement as columns.
- "Rubrics clarify expectations about a specific outcome...they are used to rate its achievement as demonstrated by student work” (p. 29). Rubrics can be used for formative feedback, grades, and assessment. Also called “Primary Trait Analysis” because, unlike grading, learning objectives addressed by the assignment, course, portfolio, etc. are broken out as dimensions for individual analysis on the assumption that these are the primary traits to be developed by student work.

“Dimensions” The rows in a rubric that express the important component parts of the task, and sometimes express the differential weight of each component in the larger task. When the student product is scored, these dimensions reveal critical areas of student strength and weakness.

“Scales” The columns in a rubric that describe how well or how poorly a given task or skill has been performed. These evaluative labels may include score or point ranges.

Summative Assessment: in contrast to Formative Assessment, “asks endpoint questions: What does this course or educational experience add up to? What has the student achieved? Does this meet campus aspirations for any individual student? For students collectively? Summative assessment can improve the learning of the next cohort of students” (Leskes & Wright, 2005, p. 18).

Validity:

Face Validity: “seems to be a reasonable way to proceed; on ‘the face of it’ provides valid information about the outcome of interest. Evidence demonstrates efforts are not merely self-serving.

Consequential Validity: “[methods] should lead to the desired results: rich evidence of learning or programmatic strengths and weaknesses; productive conversations across traditional boundaries; actions for improvement; and substance for communication with external audiences” (p. 16).

See also: *Andrea Leskes Assessment Glossary*: <http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-sp02/pr-sp02reality.cfm>

¹ American Council on Education. (2004). *Public accountability for student learning in higher education: Issues and options*. Washington, DC: Author.

²Office of Academic Planning & Assessment. (2001). *Course-based review and assessment: Methods for understanding student learning*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Amherst. See: http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/course_based.pdf See also: http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf

³ The University of New Mexico Academic Catalog 2009-2010, p. 29.

⁴ “Post-Secondary Education Act” Chapter 21, Article 1B NMSA 1978

⁵ Leskes, A. & Wright, B. D. (2005). *The art & science of assessing general education outcomes: A practical guide*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities.

⁶ Denton, J. (2007, February). *Creating a Learner-Centered Culture: Assessment as a Means, Not an End*. Session presented at the meeting of the New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention Assn., Albuquerque, NM.

⁷ IUPUI Institutional Portfolio, <http://iport.iupui.edu/about/faq/>, accessed 3/5/2009