

## Assessment Glossary

**Alignment**-The process of analyzing how explicit criteria line up or build upon one another within a particular learning path. The thoughtful mapping of outcomes from one curricular level to the next. When developing student learning outcomes, course outcomes must align or match up with program learning outcomes which in turn align to institutional learning outcomes that directly align with the mission and vision of the university.

**Alignment Matrix** -Curriculum and learning objectives are aligned or matched to ensure students are provided appropriate learning opportunities to achieve the identified learning objectives or outcomes. Definition from *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen.

**Artifacts** -Any student work product created in response to a faculty-designed assignment submitted for scoring.

**Assessment**-Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of educational programs to improve student learning and development. T. Marchese, 1987.

**Assessment Cycle**-Like every university in the country, we follow an assessment cycle divided into four parts of a continuous cycle. Those parts involve (1) define/plan (2) collect/assess, (3) analyze/interpret, (4) adjust/improve. Through iROCA, these core functions of the assessment cycle are shared between the program and the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review.

**Assessment Liaison**-Assessment leader supporting department faculty in completing assessment activities.

**Assessment Plan**-A document that demonstrates the alignment of a program's student learning outcomes to the institutional learning outcomes (ILO) while explaining each of the following: program learning outcomes (PLO), course learning outcomes (CLO), student learning outcomes (SLO); direct and/or indirect assessment methods to be used to demonstrate the attainment of each outcome/objective; a brief description of the assessment methods; an indication of which learning outcomes are addressed by each method, the intervals at which student learning data (evidence) is collected and reviewed; and the individual(s) responsible for the collection, review, and reporting of said evidence.

**Assessment Results-** The data or evidence produced by the assessment process. These data are not always quantifiable or measurable in numerical terms. Still, they may also include qualitative evidence such as portfolios, narratives, performances, or other data that may be more dependent on observation than computation. However, bear in mind that observations are often assessed using a rubric designed especially for use in scoring or assessing observable actions. Any information produced by assessment processes that can be used for analysis and improvement of student achievement and learning would fall under the definition of assessment results.

**Assessment Tool-** Instrument used to measure the characteristic or outcome of interest. It is the tool used to implement a part of a larger assessment plan. Examples: assessment tools for learning include classroom assessment techniques (minute paper, etc.), capstone projects, examinations, portfolio entries, or student performances.

**Bloom's Taxonomy** -Commonly used discussion of the six levels of learning that occur. According to Bloom, knowledge increases as one progresses through the levels of learning, where knowledge is the most surface level, and evaluation represents the deepest form of learning.

**Certified Scorer** -A scorer who has successfully completed calibration training and has met an acceptable level to score artifacts.

**Classroom Assessment** -- (sometimes referred to as **Course-based Assessment**) -A process of gathering data on student learning during the educational experience, designed to help the instructor determine which concepts or skills the students are not learning well so that steps may be taken to improve the students' learning while the course is still in session.

**College Assessment Leads** (referred to as CALs) represent their respective college and are responsible for identifying assessment samples, developing sampling plans, onboarding faculty assessors, and managing the data collection process.

**Continuous Improvement-** A cyclical process used to identify and collect evidence of learning through which instructional changes are implemented to improve student learning.

**Course Learning Outcomes** (sometimes referred to as **objectives**)-Describe specific behaviors a student is expected to demonstrate or achieve upon completion of a course.

**Culture of Evidence and Reporting**-This term often refers to an institutional culture that systematically collects data, engages in data analysis, and interpret results to inform decision-making. Such a culture is characterized by collecting and reporting on data at every level.

**Department Assessment Liaisons** (referred to as DALs) represent their respective departments and are responsible for maintaining and updating assessment components (i.e., PLOs, alignment matrices, 5YR plans, and continuous improvement plans).

**Department Assessment Steering Committee** (DASC) is a committee of faculty in each department who meet periodically to support the work of assessment (i.e., interpreting assessment results and reporting progress to the faculty as a whole).

**Direct Measure**-An assessment of learning requires students to demonstrate their learning in a way that an observer can assess it, such as in exams, performances, presentations, and papers.

**Formative Assessment**- Brief check of student learning with the intent of monitoring student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Formative assessments are often used to help students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, their gaps in knowledge, and their target areas that need additional practice. For instructors, formative assessment helps faculty recognize where students are struggling throughout the instructional process. These assessments are generally low stakes, meaning they have low or no point value. Examples of formative assessments include asking students to: draw a concept map in class to represent their understanding of a topic, submit one or two sentences identifying the main point of a lecture, or turn in a research proposal for early feedback.

**Goals** -A broad statement about the types of learning desired and facilitated within a course, department, or curriculum.

**Grades**- Evaluation of a student's performance in a course over time. Grades represent an assessment of student class work, homework, and/or special projects. Grades are intended to reflect at what level the student acquired the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes identified in the course's stated learning objectives.

**Grading**- A process of evaluating student performance. This could be one basis for student learning assessment if it follows a rubric containing explicitly defined levels of student achievement.

**Graduate Institutional Learning Outcomes** (sometimes referred to as **graduate objectives**)-Statements of what graduate students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they complete the master's degree.

**Indirect Measures**-An assessment based on perceptions or reflections of students (or alumni or others) about their learning, such as surveys.

**Institutional Learning Outcomes** (sometimes referred to as **institutional objectives**) -Statements of the institution that describe specific behaviors a student is expected to demonstrate or achieve before graduating from a university or college. At CSUN, there are seven delineated outcomes to which all program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and student learning outcomes are aligned.

**iROCA** -An acronym for **Instructors Reporting of Classroom Assessment**. It describes the process of collecting assessment data at CSUN.

**iROCA Participants**-Each college has a College Assessment Lead (CAL), who is selected by and works closely with the Office of Academic Assessment and Program review for a period of three years. The responsibility of the CAL is to onboard faculty to the iROCA process, from selecting ILO dimensions to assessing student assignments. Other responsibilities include serving as an internal reviewer for the program review process.

Department Assessment Liaisons (DALs) have an ongoing role in supporting the department in maintaining and updating assessment files (i.e., outcomes, alignment maps, five-year plans, continuous improvement plans).

All faculty with teaching responsibilities at CSUN participate in iROCA every three to five years.

**Learning Outcome** -A subject area to be assessed, such as Critical Thinking. There is an associated VALUE rubric for each of the seven Institutional learning outcomes.

**Outcomes Assessment (OA)**-The measurement of learning outcomes. OA examines student demonstrations of the results of learning. The process includes four cyclical steps: 1) teaching and learning, 2) developing questions and gathering information about student learning, 3) analyzing the information and drawing conclusions, and 4) reflecting and planning. It documents the alignment (or dissonance) between the intended learning (as stated in the outcomes) and the actual learning (as demonstrated by the

student). The practice of Outcomes Assessment is collaborative and is intended to inform. Its goal is to continually improve student learning.

**Portfolio Assessment**-Reviewers assess student work on meeting outcomes by use of a portfolio and established criteria of performance. Each item in the portfolio may be individually scored, or a holistic scoring process may be used to present an overall impression of the student's collected work.

**Program Learning Outcomes** (sometimes referred to as **program objectives**)  
-Describe specific behaviors a student is expected to demonstrate or achieve upon completing a degree program, certified program, or program of study.

**Qualitative Assessment**-Collects data that does not lend itself to quantitative methods but interpretive criteria. Examples are interviews, focus groups, and anecdotal evidence.

**Quantitative Assessment**-Collects data that can be analyzed using quantitative methods.

**Reliability**- The "reproducibility" of a measure. A measurement procedure that, when reproduced, gives similar results.

**Rubric**: A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or "what counts" (for example, purpose, organization, details, voice, and mechanics are often what count in a piece of writing); it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.

**Standards**- A set level of accomplishment all students are expected to meet or exceed. (Standards are not always high quality as sometimes the level is the lowest common denominator. Standards also do not imply complete standardization in a program because common minimum standards can be achieved by multiple pathways and demonstrated in multiple ways.)

**Student Learning Outcomes** (AKA course learning objectives or outcomes)- Statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they complete the major or degree. They may be stated in terms of expected knowledge, skills, or attitudes. These outcomes must be consistent with the mission of the department, college, and university.

**Summative Assessment**-Assessments designed to determine a student's academic development after a set unit of material or at a given benchmark, or after learning activities leading to a Student Learning Outcome. The intent of summative assessments is not to provide specific direction for improvement to students but rather to arrive at a final determination of a student's performance. Examples of summative assessments include but are

not limited to final exams, course portfolios, performance, and capstone projects.