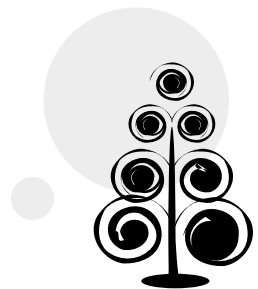


SLO Terminology Glossary

A Resource for Local Senates



SLO TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY

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Assessment of Learning. Learning assessment refers to a process where methods are used to generate and collect data for evaluation of courses and programs to improve educational quality and student learning. This term refers to any method used to gather evidence and evaluate quality and may include both quantitative and qualitative data in instruction or student services.

Assessment for Accountability. The primary drivers of assessment for accountability are external, such as legislators or the public, and usually entail indirect or secondary data. Application of accountability data for educational improvement requires careful analysis of the alignment of the data and the ramifications of the actions.

Assessment for Placement. Assessment for placement is the process of gathering information about individual students, such as a standardized test or process to determine a student's skill level, in order to place the student in a course sequence, such as math, English, ESL, or reading to facilitate student success. This process involves the validation of the content of the standardized test by the appropriate faculty content experts and analysis of the cut scores to determine the effectiveness of the placement and the development of multiple measures. Title 5 §55502 defines assessment for placement and the requirements for this kind of assessment.

by evaluating the student's ability to apply critical thinking and knowledge or to perform tasks that may approximate those found in the work place or other venues outside of the classroom setting.²

Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy is an example of one of several classification methodologies used to describe increasing complexity or intellectual sophistication:

1. **Knowledge:** Recalling or remembering information without necessarily understanding it. Includes behaviors such as describing, listing, identifying, and labeling.

2. **Comprehension:** Understanding learned material and includes behaviors such as explaining, 5(sr)13(o)7e 1ngm-4(e)-5sDC (0 -2.gs -0.015 scn)-

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6. **Evaluation:** Judging the value of evidence based on definite criteria. Behaviors related to evaluation include: concluding, criticizing, prioritizing, and recommending.³ (Bloom, 1956)

Classroom assessment techniques. Classroom assessment techniques (CATs) are “simple tools for collecting data on student learning in order to improve it” (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 26).⁴ CATs are short, flexible, classroom techniques that provide rapid, informative feedback to improve classroom dynamics by monitoring learning, from the student’s perspective, throughout the semester. Data from CATs are evaluated and used to facilitate continuous modifications and improvement in the classroom.

Classroom-based assessment. Classroom-based assessment is the formative and summative evaluation of student learning within a classroom, in contrast to institutional assessment that looks across courses and classrooms at student populations.

Closing the Loop. Closing the loop refers to the use of assessment results to improve student learning through collegial dialog informed by the results of student service or instructional learning outcome assessment. It is part of the continuous cycle of collecting assessment results, evaluating them, using the evaluations to identify actions that will improve student learning, implementing those actions, and then cycling back to collecting assessment results, etc.

Competencies. See Student Learning Outcomes.

Continuous Improvement. Continuous improvement reflects an on-going, cyclical process to identify evidence and implement incremental changes to improve student learning.

Core Competencies. Core competencies are the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in complex ways that require multiple elements of learning which are acquired during a student's course of study at an institution. Statements regarding core competencies speak to the intended results of student learning experiences across courses, programs, and degrees. Core competencies describe critical, measurable life abilities and provide unifying, overarching purpose for a broad spectrum of individual learning experiences. Descriptions of core competencies should include dialog about instructional and student service competencies. See also ***Institutional Learning Outcomes.***

Course Assessment. This assessment evaluates the curriculum as designed, taught, and learned. It involves the collection of data aimed at measuring successful learning in the individual course and improving instruction with the ultimate goal towards improving learning and pedagogical practice.

Criterion-based assessments. Criterion-based assessment evaluates or scores student learning or performance based on explicit criteria developed by student services or instruction which measures proficiency at a specific point in time.

Culture of evidence. The phrase "culture of evidence" refers to an institutional culture that supports and integrates research, data analysis,

evaluation, and planned change as a result of assessment to inform decision-making (Pacheco, 1999)⁵. A culture of evidence is characterized by the generation, analysis and valuing of quantitative and qualitative data in decision making.

Direct data. Direct data provide evidence of student knowledge, skills, or attitudes for the specific domain in question and actually measuring student learning, not perceptions of learning or secondary evidence of learning, such as a degree or certificate. For instance, a math test directly measures a student's proficiency in math. In contrast, an employer's report about student abilities in math or a report on the number of math degrees awarded would be indirect data.

Embedded assessment. E

it reliable. Good evidence is representative of what is, not just an isolated case, and it is information upon which an institution can take action to improve. I

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO). Institutional Learning Outcomes are the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student is expected to leave an institution with as a result of a student's total experience. Because GE Outcomes represent a common core of outcomes for the majority of students transferring or receiving degrees, some but not all, institutions equate these with ILO's. ILOs may differ from GE SLOs in that institutional outcomes may include outcomes relating to institutional effectiveness (degrees, transfers, productivity) in addition to learning outcomes. Descriptions of ILOs should include dialog about instructional and student service outcomes.

Likert scale. The Likert scale assigns a numerical value to responses in order to quantify subjective data. The responses are usually along a continuum such as responses of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree and are assigned values such as 1 to 4.

Metacognition. Metacognition is the act of thinking about one's own thinking and regulating one's own learning. It involves critical analysis of how decisions are made and vital material is consciously learned and acted upon.

Norm-referenced assessment. In norm-referenced assessment, an individual's performance is compared to another individual. Individuals are commonly ranked to determine a median or average. This technique addresses overall mastery to an expected level of competency, but provides little detail about specific skills.

Qualitative data. Qualitative data are descriptive information, such as narratives or portfolios. These data are often collected using open-ended questions, feedback surveys, or summary reports, and may be difficult to compare, reproduce, and generalize. Qualitative data provide depth and can be time and labor intensive. Nonetheless, qualitative data often pinpoint areas for interventions and potential solutions which are not evident in quantitative data.

Quantitative data. Quantitative data are numerical or statistical values. These data use actual numbers (scores, rates, etc) to express quantities of a variable. Qualitative data, such as opinions, can be displayed as numerical data by using Likert scaled responses which assign a numerical value to each response (e.g., 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree). These

Rigor. California community college faculty use the term *rigor* relating to courses in the context of Title 5 §55002, such as referring to course standards of grading policies, units, intensity, prerequisites level, etc.⁸ Researchers often refer to *rigor* as statistical rigor or compliance with good statistical practices.

Rubric. A rubric is a set of criteria used to determine scoring for an assignment, performance, or product. Rubrics may be holistic, not based upon strict numerical values which provide general guidance. Other rubrics are analytical, assigning specific scoring point values for each criterion often as a matrix of primary traits on one axis and rating scales of performance on the other axis. A rubric can improve the consistency and accuracy of assessments conducted across multiple settings.

Sampling. Sampling is a research method that selects representative units such as groups of students from a specific population of students being studied, so that by examining the sample, the results can be generalized to the population from which they were selected when everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected (i.e. random). Sampling is especially important when dealing with student service data.

Standardized assessment. Standardized assessments are those created, tested, validated, and usually sold by an educational testing company (e.g., GRE's, SAT, ACT, ACCUPLACER) for broad public usage and data comparison, usually scored normatively. There are numerous standardized

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Content Validity. Validity indicates that the assessment is consistent with the outcome and measures the content we have set out to measure. For instance, you go to take your driver's license exam, the test does not have questions about how to make sushi.

Variable. A variable is a discrete factor that affects an outcome.

Endnotes

¹ Section 55502 of Title 5 contains the following definitions related to assessment:

(b) “assessment” means the process of gathering information about individual students to facilitate student success. Assessment may include, but is not limited to, information regarding the student’s study skills, English language proficiency, computational skills, aptitudes, goals, learning skills, career aspirations, academic performance, and need for special services. Assessment involves the collection of such information at any time, before or after enrollment, except that the process of assigning a grade by an instructor shall not be considered part of the assessment process. Once a grade has been assigned and recorded in a student’s transcript it can be used in the assessment process.

(c) “assessment instruments, methods or procedures” means one or more assessment instruments, assessment methods, or assessment procedures, or any combination thereof. These include, but are not limited to, interviews, standardized tests, holistic scoring processes, attitude surveys, vocational or career aptitude and interest inventories, high school or college transcripts, specialized certificates or licenses, educational histories and other measures of performance. The term “assessment instruments, methods or procedures” also includes assessment procedures such as the identification of test scores which measure particular skill levels, the administrative process by which students are referred for assessment, the manner in which assessment sessions are conducted, the manner in which assessment results are made available, and the length of time required before such results are available.

Furthermore, Section 55202 states that the use of assessment as a prerequisite for placement into a course requires the use of multiple measures:

(c) The determination of whether a student meets a prerequisite shall be based on successful completion of an appropriate course or on an assessment using multiple measures. Any assessment instrument used shall be selected and used in accordance with the provisions of Subchapter 6 (commencing with §55500) of Chapter 6 of this Division.

² Grant Wiggins, Grant (1990). The case for authentic assessment. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 2(2). Retrieved February 16, 2004 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=2&n=2>. Copyright 1990, PAREonline.net.

³ Bloom B. S. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

⁴ Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

⁵ Pacheco, D. A. (1999). Culture of evidence. Retrieved June 1, 2003, from the California Assessment Institute, Resources Web site: <http://www.cai.org/assessment/cultureofevidence.html>

⁶ ACCJC. 2008. Characteristics of Evidence: Guide to Evaluating Institutions. Page 10. Author: Novato, CA.

⁷ Title 5 §55000(g) defines an educational program as “an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education”

⁸ As one example of the use of the term rigor Title 5 §55002 (b) (2) (C) says “In particular, the assignments will be sufficiently rigorous that students successfully completing each such course, or sequence of required courses, will have acquired the skills necessary to successfully complete degree-applicable work.”