

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Authentic assessment: An assessment presenting tasks that reflect the kind of mastery demonstrated by experts. Authentic assessment of a student's ability to solve problems, for example, would assess how effectively a student solves a real problem.

Closing the Loop: using an analysis of student learning assessment data to improve a program through revisions to curricula and pedagogy.

Curriculum Mapping: a process whereby student learning outcomes are mapped onto the technique for ensuring that student learning outcomes in courses mesh with program and university-wide student learning outcomes. TaskStream can help facilitate this process.

	Program Learning Outcome 1	Program Learning Outcome 2	Program Learning Outcome 3	Program Learning Outcome 4
Course 1	X	X		
Course 2		X		X
Course 3	X		X	
Course 4			X	X

Direct Assessment: Gathers evidence about student learning based on student performance that demonstrates the learning itself. Can be value added, related to standards, qualitative or quantitative, embedded or not, using local or external criteria. Examples are written assignments, classroom assignments, presentations, test results, projects, logs, portfolios, and direct observations. Direct assessments may be either tied to a specific course, or measure overall student learning in a program.

Embedded Assessment: A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the class to be used for assessment purposes such as class assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Typically information is aggregated to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course senior research papers that are graded for content and style, but later used to student learning outcomes established by the program or university.

Holistic Scoring: In assessment, holistic scoring means assigning a single score based on an overall assessment of performance rather than by scoring or analyzing dimensions individually. The product is considered to be more than the sum of its parts and so the quality of a final product or performance is evaluated. Holistic scoring criteria might combine a number of elements on a single scale.

Indirect Assessment: Acquiring evidence about how students feel about learning and their learning environment rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement. Examples include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and reflective essays.

Portfolio Assessment: An assessment process that is based on the collection of student work (such as written assignments, drafts, artwork, and presentations) that represents competencies, exemplary work, or the student's developmental progress.

Reliability: An indicator of score consistency over time or across multiple evaluators. Reliable assessment is one in which the same answers receive the same score regardless of who performs the scoring or how or where the scoring takes place. The same person is likely to get approximately the same score across multiple test administrations.

Rubric: A rubric is an established set of criteria for scoring or rating students' performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring criteria are rules for assigning a score or rating a student's performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks. Scoring criteria may include rating scales, checklists, answer keys, and other scoring tools.

Scoring Guide: A package of guidelines intended for people scoring performance assessments. May include instructions or raters, notes on training raters, rating scales, samples of student work exemplifying various levels of performance.

Standardized Tests: Assessments that are administered and scored in exactly the same way for all students. Traditional standardized tests are typically mass-produced and machine-scored; they are designed to measure skills and knowledge that are thought to be taught to all students in a fairly standardized way. Performance assessments also can be standardized if they are administered and scored in the same way for all students.

Student Learning Outcomes: expected skills, knowledge, or abilities that students are expected to attain following completion of a course, program, or some other educational experience.

TaskStream: a commercial system for managing assessment information that we have begun to use at Bemidji State University. It will archive our assessment data, show alignment at various levels, allow for curriculum mapping, and facilitate collaboration on departmental planning and assessment.

Validity: Validity refers to the extent to which the assessment measures the desired performance and appropriate inferences can be drawn from the results. A valid assessment accurately reflects the learning it was designed to measure.

(This glossary represents the contributions of several Academic Assessment Committee members, including Laurie Desiderato, Elizabeth Dunn, Richard Hook, and Patrick Guilfoile.)