

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Accountability - The demand by external stakeholders to prove that money spent has led to measurable learning; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

Accreditation - Accreditation is both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program meets standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency. As a process, accreditation reflects the fact that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the institution or program is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of education and training provided.

Assessment - An ongoing process of: establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning, ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes and systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations (Suskie, 2004).

Capstone Courses - are courses at the program completion level where course outcomes, in part or entirely, are the comprehensive major program outcomes. In these courses, instructors reinforce and integrate a combination of previously learned course outcomes or competencies and ask students to apply them in work related tasks (Baltimore CC, 2002).

Competencies – Individually competencies are a set of behaviors that encompasses skills, knowledge, and abilities and personal attributes that taken together are critical to successful work accomplishment.

Criteria - A rule or principle for evaluating or testing. A standard on which a judgment or decision may be placed.

Direct measures - A way of assessing student learning by measuring student performance directly (i.e. papers, projects, exams).

Goal – What an instructor aims to achieve. Goals refer to the destination rather than the path.

Student Learning Outcome (SLOs) - Describes what a student is expected to learn as a result of participating in academic activities or experiences at the college. SLOs focus on knowledge gained, skills and abilities acquired or demonstrated, and attitudes or values changed (Montgomery College, 2007).

Internship - An experience based opportunity whereby a student gains practical experience and applies what has been learned to a professional experience.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education - Is a unit associated with the Middle States Commission of Colleges and Schools that accredits degree granting colleges and universities in the middle states region. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than specific programs within the institution.

Mission statement - A statement that describes the overall goals of the college. Programs and program goals should support the college's mission. Assessment of student learning should provide the evidence that the college is achieving its stated mission.

Objective – The task or tasks associated with achieving goals.

Portfolio - A collection of student work to reflect student competencies and skills in a course over several courses or within a program of study. A portfolio can be used by the student or instructor to illustrate competencies.

Program – A “program” for assessment purposes is any predefined set of course leading to a certificate, license, or immediate job placement.

Reliability - The consistency or repeatability of an assessment result. For evaluation of student work, it can be measured by comparing the ratings of two or more independent raters using the same scoring metric on the same group of student work.

Rubric - A printed tool used for measuring particular student competencies (criteria) or learning goal. Rubrics are usually rating scales that define varying levels of student competency with descriptions to facilitate objective scoring by different raters. A scoring guide to evaluate student performance; the rubric contains standards related to the learning outcomes associated with the assignment the quality of student work is assessed using these standards.

Validity - Refers to the integrity of the instrument and to the extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure so that the assessment results are meaningful for the intended use.