

## **A Glossary of Useful Assessment Terms**

It is important that faculty and staff across all facets of campus agree on the meaning of terms that will be used in assessing courses and programs. The intent of this glossary is, therefore, to promote a clear and common definition of terms rather than promote the use of jargon.

### **Achievement Summary**

The annual report completed by each academic department. A summary of assessment efforts from the academic year and reflection on their impact. This document can be recorded in WEAVE or submitted through a google form to the assessment committee.

### **Alternative Assessment**

Alternatives to traditional, standardized, norm- or criterion-referenced traditional paper and pencil testing. An alternative assessment might require students to answer an open-ended question, work out a solution to a problem, demonstrate skill, or in some way produce work rather than select an answer from choices on a sheet of paper. Portfolios and instructor observation of students are also alternative forms of assessment.

### **Assessment**

The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

### **Authentic Assessment**

Evaluating by asking for the behavior the learning is intended to produce. The concept of model, practice, feedback in which students know what excellent performance is and are guided to practice an entire concept rather than bits and pieces in preparation for eventual understanding. A variety of techniques can be employed in authentic assessment.

The goal of authentic assessment is to gather evidence that students can use knowledge effectively and be able to critique their own efforts. Tasks used in authentic assessment are meaningful and valuable, and are part of the learning process.

### **Benchmark or Target**

Student performance standards or the level(s) of student competence in a content area. A goal or expectation of overall student performance. Ex: 65% of students will perform at or above the national average.

### **Common Core**

The 31-32 hour block of courses required of all CMU students. These courses are assessed by the 6 common core outcomes: articulate, multimodal, discover, analyze, respect, and serve.

### **Curriculum-embedded or Learning-embedded Assessment**

Assessment that occurs simultaneously with learning such as projects, portfolios and "exhibitions." Occurs in the classroom setting, and, if properly designed, students should not be able to tell whether they are being taught or assessed. Tasks or tests are developed from the curriculum or instructional materials.

### **Direct Assessment Methods**

These methods involve students' display of knowledge and skills (e.g. text results, written assignments, presentations, classroom assignments) resulting from learning experience in the class/program.

### **Findings**

Yearly assessment data collected and reported each year by each department. The findings should be the results of measures or reflections. In WEAVE, findings are categorized as "met", "partially met", and "not met", based on the targets set by the department.

### **General Education**

The program of courses required for all students. This includes the 31-32 hour common core block and the additional degree requirements specific to each major/degree.

### **Indirect Assessment Methods**

Assessment methods that involve perceptions of learning rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement (e.g. alumni surveys, employer surveys, exit interviews).

### **Measure**

The tool used to assess an outcome/objective or principle. Ex: Major Field Test, Student Reflection, Senior Thesis, Portfolio, Performance A measure should be connected to a benchmark/target, in order to gauge success.

### **Mission**

A holistic vision of the values and philosophy of a department, program, unit or institution.

### **Objectives**

Synonymous with outcomes. Statements that describe measurable expectations of what students should be able to think, know or do when they've completed a given educational program. Each statement should describe one expectation; should not bundle several into one statement. The statements must be clear and easily understood by all faculty in the area/department. (See **Outcomes**)

### **Outcomes**

An operationally defined educational goal, usually a culminating activity, product, or performance that can be measured. (See **Objectives**)

### **Performance-Based Assessment**

Direct, systematic observation and rating of student performance of an educational objective, often an ongoing observation over a period of time, and typically involving the creation of products. The assessment may be a continuing interaction between faculty and student and should ideally be part of the learning process. The assessment should be a real-world performance with relevance to the student and learning community. Assessment of the performance is done using a rubric, or analytic scoring guide to aid in objectivity.

**Principle**

The overarching academic and character goals for the institution, based on the mission statement. At CMU, these are the inner ring of the Wheel: Communication, Community, and Curiosity.

**Quantitative Methods of Assessment**

Methods that rely on numerical scores or ratings. Examples: Surveys, Inventories, Institutional/departmental data, departmental/course-level exams (locally constructed, standardized, etc.).

**Qualitative Methods of Assessment**

Methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers. Examples: Ethnographic field studies, logs, journals, participant observation, and open-ended questions.

**WEAVE**

The content management system CMU uses for assessment. WEAVE uses a 5 step system: Objectives, Targets, Measures, Findings, and Achievement Summary. The first three steps should be periodically reviewed and updated if necessary. Findings and the Achievement summary should be added yearly.

