

Glossary of Assessment Terms	
Assessment cycle	Consisting of four steps: 1) defining learning outcomes; 2) choosing and using a method to gather evidence of learning; 3) analyzing and interpreting the evidence; and 4) using this information to improve student learning (closing the loop).
Assessment method	A way to collect evidence of student learning
Core curriculum	An approach to general education that requires all students to take the same set of courses, rather than choosing from a menu of options.
Closing the loop	Using the findings and analysis of assessment data to improve student learning.
Direct assessment	A way of gauging the quality of student learning by examining student work products and performances directly, rather than relying on grades, credit hours, or “seat time.”
Indirect assessment	A way of gauging the quality of the educational experience and program effectiveness through the use of surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. The findings are “indirect,” i.e., filtered through the perceptions and opinions of the respondents.
Outcome	Guides the assessment of student learning concisely stating what a student should know or be able to do. Well-articulated learning outcomes describe how a student can demonstrate the desired outcome; verbs such as “understand” or “appreciate” are avoided in favor of observable actions, e.g., “identify,” “analyze.”
Outcomes	<p>Student learning outcomes (SLOs): statements clearly describing the specific and measureable knowledge, skills, and behaviors that display and verify learning has occurred.</p> <p>Program learning outcomes (PLOs): statements describing the significant and essential learnings directly related to a major program of study or discipline that students will master and reliably demonstrate.</p> <p>Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs): broad statements clearly describing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions all students are expected to have upon graduating from an institution of higher learning.</p>
Program	A systematic, usually sequential grouping of courses that forms a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree in a major or professional field.
Rubric	A tool for scoring student work or performances, typically in the form of a table or matrix, with criteria that describe the dimensions of the outcome down the left-hand vertical axis, and levels of performance across the horizontal axis. The work or performance may be given an overall score (holistic scoring), or criteria may be scored individually (analytic scoring).

Signature assignment	An embedded assessment method using an assignment—either the identical assignment or multiple assignments all constructed according to a common template— across multiple courses or sections of courses. A sample of students’ work products is then examined using a rubric to arrive at judgments about the quality of student learning across the course, program, or institution. Alternatively, a signature question may be embedded, for example, in final exams.
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