

# Valencia Community College Learning Evidence Team

## Glossary of Learning and Assessment

### **Action/Classroom Research:**

Ongoing and cumulative intellectual inquiry by classroom teachers into the nature of teaching and learning in their classrooms.

### **Artifacts:**

In the Valencia Faculty Portfolio, an artifact represents that evidence which demonstrates that the faculty tenure candidate has accomplished the Learning Outcomes objectives in the Individualized Learning Plan.

### **Assessment (of/for learning):**

Processes and tools/instruments that measure learning outcomes; student demonstration of new/expanded abilities (results of learning); documentation of the alignment or dissonance between the intended learning (as stated in the outcomes) and the actual learning (as demonstrated by the student); intended to inform, improve and or prove (Angelo): a vehicle for internal knowledge, insight and improvement and for external evidence of achievement.

### **Assessment for Accountability or Improvement:**

**Assessment for Accountability:** Assessment of some unit (department, program, or entire institution) to satisfy *external* stakeholders. Results are sometimes compared across units (maybe similar departments on different campuses) and are always summative.

**Assessment for Improvement:** Assessment that feeds directly, and often immediately, back into revising the course, program, or institution to improve student learning results. Results are often kept internal to the unit and can be formative or summative.

### **Assessment of Individuals, Programs, or Institutions:**

**Assessment of Individuals:** Uses the individual student and his/her learning as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value-added and/or used for improvement. (This type of assessment would need to be aggregated if used for accountability purposes.) Examples include improvement in student knowledge of a subject during a single course or improvement of the ability of a student to build cogent arguments over the course of an undergraduate career.

**Assessment of Programs:** Uses the department or program as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value-added and used for improvement and/or accountability. Ideally program goals and

objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment. Example: improved critical reading skills for students completing the prep reading program.

**Assessment of Institutions:** Uses the institution as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value-added and/or used for improvement or accountability. Ideally institution-wide goals and objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment. Example: how well students across the institution can “act purposely and responsibly” (from TVCA).

**Assessment Tool:**

Instrument used to measure the characteristic or outcome of interest. It is the tool used to implement part of a larger assessment plan. Example: assessment tools for learning include classroom assessment techniques (minute paper, muddiest point, etc.), capstone projects, examinations, portfolio entries, or student performances.

**Authentic Assessment:**

An assessment approach that has been designed to provide a realistic task, simulation, or problem related to that attribute or performance being measured. It engages students in challenges that closely represent what they are likely to face as everyday workers and citizens. It could be in the form of a performance test, a set of observations, open-ended questions, an exhibition, or a portfolio.

**Authentic Learning:**

Learning embedded in relevant, useful, "real-world" contexts and applications. This is also called "deep learning" (beyond information intake). In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy, authentic learning refers to understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

**Benchmarking Assessment:**

An assessment model that compares outcomes to other programs or institutions that have similar inputs and environments.

**Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs):**

Tools that involve students and teachers in the continuous monitoring of students' learning. It provides faculty with feedback about their effectiveness as teachers and gives students a measure of their progress as learners. Examples include the minute paper, the muddiest point, double entry journals, and classroom opinion polls.

**Consequential Validity:**

An evidentiary standard for determining whether an assessment tool produces positive learning results for all students.

**Core Competencies:**

Statements of intended results of student learning experiences across courses, programs, and degrees. Core competencies describe critical, measurable life abilities (deep learning) and provide unifying, over-arching purpose for broad spectrum of individual learning experiences. For example, Valencia's Student

Competencies are Think, Value, Act, Communicate (TVCA). For further explanation of TVCA see <http://valencia.cc.fl.us/competencies/default.asp>

**Criterion/Criteria:**

A standard or standards for judging how well or to what degree something has been learned. See Standards of Scholarship.

**Criterion Referenced Assessment:**

An assessment model where the “expected” or “acceptable” level is predetermined. The measurement is typically taken at a single point in time and is usually marked as pass/fail.

**Direct or Indirect Assessment:**

**Direct Assessment:** Gathers evidence, based on student performance, which demonstrates the learning itself. Can be value-added, related to standards, qualitative or quantitative, embedded or not, and can use local or external criteria. Examples include class tests, research papers, student performances, etc.

**Indirect Assessment:** Gathers reflection about the learning or secondary evidence of its existence. Example: surveys of student perceptions about learning.

**Descriptive Assessment Model:**

Assessment model that seeks to describe the current state of certain variables or phenomena.

**Embedded Assessment:**

A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching-learning process. Often used, for assessment purposes, classroom assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Can assess individual student performance or aggregate the information to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course, expecting each student to complete a research paper that is graded for content and style, but the paper is also assessed for advanced ability to locate and evaluate web-based information as part of a college wide outcome to demonstrate information literacy.

**Essential Competency of a Valencia Educator:**

A generic ability of the Valencia educator that is fundamental to his or her effectiveness in a learning college and continues to develop over the professional's career. An essential competency cuts across disciplinary contexts and the different functions of educators as classroom teachers, counselors, and librarians engage professionally. The essential competencies are so fundamental and inter-related that any complex application of these competencies to teaching will probably involve several essential competencies, just as any complex act of student learning involves all the student core competencies. Valencia has identified the following competencies essential to a faculty member's practice:

- [Learning-centered Teaching Strategies](#)
- [Valencia Student Core Competencies: Think, Value, Act, Communicate](#)
- [LifeMap](#)
- [Assessment](#)
- [Inclusion & Diversity](#)
- [Scholarship of Teaching & Learning \(SofTL\)](#)
- [Professional Commitment](#)

**Evaluation:**

A summative appraisal of learning intended to provide a final judgment of the quality of learning. Evaluation is the culmination of the formative assessment process.

**External or Local Assessment:**

**External Assessment:** Use of criteria or assessment instrument developed by an individual or organization external to the one being assessed. Usually summative, quantitative, and often high-stakes. Example: standardized tests.

**Local Assessment:** Means and methods that are developed by an institution’s faculty, based on their teaching approaches, students, and learning goals. Can fall under any assessment definition except external assessment, for which it is an antonym.

**Exploratory Assessment:**

Assessment model that explores unknown phenomenon and seeks to answer “why?” questions. Typically uses focus groups or other qualitative assessment methodologies.

**Formative/Summative Assessment:**

**Formative Assessment:** In progress assessment; feedback loops between teacher and students intended to improve teaching and learning along the way, and thereby also improving the quality of the end outcome. This includes student and teacher self-assessment.

**Summative Assessment:** Measures of performance at given "finish points" in a course, at course/program conclusions, at graduation, etc. Summative assessment may include student self-assessment.. Tests and papers are kinds of summative assessment. Grades are reflections of individual teacher evaluations of student performance on series of tests and papers.

**High Stakes Assessment:**

The decision to use the results of assessment to set a hurdle that needs to be cleared for completing a program of study, receiving certification, or moving to the next level. Most often high stakes assessment is externally developed, based on set standards, carried out in a secure testing situation, and administered at a single point in time. Examples: exit tests, competency tests.

**I-E-O Assessment Model:**

Assessment model designed by Alexander Astin that looks for relationships between inputs, environment, and outcomes.

**Learning:**

The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and/or abilities through instruction or experience.

**Learning Activities:**

The specific design and implementation of learning opportunities (inquiry, exploration, discovery, listening, observation, reading, writing, planning, discussion, practice, experimentation...) that lead to the desired learning outcomes.

**Learning-centered:**

Quality of effort is measured or judged by its effect on learning.

According to the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE): (1) formulating the right questions, that is, "a spirit of inquiry"; (2) assessment linked to those questions; and (3) systems that ensure that the answers result in improvements.

**Learning College:**

A learning-centered college actively encourages the importance of a culture of learning and a culture of evidence throughout the entire institution in a manner that is easily understood by all.

**Learning Outcome:**

A statement of what a student should understand and be able to do as a result of what he or she has learned in a course or learning program ... in other words, "the essential and enduring knowledge, abilities, and attitudes or dispositions" that enable a student to practice and apply her learning in the real world. Synonyms: learning goal, competency, ability.

**Longitudinal Assessment:**

Assessment model that uses cohorts of students to track change or progress over time.

**Norm-Referenced Assessment:**

Assessment that compares an individual (student/group/program) to his/her/its placement relative to his/her/its peer's status on the same measure.

**Objective (Learning Objective):**

Incremental learning steps students must take to reach a broader learning outcome. Students must normally learn several objectives for each course learning outcome.

**Performance-based Assessment:**

A type of student evaluation that requires a student to perform a task and be evaluated using indicators/criteria for performance (rather than traditional testing methods such as selecting an answer from an existing list.)

**Portfolio:**

Compilation of evidence demonstrating a level of development of an essential competencies and the achievement of specific learning outcomes. The portfolio serves as a tool for both formative and summative assessment. A portfolio is a repository of professional and/or academic work.

**Qualitative/Quantitative Assessment:**

**Qualitative Assessment:** Collects data that does not lend itself to quantitative methods but rather to interpretive criteria.

**Quantitative Assessment:** Collects data that can be analyzed using quantitative methods.

**Reliability:**

The “reproducibility” of a measure. A measurement procedure that when reproduced gives similar results.

**Rubrics:**

Scoring guidelines/scales that enable reliable judgments about student work. Rubrics answer "What does mastery (and varying degrees of mastery) for a target achievement (outcomes) look like?, What does the range in the quality of performance look like?, How do we determine validly, reliably, and fairly what score should be given and what the score means?, How should the different levels of quality be described and distinguished from one another? (Pohl).

**Standards (generic term):**

A set level of accomplishment all students are expected to meet or exceed. (Standards are not always high quality as sometimes the level is the lowest common denominator. Standards also do not imply complete standardization in a program because common minimum standards can be achieved by multiple pathways and demonstrated in multiple ways.)

**Standards of Scholarship:**

A framework to guide the evaluation of scholarly work. [See Valencia’s Standards of Scholarship.](#)

**Transformative Assessment:**

The use of assessment information as a tool to communicate the desired change of teaching and learning in a program or institution.

**Triangulation:**

The use of three (or more) sources of information to derive and substantiate an assessment or conclusion.

**Validity:**

The degree to which the results of a study are likely to be true, believable and free of bias. Example: the results of a descriptive study are valid if they truly describe the intended construct/concept.

**Value-Added Assessment:**

The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Can either focus on the individual student (how much better a single student can write at the end than at the beginning of a course) or on a cohort of students (how much better Composition II final papers are-in the aggregate-than beginning Composition I papers). Requires a baseline measurement for comparison.

## References

Angelo, T. A. "Reassessing (and Defining) Assessment." The AAHE Bulletin, 4B (2), November 1995.

Angelo, T. A. & Cross, K. P. (1993). Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers. Jossey-Bass.

Cross, K. P. & Steadman, M. H. (1996). Classroom Research: Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Jossey-Bass.

Leskes, A. (2002). "Beyond Confusion: An Assessment Glossary." American Association of Colleges and Universities.

Pohl, Michael, for the QSITE Higher Order Thinking Skills Online Course 2000, "Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy Revised," oz-TeacherNet: <http://rite.ed.qut.au/oz-teachernet/training/bloom.html>.

Swing, R. Institutional Research Basics: An Overview of Assessment in Higher Education. <http://www.panda.auburn.edu/sair/2-0220-WK.pdf>

Teacher Evaluation Kit Glossary <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/glossary/glos-a-d.htm>

Valencia Community College Office of Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning.

Wiggins, Grant. Online Resource Glossary: Assessment Glossary: <http://www.uwlax.edu/provost/assessment/A-glossary.htm>.