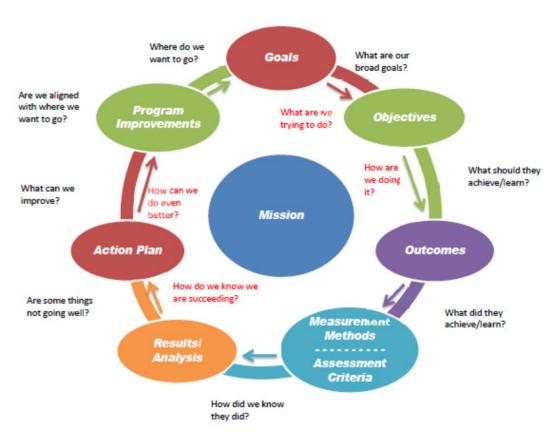NOTE: References herein to the various levels of assessment (e.g., ILOs, PLOs, CLOs, GLOs, SLOs) pertain to Student Learning Outcomes at the various levels of institution, program, college, GenEd, and Courses.

Academic Assessment
Standard Terms and Definitions A ~ Z
October 2012

Assessment Cycle Promoting Institutional Effectiveness[1]

Assessment: An ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.[2]

Assessment Cycle: An ongoing circular process of assessing student learning outcomes beginning with establishing goals and objectives, establishing benchmarks and measurement methods, collecting data to determine if the goals and objectives have been met, analyzing the results, making an action plan to improve student learning. This is known "Closing-the-Loop" as the final stage of the cycle.

Authentic assessment: An assessment process similar to or embedded in relevant real-

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[1] Assessment Primer. University of Connecticut
[2] Thomas A. Angelo: (AAHE Bulletin, November 1995

world activities. Authentic assessment is on the rise. Assessment is moving from standardized tests to performance-based assessment. Tests are becoming more complex, authentic, and real- world in character. They go beyond multiple-choice questions and ask students to write, show steps as they solve problems, and demonstrate creativity in tasks requiring design and analysis.

Blooms Taxonomy: A hierarchical system of ordering thinking skills from lower to higher, with the higher levels including all of the cognitive skills of the lower levels.

Closing-the-Loop: The recurring cycle, and the use of assessment information in curricular decision making is known as closing the loop. Closing the loop is critical to sound assessment practice. It is this process that ties together the phases of assessment planning, data collection, analysis, and decision making. Closing the loop supports curricular decision-making that is sound, defensible, and most likely to show positive change.

College level Student Learning Outcomes (CLOs): College-level assessment means we look at learning at the college or school level (not just course level or program level) and ask what are the common learning experiences of a student receiving a degree from any of the major programs offered by a college or school.

Direct Assessment: Assessment based on an analysis of student behaviors or products in which they demonstrate how well they have mastered learning outcomes.

Examples of measures for Direct Assessment of Student Learning:

1. Published Tests
2. Locally-Developed Tests
3. Embedded Assignments and Course Activities
4. Portfolios
5. Collective Portfolios
6. Projects

Educational Objectives: The knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions students are expected to acquire as a result of completing your academic program. Objectives are sometimes treated as synonymous with outcomes, though outcomes are usually more detailed, behavioral in nature, and stated in precise operational terms.

Formative assessment: Assessment designed to give feedback to improve what is being assessed, or assessment of students at an intermediate stage of learning.

General Education level Student Learning Outcomes (GLOs): A set of GenEd learning outcomes that is a comprehensive list of the most important knowledge, skills, and values students learn in the GE curriculum. The outcomes are reasonable and describe how students can demonstrate learning. Faculty members agree on explicit criteria, such as rubrics, for assessing students' mastery and have identified exemplars of student performance at varying levels for each outcome. General Education Learning Outcomes should be consistent with campus mission, consistent with WASC expectations, and a

reasonably short list of outcomes that faculty value-not just a master list of all the individual GE course learning outcomes.[3]

Goals: General statements about knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values expected in graduates. *See illustration of the Assessment Cycle on page 1.*

Indirect Assessment: Assessment based on an analysis of reported perceptions about student mastery of learning outcomes. The perceptions may be self-reports by students, or they may be made by others, such as alumni, fieldwork supervisors, employers, or faculty.

Examples of measures for Indirect Assessment of Student Learning:

1. Student surveys & focus groups
2. Alumni surveys
3. Employer surveys
4. Job placement data
5. Acceptance by graduate programs
6. Exit interviews

Institutional level Student Learning Outcomes (ILOs): Institutional-level assessment means we look at learning on the institutional level (not just program or individual student or course level) and ask what *all* the learning experiences of a degree *add up* to, at what *standard* of performance (results). The University of Guam has seven ILOs:

The expected fundamental knowledge, skills, and values that the University of Guam student will have demonstrated upon completion of *any* degree are:

- Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving
- Mastery of quantitative analysis
- Effective oral and written communication
- Understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse people, ideas and values in a democratic context
- Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology
- An appreciation of the arts and sciences
- An interest in personal development and lifelong learning

Typical assessment questions at this level[4]:

◈ *What do the institution's educational programs add up to in terms of student learning?*

◈ *How well are the institution's goals and outcomes for student learning being achieved?*

◈ *How much have our students learned over their college years?*

◈ *How well does the institution educate students for the complexities of the twenty-first century?*

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[3] Allen, M, California State University, Bakersfield; WASC

[4] Miller R. and Leskes A. 2005. *Levels of Assessment, From the Student to the Institution*

◇ *What evidence is there that the institution is fulfilling its educational mission?*

◇ *How can institutional effectiveness be demonstrated authentically to external stakeholders?*

Learning outcome: A clear, concise statement that describes how students can demonstrate their mastery of an institutional, program, or course goal.

Longitudinal: Longitudinal assessment puts the attention more squarely on the same student cohort's experiences in attending a particular institution over several years. Growth models enable the identification of individual student growth patterns that can take into account how earlier circumstances (e.g., previous skill levels, classrooms environments and teachers) affect students' current learning outcomes. Assessments of growth in student achievement over time provide a way of recognizing that schools serve students who start at different places and progress at different rates.[5]

Mission: a holistic vision of the values and philosophy of an entity.

Example of a Mission Statement:

"The mission of the College of Agriculture is to provide students with the educational experiences and environment that promote discipline competence; the capacity to attain career success in agriculture, food, or related professions; and a sense of civic responsibility."

Objectives: see Learning Objectives.

Outcomes: Clear, concise statements that describe how students can demonstrate their mastery of stated goals.

Program level Student Learning Outcomes (PLOs): Program-level assessment means we look at learning on the program level (not just individual student or course level) and ask what *all* the learning experiences of a program *add up* to, at what *standard* of performance (results).

Typical assessment questions at this level[4]:

◇ *Do the program's courses, individually and collectively, contribute to its outcomes as planned?*

◇ *How well does the program fulfill its purposes in the entire curriculum?*

◇ *How well do the program's sub-categories (e.g., distributive requirements in general education) contribute to the overall purposes?*

◇ *Does the program's design resonate with its expected outcomes?*

◇ *Are the courses organized in a coherent manner to allow for cumulative learning?*

◇ *Does the program advance institution-wide goals as planned?*

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[5] Longitudinal Student Assessment: A Growth Model for Hawai'i's K-12 Students.2006.

Rubrics: can be used to holistically score any product or performance such as essays, portfolios, recitals, oral exams, research reports, etc. A detailed scoring rubric that delineates criteria used to discriminate among levels is developed and used for scoring. Generally two raters are used to review each product and a third rater is employed to resolve discrepancies.

Qualitative assessment: Assessment findings are verbal descriptions of what was discovered, rather than numerical scores.

Quantitative assessment: Assessment findings are summarized with a number that indicates the extent of learning.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): A comprehensive list of the most important knowledge, skills, and values students learn in a course or GenEd curriculum, or in a major program or within a college or institution. Outcome statements should specify what students do to demonstrate their learning, therefore they can be measured.

Typical assessment questions at this level[4]:

- *How well is the class collectively achieving the course's content outcomes and objectives (at any one point, at the end)? How well is the class collectively achieving general or transferable learning outcomes and objectives?*
- *Are the assignments helping students achieve the expected level of knowledge or skills?*
- *How well are students prepared for the following courses in the sequence?*
- *Is the course level appropriately targeted for the ability(ies) of the students when they begin?*
- *With what degree of consistency do different sections of a course achieve similar outcomes?*
- *How well is the course fulfilling its purpose in a larger curriculum?*

Examples of Student Learning Outcomes:

Goal: Ethics

- ➢ *Learning Outcome: Students articulate an individual code of ethics and apply it to personal decisions of integrity.*

Goal: Collaboration/Teamwork

- ➢ *Learning Outcome: Students describe and assume personal responsibility in collaborative endeavors, and respect and support the contributions of others.*

Summative assessment: Assessment designed to provide an evaluative summary, or assessment that occurs as students are about to complete the program being assessed.

University Assessment Committee (UAC): Committee with broad campus representation formulated to facilitate the systematizing of assessment on an institutional level through, among other activities or actions, regularizing deadlines for program units to report on assessment plans, assessment reports, and "closing the loop" actions.; oversee assessment at all levels at the University of Guam; to provide opportunities for training of faculty in assessment; to support assessment of the General Education program; to develop and oversee the assessment of University-wide student learning outcomes (SLOs) that should be linked to program and course SLOs ; to monitor University assessment activities such as program review and make recommendations to the appropriate body; to advise the University on assessment matters

TracDat: TracDat is a flexible, web-based enterprise solution that provides the critical framework for institutional assessment, strategic planning, accreditation, and quality improvement processes at the college, university or across an entire system. TracDat is a complete process application for managing continuous improvement throughout academic and nonacademic areas of higher education institutions. TracDat is a platform for programs to form and store assessment plans, SLOs, PLOs, curriculum mapping, assign tasks, identify assessment benchmarks, report results, and identify actions for closing-the-loop. To access UOG's TracDat account use https://uog.tracdat.com/tracdat/faces/index.jsp

Triangulation: Involves the collection of data via multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome. Triangulation strategies involve utilizing at least three different assessment approaches to gathering data. Triangulating methods of analysis is commonly recommended to overcome validity problems.[6]

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[6] Triangulation in Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. Karen H Nelson 2010.

UOG Expected Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
December 2008

Some of the expected fundamental knowledge, skills, and values that the University of Guam student will have demonstrated upon completion of *any* degree are:

- Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving
- Mastery of quantitative analysis
- Effective oral and written communication
- Understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse people, ideas and values in a democratic context
- Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology
- An appreciation of the arts and sciences
- An interest in personal development and lifelong learning

Graduation Proficiency – External Validation

In November 2011, the WASC Commission approved the first stage of its accreditation redesign process. A core value underlying the Commission action is the increased focus on student success and student learning as the center of the accrediting process. Institutions are expected to be able to more clearly articulate the meaning and rigor of all degrees offered and to assure that all undergraduate degrees provide, among other things, demonstration of proficiencies in at least five areas commonly expected of all baccalaureate graduates. These proficiencies have long been a part of accreditation standards, and the Commission is building on CFR 2.2a by calling for these proficiencies to be demonstrated in the capacities of the institution's graduates. The following five proficiencies were drawn from the larger list of expectations sited in 2.2a:

- College-level written communication
- College-level oral communication
- College-level quantitative skills
- Habit of critical thinking
- Information literacy.[7]

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[7] *WASC Resource Fair Guide 2012*

Linking ILOs, CLOs, PLOs, GLOs, and SLOs: An Example

University Level: UOG degree
ILO: *Upon completion of degree program, a student shall demonstrate effective oral and written communication*

College/School Level: SBPA majors
CLO (optional):

GenEd Level: Essential Skills
GLO: *Students demonstrate an ability to clearly communicate complex thoughts and emotions through reading, writing, speaking and listening.*

Program Level: Bachelor of Business Admin in Accounting (BBAA)
PLO: *Demonstrates and ability to communicate relevant financial and non-financial information effectively*

Course Level: BA200: Principles of Financial Accounting
SLO: Demonstrates the ability to communicate relevant financial and non-financial information effectively;

Course Level: EN110
SLOs: *By the completion of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to:*
1) Achieve clarity and precision in writing, using standard mechanical and grammatical conventions of written English
2) Formulate a clear thesis statement, whether implicit or explicit, and support it cohesively with evidence,
examples, and explanations
3) Think critically and articulate clearly their positions on issues, texts, and media, paraphrasing and summarizing where appropriate
4)Recognize and use a variety of rhetorical approaches or strategies in English, including, but not limited to, narration/description, classification/comparison-contrast, and argument/persuasion
5) Draw on their own backgrounds and experience, as well as current authoritative and credible written or media materials, in the performance of writing tasks
6) Work with the instructor and peers to review, revise, and edit their writing effectively
7) Understand and practice the writing process from topic choice to final edit