



**Glossary of General & Assessment Terms
And
Accrediting & Credentialing Organizations**

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GCU Glossary of General & Assessment Terms

AAC – Academic Affairs Committee

The AAC is a GCU-working committee comprised of academic leadership and faculty that recommend and approve new policies and procedures affecting the delivery of academic services and curricula. It is a key component of faculty governance on campus.

Accreditation

The designation that an institution earns indicating that it functions appropriately with respect to its resources, programs, and services. The accrediting association, often comprised of peers, is recognized as the external monitor. Maintaining fully accredited status ensures that the university remains in compliance with federal expectations and continues to receive federal funding.

Alignment

The logical connection between learning outcomes and curricular scope, organization, and content. Curriculum mapping is an example of the alignment process.

ALT – Academic Leadership Team

The ALT is a GCU academic body comprised of individuals representing the highest levels of leadership from each college and academic service. This group oversees the policies, procedures, and processes that ensure academic and institutional integrity.

AM&T Report – Academic Metrics and Trends Report

The AM&T Report is a quantitative report generated biweekly by the Center for Institutional Effectiveness. The report contains key student performance data disaggregated at the course level, tracking student pass rates, withdraw rates, failure rates, persistence, retention, and a number of other statistics.

Analytic Rubric

A rubric that articulates and measures levels of performance or competencies for a set of criteria. Each criterion is scored individually. An analytical rubric is in contrast to a holistic rubric.

Anchor Sample

A student artifact that represents a specific level of performance. An anchor sample is used by normed readers to assess student work, usually comparing the student's performance to the anchor sample.

Andragogy

The art and science of teaching and learning with a focus on adult learners.

APL – Academic Program Lifecycle

The APL refers to the steps in the process that a program undergoes from viability to evaluation.

Artifact

A student work product that is assessed to evaluate the level of competency mastery.

ASL – Assessment of Student Learning

The ASL is GCU’s campus-wide assessment of student learning process. It is conducted by the Office of Assessment, applied to all levels, and covers key University mission critical competencies.

Assessment

The collection and analysis of information about student learning and institutional effectiveness.

- Assessment is best accomplished through multiple means. No single measure can adequately capture complex constructs such as teaching, student learning, or institutional effectiveness.
- Assessment of student learning can be quantitative or qualitative but is most often a combination of both.
- Assessment of institutional effectiveness is most often quantitative, although at times qualitative data might be collected.
- Assessment is an essential component of the continuous improvement process and is undertaken at GCU for two reasons: first and most importantly, to improve student learning; and second, to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of institutional systems and processes (most often referred to as “institutional effectiveness”).

Assessment Findings

Data that have been collected to serve as evidence of student learning.

Assessment Instrument

A tool used to evaluate assignments, activities, artifacts, or events that support outcomes or objectives. These can be measurement tools such as rubrics, standardized tests, locally designed tests, exit interviews, or student, alumni, or staff surveys.

Assessment Methods

Tools or instruments used for measuring student learning. Direct measures demonstrate student performance of objectives and can include research essays, oral presentations, projects, performances, portfolios, examinations, case study analyses, and internships. Indirect methods, from which student perception is assessed, include surveys and interviews.

Assessment Plan

A document that outlines assessment activities, including identifying learning outcomes or program competencies, assessment measures, and target mastery goals.

Authentic Assessment

A form of assessment that measures a student's ability to demonstrate meaningful application of skills and knowledge. Authentic assessment usually consists of a task that students perform, as opposed to taking an exam. This form of assessment can take place repeatedly in order to measure the ability to apply knowledge and skills and meet learning outcomes. Authentic assessment most often utilizes a rubric to measure a student's performance level associated with a learning outcome. Authentic assessment is also called performance-based assessment.

Automated Rubric

This analytic rubric is a feedback instrument that can be accessed and used by the instructor directly from the Learning Management System (LMS), allowing faculty to score the work product in the system. The LMS stores the level of competency in a database. Rubrics provide important pieces of data in most college assessment plans.

BMA – Benchmark Assignments

Assessments or measurements that evaluate student performance, knowledge, or skills relative to a defined, explicit set of learning outcomes or goals. Among the various types/levels of benchmarks are the following: course, programmatic, university.

Blind Review

A method whereby normed readers review and assess artifacts from which all identifiers have been removed. This technique is used in GCU's annual ASL process.

CD – Curriculum Developer

Curriculum developers are part of the Grand Canyon Education (GCE), Curriculum Design and Development (CDD), and work on course revisions and new course development.

CDD – Curriculum Design and Development

CDD is a professional services group at GCE that assists the colleges in program design and course development.

CDT – Course Design Tool

CDD uses the CDT within xRM for the management of courses across various delivery methods.

CLA+ – Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus

A national web-based assessment designed to assess critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. The CLA+ is offered in the fall to freshmen and in the spring to seniors. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies are available. Over 500

institutions have participated in the CLA and CLA+.

<http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/>

Co-Curricula

Co-Curricula are activities and learning experiences, both formal and informal, that complement and align to the academic curriculum and support the University mission and vision.

Cohort

A group of students that begin and usually move through a program together.

Competencies

The specific, measurable knowledge, skills, or abilities that students should be able to demonstrate after completing a particular course or a set of courses.

Competency Mastery

The evaluation that student work meets or exceeds targets set for an assessed competency.

Cross-Sectional Study

A study in which the performance of a specified individual or group is observed at one point in time. The CLA+ test conducts a cross-sectional study of freshmen in the fall and seniors in the spring of every year.

CRT – Criterion-Referenced Test

A testing method by which scores are based on specific, articulated criteria. The CRT, also called standards-based assessment, is in contrast to norm-referenced tests (NRT) that compare an individual score against a group.

Culture of Assessment

An institutional characteristic that shows evidence for valuing and engaging in assessment for ongoing improvement.

Curriculum Map

A matrix that documents the connection between outcomes (what students will be able to do or demonstrate as a result of their studies) and where the curriculum addresses those outcomes. A curriculum map can be an analytic tool for tracking and aligning curriculum content to learning outcomes. GCU uses the curriculum map to track the location of benchmark assignments in programs and align them to learning competencies.

DCO – Detailed Course Outline

A document created by CDD and the colleges that provides an outline or a framework for the development of a new course. DCOs are frequently started during the program design process,

where they bridge programmatic competencies and course objectives, and completed in preparation for the development of the syllabus.

Direct Measure

An assessment method that utilizes student work to demonstrate competency in specific student learning outcomes. Direct measures include:

- Student writing (e.g., essays or papers)
- Capstone course projects
- Supervisor observations
- Portfolios
- Standardized or local examinations

Domains

The educational tracks, themes, and expectations in a particular course or set of courses. Specifically, a domain is a key thematic element that runs throughout a program, including domains derived from the mission statement. Domains are used at GCU primarily in the Program Designs and Maps that are produced for each program/Program of Study through CDD.

Effectiveness

The degree to which programs, events, activities or institutions achieve intended results and purposes.

Embedded Assessment

A form of assessment that gathers information on proficiency through regular activities. When assessment is embedded, it is authentic, unobtrusive, and an ongoing part of the teaching-learning or operational process.

EOCS – End of Course Survey

The EOCS is offered to all GCU students at the end of each course to assess satisfaction with curriculum, instruction, and student services.

EOPS – End of Program Survey

The EOPS is offered all GCU students at the completion of a Program of Study to assess overall satisfaction, career preparation, and employment outlook.

FEOCS – Faculty End of Course Survey

The FEOCS is offered to all GCU faculty at the end of each course to assess satisfaction with curriculum, faculty services, and technical support.

Formative Assessment

An assessment method that uses assessment information as immediate feedback to improve instruction and student performance and is therefore used by individual faculty members in ongoing activities (e.g. Classroom Assessment Techniques).

GCE – Grand Canyon Education

GCE operates as a third-party provider of educational and related services to GCU.

Goals

The educational expectations of a planned program or set of programs, such as the goals of a particular college or the overall GCU goals. The term is associated primarily with program- and institutional-level assessment.

Holistic Rubric

A rubric that assigns a level of performance by measuring performance across multiple criteria as a whole. It does not give single scores for each criterion. A holistic rubric is in contrast to an analytic rubric.

Holistic Scoring

A method of obtaining a score that results from an overall judgment of performance using specified criteria.

IAP – Improvement Action Plan

IAPs are based on the collaborative analysis and interpretation of Assessment Findings. They include specific initiatives designed to improve performance, the success indicator to demonstrate improvement, the personnel responsible for implementing the improvement, and the time period involved.

ICS – Initial Course Survey

The ICS is a survey offered to GCU students in the middle of their first course to assess satisfaction with student services and instruction.

ID – Instructional Designer

Instructional designers are part of GCE's CDD and work on program revisions and new program development.

Indirect Measure

A method that assesses student opinion or perception rather than knowledge, skills, or abilities. Indirect measures include:

- Exit interviews
- Course grades
- Focus groups
- Participation rates

- Surveys

Institutional Effectiveness

The measure of an organization's achievement of articulated goals.

Inter-Reader Agreement

The extent to which two or more scorers or readers reach consensus in assessment.

LMS – Learning Management System

The web-based interface that facilitates classes. Content is presented, forums are used for asynchronous communication, and assignments and quizzes are collected and completed.

Learning Outcomes *or* Student Learning Outcomes

The expected learning outcomes of an educational experience or a series of educational experiences (assignment outcomes, course outcomes, and program outcomes). Learning outcomes are most often associated with course- and program-level assessment.

Likert Scale

A method used in questionnaires and surveys to prompt a respondent to express a view on a statement being presented, thereby signaling his or her level of agreement or disagreement with the statement presented.

Longitudinal Study

A study in which a specified individual or group is followed over a period of time to discover changes that may be attributable to the influence of the educational experience.

LC – LoudCloud

LoudCloud is GCU's Learning Management System (LMS).

Measurement Tool

Any standardized method used to collect data for assessing outcomes.

Mid-Semester Survey

The Mid-Semester Survey is offered to traditional GCU students to provide an opportunity for mid-semester feedback about their academic, student services, and engagement experiences.

Mission Statement

A statement that articulates an organization's essential nature, its values, and its work.

Norming

The process by which assessment readers learn to apply rubric criteria consistently to student work products and to align their scoring.

NRT – Norm-Referenced Test

A testing method by which an individual's score is compared to peer scores. It contrasts with criterion-referenced tests (CRT), where scores are based on specific criteria.

NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement

The NSSE is a survey instrument that collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

<http://nsse.iub.edu/>

Objective Measure

Data that avoid bias from observers' feelings, interpretations, or other extraneous factors.

Objectives

The expected learning outcomes of planned educational experiences; in other words, the skills and knowledge that students should develop and demonstrate. The term is primarily associated with course-level assessment.

Outcome-Based Education

An educational approach or philosophy focusing on student learning that is achieved and assessed utilizing a system of established goals or learning outcomes.

PDD – Program Design Document

The PDD provides a high-level overview of a program, which includes the mission-critical competencies, programmatic domains and competencies, Professional Standards, a list of the courses in the program, and how the competencies are assessed.

PDT – Program Design Tool

CDD uses the PDT within xRM for the management of programs across the University.

Pedagogy

The art and science of how something is taught and how students learn it. Pedagogy refers to the approach to teaching and learning, the way the content is delivered, and what students learn as a result of the process.

Performance-Based Assessment

Also called authentic assessment, performance-based assessment uses authentic tasks to measure performance.

Portfolios

A systematic and organized collection of a student's work that exhibits to others the direct evidence of a student's efforts, achievements, and progress over a period of time.

POS – Program of Study

The POS provides a general description of an academic program, the preferred sequence of program major courses, their descriptions and credit values.

Programmatic Assessment

Program analysis of student performance is an on-going annual process through a review of the benchmark assessments of expected learning outcomes. The analysis and interpretation of programmatic assessment data guide improvement action plans, inform curricular and instructional changes, and further development to more effectively meet student needs. The ultimate goal of this effort is to improve student learning, students' overall university experience, and their future success.

Program Review

Program efficacy and performance are assessed and evaluated in a recursive three-, five-, or six-year cycle which culminates in a formal Program Review. Program Review assesses data gathered from multiple indicators appropriate to a program's mission and educational purposes, and concomitant with student success and external requirements. Ongoing assessment, analysis, and improvement actions occur during the cycle, all of which provide evidence for the final review.

PSEC – Program Standards and Evaluation Committee

The PSEC is comprised of college faculty and administrators who gather to discuss, prepare, and vet proposals for new academic programs. The PSEC reviews and evaluates program designs and coursework for each program and makes recommendations and/or modifications based on that review. The PSEC considers proposals for all new courses and programs of study and makes recommendations to college leadership.

Qualitative Data

Non-numeric information, such as conversation, text, audio, or video.

Quantitative Data

Numeric information including quantities, percentages, and statistics.

Reliability

The extent to which a set of results can be generalized and repeated over time, across tasks, and among interpreters. Reliability indicates how consistently assessment procedures measure their specified target with high levels of agreement.

Rubric

A scoring and instructional tool used to assess student performance using a task-specific range or set of criteria. A rubric is used to measure student performance against this pre-determined set of criteria and contains the essential criteria for the task and levels of performance (i.e., from low to high) for each criterion.

Sample

A defined subset of the population based on defined criteria.

Scaffolding

An instructional technique in which a complex task is divided into smaller tasks within a single course or throughout an entire Program of Study to accomplish the reinforcement and mastery of desired learning outcomes.

SME – Subject Matter Expert

An individual with authoritative knowledge, expertise, and/or skill in an academic area. SMEs collaborate in the development of course- and program-level curricula.

SSC – Student Services Counselor

An individual who works with current and prospective students to advise them on degree program requirements, course selection, and financial processing.

Standard of Performance

A specific expectation of student performance that shows progress toward a learning outcome.

Status Report

Audit conducted at pre-determined intervals post submission of an Improvement Action Plan, that indicates the progress of that plan.

Student Artifact

A sample of a student work product, such as an essay or subject paper.

Student Learning Outcomes *or* Learning Outcomes

The expected learning outcomes of an educational experience or a series of educational experiences (assignment outcomes, course outcomes, program outcomes). Learning outcomes are most often associated with course and program-level assessment.

Subjective Measure

Data that rely on opinion or judgment.

Summative Assessment

An assessment method that is culminating and does not inform the immediate learning experience. The goal of summative assessment is to make a judgment of student competency after an instructional phase is complete. A department or program would conduct summative assessment at the completion of a program to ensure students have met the program goals and objectives (e.g. Capstone).

Target

The level of student performance expected for an outcome. GCU uses acceptable and ideal target performance in programmatic assessment. Targets identify the percentage of students expected to meet or exceed a specified score.

Taskstream AMS (Accountability Management System)

Taskstream is a web-based system for managing and tracking programmatic assessment. Used by each college, Taskstream AMS has provided a means for curriculum mapping, recording assessment plans and findings, and tracking improvement actions plans and status reports. GCU is transitioning to an internal system in the near future.

Triangulation

A method of data collection using multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome.

UAC – University Assessment Committee

The UAC identifies assessment goals for the University, provides discussion and assistance in the development of assessment tools, and assists with creating a culture of assessment at GCU. The membership of this committee is representative of the diversity of GCU's colleges and departments. The individual committee members work collaboratively to identify and develop assessment processes and serve as liaisons in communicating assessment strategies and building a culture of assessment in their respective colleges or departments.

UC – University Counselor

An individual who is typically the first and primary point of contact for new and prospective students. The UC helps students to navigate the application and matriculation processes and assists students with initial course enrollments.

UBD – Understanding by Design

UBD is an instructional design model based on reverse design that focuses on student understanding by beginning with desired outcomes and working backwards through curriculum design, assessment development, and classroom instruction. Used to determine programmatic outcomes.

University Mission-Critical Competencies

The Mission-critical competencies are an articulation of the core skills Grand Canyon University expects of all students, regardless of college, program, or level, upon completion of a degree. These expectations reflect the Christian liberal arts nature of GCU's educational experience and demonstrate the connection of all University programs of study and the courses that make up those programs, to a Christian liberal arts heritage. These competencies include:

- Effective Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Christian Worldview

- Leadership
- Global Awareness, Perspectives and Ethics

Validity

The degree to which evidence or results support a specific interpretation of test scores or results. Validity is a concept that defines quality in assessment. It addresses the extent to which assessment methods actually measure what is intended and provide accurate information that supports its intended purpose.

Value-Added

The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or by the completion of a degree. Measurement of value-added can focus on the individual student (how much better a student can write, for example, at the end than at the beginning) or on a cohort of students (i.e., senior papers that contain more sophisticated writing skills than freshmen papers). A baseline measurement is required for comparison.

xRM

The project management system used to track progress, lifecycles, data, and metrics in order to manage projects and improve business practices. CDD uses xRM to track course development projects and program design projects. GCU manages Programmatic Assessment and Program Review in xRM.

Accrediting & Credentialing Organizations

ABET – Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology

ABET accreditation provides assurance that a college or university program meets the quality standards of the profession for which that program prepares graduates. ABET accredits disciplines of applied and natural science, computing, engineering, and engineering technology programs at colleges and universities. ABET accredits programs, not institutions, and provides specialized accreditation for post-secondary programs within degree-granting institutions already recognized by national or regional institutional accreditation agencies or national education authorities worldwide. <https://www.abet.org/>

AAQEP – Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation

AAQEP promotes excellent, effective, and innovative educator preparation that is committed to evidence-based improvement and enjoys a high degree of community engagement and public confidence. AAQEP leverages credible evidence, technological advances, and innovations in quality assurance/accreditation to provide transparent, understandable reports on program quality and to foster innovation and improvement. <https://aaqep.org/>

ACBSP – Accreditation Council for Collegiate Business Schools & Programs

ACBSP, founded in 1988, was created by its members to fulfill a need for specialized accreditation by institutions of higher education with business schools and programs. www.acbsp.org/page/main

ATS – The Association of Theological Schools

More than 270 graduate schools of theology in the United States and Canada form The Association of Theological Schools. Member schools conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and for teaching and research in the theological disciplines. <http://www.ats.edu/>

CAATE – The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education

CAATE produces the Academic Accreditation of Professional Athletic Training Programs Standards. CAATE strives to assure accreditation excellence across the continuum of AT Education enhancing clinical practice. <http://www.caate.net/>

CACREP – Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

CACREP accredits master's and doctoral degree programs in counseling and its specialties that are offered by colleges and universities in the United States and throughout the world. CACREP's mission is to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through the development of preparation standards; the encouragement of excellence in program development; and the accreditation of professional preparation programs. <https://www.cacrep.org/>

CAE – Center of Academic Excellence

CAE is a recognition by the National Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security. This designation is given to institutions who meet the rigor and hands-on experience cybersecurity requirements as laid out by the NSA and DHS. Schools are designated after meeting stringent criteria and may elect to specialize in several possible focus areas. CAE-CD institutions receive formal recognition from the U.S. Government for participating in the program. Recognition is program specific. <https://www.nsa.gov/resources/students-educators/centers-academic-excellence/>

CCNE – Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

CCNE is an autonomous accrediting agency contributing to the improvement of the public's health. The commission ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency programs in nursing. It also serves the public interest by assessing and identifying programs that engage in effective educational practices. <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation>

CHEA – The Council for Higher Education Accreditation

CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA serves as a national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation. <https://www.chea.org/>

CSWE – Council of Social Work Education

CSWE is the national association representing social work education in the United States that ensures and enhances the quality of social work education for a professional practice that promotes individual, family, and community well-being, and social and economic justice. CSWE pursues this mission in higher education by setting and maintaining national accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's degree programs in social work, by promoting faculty development, by engaging in interprofessional and international collaborations, and by advocating for social work education and research. <https://www.cswe.org/>

HLC – Higher Learning Commission

HLC is an independent corporation that was founded in 1895 as one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. HLC accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region, which includes the following 19 states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. <https://www.hlcommission.org/About-HLC/about-hlc.html>

NASAC – National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission

NASAC is an academic accreditation organization for higher education addiction studies programs. The organization represents addiction-focused major and minor programs,

educators, and practitioners at the Associate, Bachelor's, Master's, Post-Grad, and Doctoral levels. <https://nasacaccreditation.org/>

NOAA – National Office for Arts Accreditation

NOAA is the name given to the staff and facilities shared by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), and the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). In addition to the work of these four accrediting bodies, NOAA manages these cooperative efforts that involve all four accrediting bodies, the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project, the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA), and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS).

<https://www.arts-accredit.org/national-office-for-arts-accreditation/>