

# NLC Common Assessment Language

**Active Learning** – an approach to instruction in which students engage in the material they study through reading, writing, discussion, and reflection. It can also involve hand-on approaches.

**Action plan** – a plan of actions taken to improve a program or assessment process based on the analysis of results.

**Action Research** – an ongoing and cumulative inquiry into classroom instruction by the classroom teacher. Starts with premise of something to measure, determine, or improve.

**Artifact** – an object produced by a student to indicate attainment of a skill or knowledge. Often stored for future assessment.

**Assessment** – the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Marchese, 1987; Palomba & Banta 1999).

**Assessment plan** – a document which identifies expected outcomes for a program and outlines how and when the identified outcomes will be assessed.

**Asynchronous learning** - instruction and learning that does not take place at the same time by all students enrolled in a course. Usually applies to online learning that is provided through a course management system and is accessed and completed by individual students within a specified timeframe. See synchronous learning.

**Authentic assessment** – assessment that provides a realistic task, simulation, or problem related to the standard being measured.

**Authentic learning** – learning that is immersed in relevant, real-world contexts. In relations to Bloom’s Taxonomy, authentic learning refers to understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

**Baseline** – a minimum or starting point used for comparisons.

**Benchmark** – a defined standard or measure that serves as a point of reference by which performance is measured. Often compared to similar programs and institutions with similar demographics and inputs.

**CANVAS** – a learning management system supported by INSTRUCTURE and the official system used by Alamo Colleges.

**Blended learning (Hybrid)** – a course that has a combination of face-to-face delivery combined with online delivery using the college's current content management system.

**Bloom's Taxonomy** – a taxonomy of terms used to describe objectives. Published in *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* by Charles Bloom in 1965. It initially had these six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In [2001 it was revised](#).



Bloom's Taxonomy By Kristina Ia  
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**Classroom level assessment** – assessment to determine the extent to which a specific course is achieving its learning goals, as well as, assessment to improve teaching of specific courses or segments within courses.

**Classroom assessment techniques (CATS)** – tools that assist in the continuous monitoring of student learning. Provides faculty feedback about their effectiveness as teachers. Formative learning assessment.

**Core competencies** - statements of intended results of student experiences and learning across courses, programs, and degrees. See also NLC Core Competencies

**Course** – a defined unit of instruction for credit. Basic description of course content can be found in the college course catalog.

**Criterion Referenced Assessment** – assessment that has a predetermined level for expected and acceptable attainment.

**Curriculum Map** - a matrix representation of a program's learning outcomes showing where they are taught and/or assessed within the program.

**Data** – raw statistics or numbers generated from an assessment activity.

**Direct assessment** - using samples of student work produced in class and programs to assess student learning.

**External assessment** – an assessment instrument developed by an entity external to the organization that is using the assessment. Usually, these assessments are summative and standardized.

**Goal, Unit** - a formulated purpose or aim that a department or its subunit(s) intends to achieve in support of the college mission.

**Indirect Assessment** – using measures that imply that learning has taken place (e.g. student perceptions of learning through surveying/focus groups, attendance, retention, transfer) but do not specifically demonstrate that learning or skill.

**E – Gradebook** – an electronic gradebook.

[Formative assessment](#) – assessment used to immediately determine whether students have learned what the instructor intended them to learn. Can be used in different stages of a student's academic path to improve student learning.

**Institutional effectiveness** – assessment to determine the extent to which a college is achieving its mission.

**Instructional design** – a means of organizing learning and providing objective-based methodologies for conveying knowledge.

**Instructional objectives** – measurable learning achievements intended to show what students are incrementally learning and the level they must reach to achieve a broader learning outcome.

**Instructional technology** – technology and software used to assist in learning and instruction.

**Learning objective** – See instructional objectives.

**Learning outcomes** – a statement of what a student should understand and be able to perform as a result of what the student has learned in a course or program.

**Metric** – a standard of measurement.

**Mission Statement** - a concise statement outlining the purpose of a program.

**NLC Core Competencies** –

**Critical Thinking Skills:** The NLC core curriculum will advance students' critical thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

**Communication Skills:** The NLC core curriculum will advance students' effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

**Empirical and Quantitative Skills:** The NLC core curriculum will advance students' ability to manipulate and analyze numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.

**Teamwork:** The NLC core curriculum will advance students' ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

**Personal Responsibility:** The NLC core curriculum will advance students' ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision making.

**Social Responsibility:** The NLC core curriculum will advance the students' intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

**Objective (Outcomes), Unit Plan** – a specific statement that outlines what the unit will perform/implement in order to achieve the unit goal.

**Performance indicator**– a description of an observable or measurable criteria that represents the achievement (or not) of an outcome.

**Placement assessment** – an assessment that students upon entry into Alamo Colleges are required to take to determine if they are ready for college level course work.

[Portfolios for Assessment](#) - assessment portfolios are purposeful collections of student works that exhibit effort, progress and achievement. Assessment portfolios should be based on student learning outcomes / program outcomes; include documentation that students have demonstrated each outcome; be scored by the instructor with a common rubric.

**Post-test** – an assessment given to students to determine their post-instruction ability to apply knowledge for a specified unit or course. Usually preceded by a pre-test that allows for comparison a student’s pre-to-post test scores.

**Pre-test** – an assessment given to students to determine their starting place in applying knowledge for a specified unit or course.

**Program** – in the context of this committee, program refers to a degree offered by NLC; AA, AS, AAT.

**Program level assessment** – assessment to determine the extent to which students in an academic program can demonstrate the learning outcomes for that program. Ideally, program goals should serve as the basis for program level assessment.

**Program outcomes** – an assessment to determine the extent to which students in an academic program can demonstrate the competencies defined for that program. Integrated learning over the course of the entire program.

**Qualitative assessment** – an assessment method that relies on narrative description.

**Quantitative assessment** – an assessment method that relies on numerical scores or ratings.

**Reliability** - the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results.

[Rubric](#) - a rubric can be defined as a descriptive guideline, a scoring guide or specific pre-established performance criteria. Rubrics are developed to assist teachers in rating qualities of learning outcomes. When provided to students before and during learning, rubrics also assist students to more successfully interpret and anticipate expected levels of performance. See Rubric, CANVAS definition.

**Rubric, CANVAS defined** – an assessment tool for communicating expectations of quality.

**Self-assessment** – an assessment undertaken by students to determine their own level of knowledge or skill.

**Standards** – a set level of accomplishments all students are expected to meet or exceed. Standards can be set at a minimum level and can have different pathways to demonstrate accomplishment.

**Student learning outcomes** – the measure of what a student understands and performs as a result of what the student has learned in a course or program.

[Summative assessment](#) – a measure of the level or proficiency of a student's success at the end of an instructional unit by comparison to a standard. It is cumulative in nature.

**Survey** – an indirect assessment method that asks the user to provide information about their experiences or opinions.

**Synchronous learning** – instruction and learning that takes place at the same time by all students enrolled in a course. Usually applies to online learning that is “real-time.” See asynchronous learning.

**Triangulation** – the use of three or more sources of information to derive and substantiate a conclusion.

**Validity** –the level of how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure.