

## Learning Assessment Glossary

**Learning Assessment** – A process designed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning, where results are used to make improvements in pedagogy.

*Direct Assessment* – Measures of characteristics of student learning (usually an action) that are immediately visible and measurable.

*Indirect Assessment* – Measures of characteristics of student learning that are not immediately visible or measurable, but which can be inferred from related measurable items.

**Core Objectives** – The set of six broad skills - *Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility* – that the THECB has mandated be integrated into all undergraduate core curricula at Texas colleges and universities.

**Curriculum Areas** – The major divisions of general education fields of study – Communication; Mathematics; Life & Physical Sciences; Language, Philosophy, and Culture; Creative Arts; American History; Government/Political Science; Social/Behavioral Science – defined by the THECB.

**Focus Areas** – Components of general education competencies that serve to divide the scope of the competency into several more narrowly-defined concepts. They serve as a bridge for mapping specific course and program learning outcomes to general education competencies.

**General Education Competencies** – The set of broad skills, defined for SAC to include *Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, Personal Responsibility, Leadership, and Performance* that should be developed and mastered by all students completing the general education core curriculum.

**Learning Outcome** – A statement of knowledge, skill, or ability that a student should gain, supplement, or perfect as a result of participating in an activity, course, or program.

**Mapping Categories** – The three categories used in the context of this document to determine how strongly individual, course, and program learning outcomes engage a general education competency.

*Introductory* – A learning outcome, course, or program minimally touches a general education competency, usually in just a single Focus Area.

*Reinforcement* – A learning outcome, course, or program engages multiple Focus Areas of a general education competency in some breadth and/or depth.

*Comprehensive* - A learning outcome, course, or program engages all Focus Areas of a general education competency in significant breadth and depth.

**Measurement Instrument** – Any tool that is used by an instructor (or program) to evaluate the level of attainment of a student learning outcome.

**Program** – Any curriculum at SAC that leads to a degree or a certificate.

**Standard of Mastery** – The minimum level of performance that a student must demonstrate on an assessment instrument in order for an instructor to document attainment of an outcome.

**SAC** – San Antonio College

**SACS-COC** – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges

**Student Artifacts** – The actual examples of work that students submit and against which they are evaluated for attainment of student learning outcomes.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** – Statements of the knowledge, skills, or abilities that students are expected to learn or develop upon completion of a course or program.

*Course-Level* – Very specific, measurable statements of the knowledge, skills, or abilities that students will learn or develop upon completing a specific course. These are the SLOs against which instructors evaluate students each semester.

*Program-Level* – Broader-based statements of the knowledge, skills, or abilities that students will learn or develop by the time they complete a program. Generally, upon completion of an Associate Degree, the general education competencies serve as the backbone for the program learning outcomes.

**THECB** – Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

**Triangulation** – The process of using multiple assessment instruments (both direct and indirect) to validate attainment of learning outcomes.

**Validation (of measurement instrument)** – The process of evaluating whether a measurement instrument is effectively assessing the SLO it purports to measure.

**Validation (of student artifacts)** – The process of evaluating whether a student's performance on a measurement instrument is representative of their mastery of the SLO.