

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment requires that learners apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout the course to address complex, real-world problems. Authentic assessment requires that learners demonstrate the specific competencies and skills that are expected of graduates working in the field or discipline.

Competency

“Competencies represent a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. Fostering these competencies is the object of educational programmes. Competencies are formed in various course units and assessed at different stages. They may be divided in subject-area related competencies (specific to a field of study) and generic competencies (common to any degree course)” ECTS Users’ Guide (2005).

Formative assessment

Formative assessment occurs throughout a course, may be informal or formal, is considered low-stakes, and provides learners with opportunities receive feedback in order to make improvements.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a period of instruction, may be cumulative, considered high-stakes (e.g. final exam) and is used to evaluate student learning and to assign a grade.

KSAs or Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

KSAs refer to the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that an instructor would like students to learn and demonstrate. Knowledge refers to the types of thinking that an instructor wants their students to do or the knowledge that they want them to acquire. Skills refers to abilities instructors want students to be able to perform at a given level. Attitudes refer to the feelings, values, appreciations, motivations, or priorities an instructor wants to stimulate in their students.

Learning Objectives or Goals Learning objectives (sometimes referred to as goals) are broad statements indicating the overall purpose of the course or program and indicate the instructor's overall intention in teaching the course. They are statements that focus on the instructor's intention(s) for teaching. Learning objectives can be phrased "The purpose of this course is to....."

Example: Discipline: English; Goal/Objective: The purpose of this course to develop students' critical reasoning about satiric writing in eighteenth century literature.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are clear statements that indicate "what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after the completion of a process of learning" (Kennedy, 2006, p. 5). They are statements that focus on the learners achievements. Because they are tied to assessment, they only describe the essential learning that students need to demonstrate at the end of a program, course, unit/module, or lesson. With each level, the learning outcomes that students are expected to meet becomes more and more specific. Learning outcomes support the overall goals or objectives of the course/program.

Example: Discipline: English; Learning outcome: By the end of the unit, students will be able to analyze the relationship between the language of satire to literary form by closely examining the eighteenth century texts in this course.

Unit

A unit (sometimes referred to as a module) of instruction focuses on a particular topic, theme, stage in a process. A unit or module can vary in length and depends entirely on the time required by learner to achieve the unit's learning outcomes. For example, a unit of learning can range in length from 1 - 4 weeks, etc. depending on depth and breadth of the learning.