

Glossary of Common Terms

Definitions of UHCL Assessment Terminology

AMS stands for Accountability Management System and is a Taskstream product used to house assessment plan data for academic programs and support units.

Academic Program denotes a degree program (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate) offered by any of UHCL's schools.

Assessment Cycle is the cyclical process of continuous improvement, including five phases: develop outcomes, design assessment plan, implement plan and collect information, interpret and evaluate information, and modify and improve plan.

Assessment Plan is a blueprint that enables planned evaluation of the strategies used to obtain set outcomes based on specific quantitative or qualitative data collected and analyzed through defined methods.

Assessment Timeline is the period of time devoted to the assessment cycle. The timeline also provides due dates for completed assessment plans and related items.

Closing the Loop refers to the process of using assessment results to determine plans to improve performance and putting those plans into action. Closing the loop occurs during the modify and improve phase of the assessment cycle.

Co-curricular Program indicates a unit (usually within the Student Services Division) that, due to the nature of the services provided, includes both learning outcomes and program outcomes in its assessment plan.

Criteria for Success expresses in specific and measurable/observable terms the *desired* performance level for a specific learning or program outcome.

Curriculum Map displays the alignment between course curriculum and learning outcomes. Courses or specific activities address a particular outcome at one of three levels: introduce, practice, or reinforce.

Direct Measure is an assessment tool based on primary evidence of student work, such as embedded questions in quizzes or an evaluation of an oral presentation.

Editor is an AMS user with edit permissions for his/her assigned assessment plans.

Indirect Measure is an assessment tool based on reflection/perception or secondary evidence, such as a student survey which collects respondents' thoughts about their ability to meet a specific requirement.

LAT stands for Learning Achievement Tools and is a Taskstream product used to assist faculty in the collection and assessing of student assignments, organization of field placement, and development of e-portfolios for assessment purposes.

Learning Outcomes directly relate the skills and knowledge students are expected to gain from a course, academic program, or co-curricular program and must align with UHCL University Learning Outcomes (ULO). These outcomes are included in academic program assessment plans and may be included in the support unit plans of co-curricular offices, such as those within the Student Services Division.

Methods describe the tools and techniques used to determine the extent to which the outcomes are achieved. The methods must identify specific areas that need further improvement. Assessment methods can be direct, indirect, qualitative, or quantitative measures.

Primary Contact is an individual who serves as a plan's contact/liaison with OIE. This individual is responsible for ensuring assessment plan data is entered into AMS on or before the annual deadline. A Primary Contact has edit access in AMS (for his/her assigned plans). For academic program assessment plans, this role is typically filled by the Program Coordinator. For unit plans, this role is typically filled by the Director.

Program Outcomes are focused on operational/administrative objectives of a department/office and align with UHCL Strategic Goals (USG). These outcomes are included in academic program plans and support unit plans.

Qualitative Measure is a method of inquiry focused on quality/characteristics where data is observed but not measured numerically, such as an open-ended questionnaire or exit interview.

Quantitative Measure is a method of inquiry focused on quantity where data is expressed and analyzed numerically, such as a five-point scale rubric.

Reliability indicates the degree to which an assessment method produces results that can be consistently replicated.

Results describe the findings on performance, as measured by the established methods/criteria for success, and identify specific areas for improvement.

Reviewer is an AMS user designated to review submitted assessment plans. Using a standard rubric, a reviewer conducts the annual evaluation of each completed plan in AMS. Reviewers include individuals at various levels within the institution – Program Chairs, Deans, AVPs, and OIE staff.

Sample is a smaller group within a larger population, chosen to serve as a representative set for the greater population during data analysis.

Standing Requirements include an established collection of learning and/or program outcomes, as well as curriculum maps developed by academic programs.

Status Report is an update of how much progress has been made in continuous improvement efforts, based on planned or taken action.

Strategies are specific approaches, tactics, and procedures implemented in the effort to meet or exceed the criteria for success for a learning or program outcome.

Support Unit denotes any department or office, including operational/administrative (such as Budget, Admissions, Development and Alumni Relations) and co-curricular (such as Student Success Center, Counseling Services, Student Life).

Use of Results describe the specific actions (planned or taken) to improve performance based on determined results. For learning outcomes, this includes what an academic program intends to do with the knowledge gained from results by documenting specific adjustments to teaching, measures, or targets to increase student performance. For program outcomes, this includes what a program or unit plans to do with the knowledge gained from results by documenting specific changes to operational strategies or processes in an effort to improve performance.

University Learning Outcome (ULO) Set includes established metrics to which student learning outcomes are aligned. There are eight ULOs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Information Technology, Interpersonal Competence/Teamwork, Ethical Citizenship/Personal Responsibility, Global Perspective/Social Responsibility, and Other – Professional Accreditation Standards.

University Strategic Goal (USG) Set includes the four goals of UHCL's strategic plan. Within the annual assessment cycle, these goals serve as metrics to which program outcomes are aligned.

Validity indicates the degree to which an assessment tool measures the desired performance it was designed to measure, and allows for appropriate inferences to be drawn from the results.

Viewer is an AMS user with view-only permissions for his/her assigned assessment plans; a viewer cannot make changes/edits to a plan in AMS.