



Director of Academic Assessment

## MSU Assessment Terminology\*

**Assessment:** Assessment is the systematic collection and analysis of information (Data) for improvement purposes.

**Assessment Tool:** Instrument used to measure the characteristic or outcome of interest. It is the tool used to implement part of a larger assessment plan. Example: assessment tools for learning include classroom assessment techniques (minute paper, muddiest point, etc.), capstone projects, examinations, portfolio entries, or student performances.

**Benchmark/Target:** A point of reference for measurement; a standard of achievement against which to evaluate or judge one's own performance. A program can use its own past performance data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future data/performance. Additionally, data from another (comparable, exemplary) program can be used as a target benchmark.

**Direct Measure:** Gathers evidence, based on student performance, which demonstrates the learning itself. Can be value-added, related to standards, qualitative or quantitative, embedded or not, and can use local or external criteria. Examples include class tests, research papers, student performances, etc.

**Indirect Measure:** Gathers reflection about the learning or secondary evidence of its existence. Example: surveys of student perceptions about learning, e.g. Satisfaction survey.

**Measure:** To collect quantitative and/or qualitative data to be analyzed. Qualitative data are data that do not lend themselves to quantitative methods but rather to interpretive criteria, for example, interviews, focus groups, and anecdotal evidence.

**Program of Study:** The phrase "program of study" most often and routinely refers to a degree offered by the university.

**Student Learning Goal (SLG):** A general statement of what a student should know and/or be able to do upon graduation from a program of study.

**Student Learning Outcome (SLO):** A specific statement of what a student should know and/or be able to do as a result of what is learned in a specific course or set of courses in a program of study.

\*Document is adapted from several sources, including Clark College, Stephen F. Austin State University, James Madison University, and AAC&U.