

## Assessment Vocabulary

This document serves as a vocabulary guide for NJIT faculty and staff involved in the assessment of academic programs, including the GER program, and student support services.

Each vocabulary item contains a definition and key consideration when working with each assessment component. These are tuned to NJIT’s context and are based on current best practices in higher education assessment and the accreditation requirements of the Middle States standards.

Examples are provided based on a fictional academic program for the purposes of illustration.

### Mission Statement

A concise statement, developed collaboratively by faculty and other stakeholders, that communicates the purpose and values of the academic program.

Key considerations include:

- Clearly and concisely written for a general audience
- Realistic and achievable
- Defines the program’s purpose
- Identifies the program’s primary functions, activities, & stakeholders
- Focused on student learning
- Aligns clearly to the missions of the University, College, and Department
- Highlights what is unique about the program
- Publicly available, known, and easy to find

**Example:**

“The mission of NJIT’s MS in Measurement and Assessment in Higher Education [*program title*] is to prepare students for work in institutions of higher education [*program’s stakeholders*] with a focus on educational assessment and continuous improvement [*primary purpose*] by providing them with skills and experience in data collection, management, processing, analysis, and reporting [*primary functions & activities*]. These will be applied through the design, implementation, assessment, and revision of an educational assessment system as well as through the research, writing, and defense of a thesis [*optional clarification statement*].”

### Program Goals

Broad and abstract statements, developed collaboratively by faculty and other stakeholders, that describes

the general knowledge and abilities that students are expected to achieve through the program.

Key considerations include:

- Between 3-7 goals identified (a general recommendation)
- Clearly stated and concisely written
- Realistic and achievable
- Aligned clearly to the program mission
- Focused on student learning
- Reflect the purpose & intentions of the field and the program
- Uses action verbs to clearly describe the general knowledge and abilities that are expected of all students
- Publicly available, known, and easy to find

**Example:**

“Program graduates will **transform** *[verb]* data into actionable knowledge for use in assessment *[general knowledge or ability]*.”

## Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

A specific and measurable skill, ability, knowledge, belief, or attitude that students are expected to achieve through the program.

Key considerations include:

- Clearly stated, precise and concisely written
- Expressed in terms of the student
- Realistic and achievable within the timeframe of the program
- Aligned clearly to the program goals
- Measurable, an observable behavior
- Uses action verbs to clearly identify a specific skill, ability, knowledge, belief, or attitude that students are expected to achieved
- Publicly available, known, and easy to find

**Example:**

“Students will be able to **design** *[action verb]* data visualizations and other reporting mechanisms to communicate useful information *[specific skill, ability, knowledge, belief, or attitude]* to **stakeholders to inform assessment** *[person, place, or thing and purpose]*.”

## Curriculum Mapping

Outlines required and elective courses, and other requirements, in the program’s curriculum that address specific program SLOs.

Key considerations include:

- All required and elective program courses are mapped to at least one SLO
- All SLOs have courses mapped to them
- All students have ample opportunity to acquire and demonstrate mastery of all SLOs

**Example:**

Please see the [document available at this link](#) for an example.

## Measures of Assessment

Identifies the assessment mechanisms used to determine if students have achieved a specific program SLO.

Key considerations include:

- All SLOs have measures identified
- All program courses or requirements use at least one measure to assess students' achievement of an SLO
- Are directly relevant and aligned to students' achievement of the SLO
- Yields meaningful, consistent, and reliable evidence of students' achievement of the SLO
- Results can directly inform potential program actions and adjustments

**Example:**

Measures of assessments can include rubric scores, exam questions, papers, projects, or any other assessment that directly assesses the students' acquisition and demonstration of a student learning outcome (SLO).

## Benchmarks & Targets

Identifies a level of student achievement (benchmark) for a specific measure as well as a goal for the percentage of students that meet or exceed the identified level of achievement (target).

Key considerations include:

- Set for all measures of assessment
- Benchmarks and targets are appropriately rigorous and can lead to continuous program improvement.

**Examples:**

"80% of students achieve a Competent (level 3 of 5) or higher for all rubric levels."

## Findings

Indicates whether students met or exceeded the target for each benchmark, based on data from the Measure.

Key considerations include:

- Included for all measures of assessment

- Includes the percentage of students that met or exceeded the target
- Indicates whether the target was “Met” or “Not Met”

**Example:**

“Not Met – 60% achieved a Competent (level 3 of 5) or higher for all rubric levels.”

### Recommended Actions

Actions are recommended by the program director based on the findings for SLOs.

Key considerations include:

- Are provided by the program director for both the initial data analysis findings and the SLOs, as appropriate
- Are labeled for “Immediate,” or “Long-Term” action
- Are realistic and achievable

**Example:**

“Students require more guidance and resources for designing and conducting effective presentations prior to their final presentation.”