

Assessment Vocabulary

Assessment, like any field, uses a certain vocabulary. Just as in other fields, some of that vocabulary can be confusing, or unclear, and people use it differently. The following definitions show how the following terms are used at MCLA.

Institutional level

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a brief declaration of an organization's purpose and values - the reason why it exists. The mission does not describe what an organization will do, or how or when it will do it.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goals are the long range goals for an entire organization, based on its mission. They define the direction of the organization, usually over several years. Everything the organization does should be related back to its strategic goals and through them, support the mission.

Program level

Program Goals

Program goals are broad general statements of what the *faculty* want to accomplish at the program/domain level. They can be directly related to learning outcomes, such as “to have at least 50% of our graduates admitted to top tier graduate schools” or less directly related, such as “to increase enrollment in the program.” They should tie back to the institution’s mission and strategic goals.

Program Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are concise statements that specify the measurable knowledge, skill, or behavior that you expect students to be able to demonstrate at the end of a program of study and *apply to the entire curriculum as a whole*. “Students will be able to design an effective scientific experiment.” They should support program goals and the strategic goals of the college. At MCLA the outcomes of all academic programs and Core Domains are listed in the catalog.

Course Level

Course Objectives

Course objectives refer to what individual instructors *plan* for a specific course. For instance, “to raise students’ awareness about substance abuse by pre-teens.” They are the *inputs* of a course that will lead to the student learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are concise statements that specify the measurable knowledge, skill, or behavior that faculty *expect* students to be able to *demonstrate* at the end of the course. “Students will be able to analyze the causes of the Civil War.” Learning outcomes should map to the course objectives, support program goals and the strategic goals of the college.