THE GLOSSARY OF COMMON ASSESSMENT TERMS FOR THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (IoE) STUDENTS

The IoE Teaching and Learning Group on Assessment Literacy

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FOREWORD

Obviously assessment is an important part of any course, yet often it is hard to understand fully what is expected in order to be successful.

This Glossary is the result of an on-going, extensive project involving a number of staff within the IoE and hundreds of students across our different programmes. It is designed to provide further clarity for you by providing examples of the types of thinking we expect you to demonstrate and how you might express yourself to show this type of thinking. It has been constructed with input from staff and students, and we hope you find it useful. We will doubtlessly receive further feedback about how it can be developed further, which would be welcomed. I am very grateful for all the work that has gone into producing this document and hope you find it useful in supporting your development through your programme.

Dr. Rebecca Harris
Director of Teaching and Learning, Institute of Education

We hope you will find this Glossary useful in helping you to better understand key assessment terms that are commonly found in assessment criteria. We also hope it will help you to develop the *scholarship* of your work, which refers to the depth and quality of a piece of written work. Scholarship has many important aspects, and you will find the definitions and examples of these aspects in this Glossary. Moreover, we use Education-specific examples to make the Glossary more relatable to the coursework you are working on here at the Institute of Education.

This Glossary has been developed with feedback from over 300 students and teaching members of staff across all programmes at the Institute. We are grateful for their support.

Dr. Natthapoj Vincent Trakulphadetkrai
Chair of the IoE Teaching and Learning Group on Assessment Literacy

ANALYTICAL THINKING

Definition: Analytical thinking is the ability to examine pieces of information (e.g. literature or research data) in order to identify and discuss similarities and differences between them, leading to a logical and coherent conclusion.

Weak example:

Smith (2018) investigated whether teaching grammar can be useful for second language learners. Therefore, grammar rules should be taught using story picture books.

(*Explanation:* The above example involved no comparison between two or more related perspectives or studies, and the conclusion did not logically follow on from the point stated in the first sentence.)

Strong example:

Both Smith (2018) and Jones (2017) investigated whether teaching grammar can be useful for second language learners. However, while Smith (2018) emphasises the importance of explicitly teaching grammar rules, Jones (2017) argues that second language learners should be given opportunities to discover these grammar rules themselves. Despite the differences in the teaching methods, both studies demonstrated that teaching grammar is useful for second language learners.

(*Explanation:* The second example is better than the first example not because it is longer, but because it compared two perspectives and studies by discussing their similarities and differences (in bold) before drawing a logical and coherent conclusion.)

ARGUMENT

Definition: An argument is a series of points made that are supported by evidence and lead to a logical and coherent conclusion.

Weak example:

Science aspirations are formed at the primary school level when children are already developing their ideas about their future careers (Archer, DeWitt & Wong, 2013). Findings of the ASPIRE (2013) project indicate the significant impact that gender and socio-economic background can have on children's learning, aspirations and achievements in relation to science. **Thus, it would be more effective to focus our efforts on the earliest years of a child's life since early and meaningful participation in science is likely to promote children's motivation to learn science.**

(*Explanation:* The argument (in bold) about trying to foster children's positive perception about science early is not relevant to and not built on the point about the impact of children's gender and socio-economic on children's perception about the subject. This leads to an incoherent conclusion.)

Strong example:

Science aspirations are formed at the primary school level when children are already developing their ideas about their future careers (Archer, DeWitt & Wong, 2013). This might explain why most research activities and interventions that have focused on young people at the secondary school level have been found to do too little to make a change. **Thus, it would be more effective to focus our efforts on the earliest years of a child's life since early and meaningful participation in science is likely to promote children's motivation to learn science.**

(*Explanation:* The argument (in bold) about trying to foster children's positive perception about science early is relevant to and built on the premise about how science aspirations are formed at the primary school level. This leads to a coherent conclusion.)

CRITICAL THINKING

Definition: Critical thinking is the ability to constructively question or challenge information given by sources or research. However, it is not only about identifying what is 'wrong'. It is also the ability to justify the reasons for agreeing with something as well as for disagreeing with it.

Weak example:

Jones (1970) states that readers understand the meaning of words differently to one another.

(*Explanation:* The above example shows that the student has not considered the validity of Jone's (1970) statement, and the statement appears to have been taken as absolute truth.)

Strong example:

Jones (1970) states that readers understand the meaning of words differently to one another. **However, this conclusion must be treated with caution as the research was conducted almost 50 years ago, and the study collected data from just five readers.**

(*Explanation*: The second example is better than the first example not because it is longer, but because it shows that the student has considered the validity of Jone's (1970) statement, and did not take it as absolute truth. The student did this by questioning the relevance of the research which was carried out several decades ago, and questioning the extent to which the research drawn from just five readers is enough to make an accurate representation of the whole population.)

DEFINING

Definition: Defining is the ability to give precise meaning of a technical term and to discuss the different interpretations of the term that may exist as drawn from appropriate literature.

Weak example:

Bilingualism typically refers to competence in two or more languages.

(*Explanation:* While the term 'bilingualism' was briefly defined, it was not supported by any literature. Awareness of how this term might be interpreted differently by different scholars was also not demonstrated.)

Strong example:

Bilingualism is interpreted differently by different scholars. To some scholars (e.g. Cummins & Swain, 1986), the focus of bilingualism is on the people who speak the languages and their linguistic capabilities. In contrast, Li (2013) considers that bilingualism refers to the knowledge and use of two languages which pays greater attention to the languages themselves as used in a social context. In the context of this assignment, bilingualism is taken to refer to competence in two or more languages.

(*Explanation:* The second example is better than the first example not because it is longer, but because it demonstrated awareness of the different interpretations of the term 'bilingualism' as supported by appropriate literature. It also concluded with the definition of the term that would be used in this piece of writing.)

JUSTIFICATION

Definition: Justification is the ability to make a case by providing a body of evidence to support your ideas and points of view.

Weak example:

Teaching mathematics using story picture books is beneficial. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to teach mathematics using story picture books.

(*Explanation:* The statement in the first sentence is not supported by any evidence. This statement might thus be viewed as a personal view of the writer. In academic writing, all statements made should be fully justified by evidence.)

Strong example:

Teaching mathematics using story picture books is beneficial. Such benefit has been well documented by research, such as those conducted by Jones (2015) and Smith (2017), which confirmed the positive impact of using stories to develop children's language development and mathematical thinking. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to teach mathematics using story picture books.

(*Explanation:* The second example is better than the first example not because it is longer. It is better because in the second example, the statement in the first sentence is fully supported by the evidence (e.g. research studies) cited in the second sentence. Thus, it is a justified statement.)

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP YOUR ASSESSMENT LITERACY

The University of Leicester	This guideline helps students with academic writing including unpacking assessment terms	https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/essay-terms
	There are also sections that explain how to write academically	https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/study-guides-pdfs/writing-skills-pdfs/essay-terms-explained
The University of Manchester	The Academic Phrase bank is a resource for academic writers. It provides an explanation of key assessment terms. This could be a useful tool in helping to develop students' dissertation/research writing skills and in helping them to think about the constituent parts that make a research report/dissertation.	http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

What our students say about the Glossary …

"The definitions were useful and the examples provided were even more helpful for clarifying exactly what the terms mean. The glossary is laid out in a clear and easy to follow way for each key term."

"Clarifies definitions and clears up misconceptions so there is no room for error."

"The vocab used in the definitions are easy to understand and put in a simple way."

"It clearly outlines what each term means as well as guiding you on how this would work in your assignment to clarify the definitions."

"It broke the terms down into smaller chunks which made it easier to process and get my head around."

"If I get lost in an assignment, they would be helpful to refer to."

"The glossary breaks down each term, explaining more clearly what is required and expected in academic writing."

"These are key words often used in assignment titles so understanding what they mean would help you better understand what the assignment marker is looking for."