

Using Holistic Rubrics to Assess General Education Learning Outcomes

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The Difference Between Assessment and Grading

- Grading is a one-on-one activity between an individual faculty member and an individual student for the purpose of evaluating that student's work leading to the award of "something" (a grade, credit hours, certificate, degree, whatever)
- Assessment is a collaborative activity involving groups of faculty examining multiple examples of student work for the purpose of improving teaching and learning
- Thus, while both assessment and grading may involve the use of the same material (student work or products of some kind), the way the material is used and the purposes of the activities are markedly different

**Aren't Grades
(By Themselves)
Enough**

NO!

According To Dressel, Grades Are:

“An inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material.”

Grades Reflect Many Things Other Than Course Content and Mastery Level

Participation Variables

- Discussion
- Cooperation
- Attendance
- Verbal Ability

Grading Practices Are Not Standard

- Grades in one course (or separate sections of the same course) may be assigned on a different basis from grades in another.
- An “A” or a “B” does not mean the same thing in all courses

- Much of the current controversy in education comes from the lack of course content mastery among students who have received passing grades.
- Thus, used alone, grades are widely regarded as inadequate for assessing general student learning

With One Exception

If faculty have used Walvrod's (Walvrod & Anderson, 1998, Walvrod, 2004) Primary Trait Analysis/Effective Grading techniques and rubrics to come to agreement on what each grade means in all departmental courses, then grades may be used to assess both departmental and general education learning outcomes.

Steps in Designing an Assessment Process:

- Identify Outcomes
- Articulate and Operationally Define Outcomes
- Select Assessment Methodology
- Establish Standards
- Devise System for Use of Assessment Results
- Devise System to Evaluate Assessment Model
- Pilot Test
- Implement

Common Gen. Ed. Outcomes

- Writing
- Speaking
- Math
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Technology
- Appreciation of Diversity/Multiculturalism
- Social Responsibility/citizenship

Operationally Defined Outcome: Math

1. Identifies data necessary to solve the problem
2. Analyzes data correctly
3. Justifies results of analysis

Assessment Methodologies: Three Major Categories

- ❖ “Real-World” Experiences
- ❖ Course-Related/Course Connected
- ❖ Testing

Our Choice: Course Related

- ❖ Performance-based model
- ❖ Use work students produce in class (student artifacts)
- ❖ Obviates standardized testing “motivation to perform well’ issues
- ❖ Several ways to collect artifacts
 1. All-college “Assessment Day”
 2. Sample classes with assignments relevant to outcome
 3. Common assessment assignment in relevant classes
- ❖ Several ways to score/analyze artifacts using rubrics
 1. Relevant faculty departmental/discipline teams
 2. Interdisciplinary faculty teams
 3. All faculty

What is a Rubric?

- A scoring rubric is a set of ordered categories to which a given piece of work (e.g., a student “artifact”) can be compared. Scoring rubrics specify the qualities or processes that must be exhibited in order for a performance to be assigned a particular evaluative rating (McDaniel, 1994).

Types of Rubrics

Rubrics may be:

- General—they contain criteria that are general across tasks
 - Designed to provide general guidance as to expectations, such as evaluation of written assignments (e.g., a “writing rubric”)
- Task-specific—they are unique to a specific task assignment
 - Designed to provide detailed guidance regarding a specific assignment or task (e.g., a rubric for the “civil war writing assignment”)

Types of Rubrics

- Checklists
- Analytic
- Holistic

Checklist Rubrics

- Checklist rubrics contain a list of behaviors or specific steps which can be marked as Present/Absent, Complete/Incomplete, Yes/No
 - Useful to note the completion of a task but when assignment of a rating scale is not necessary

Analytic Rubrics

- Analytic rubrics employ rating scales to provide specific feedback along several dimensions
 - Assignments/artifacts can be broken down into separate components (e.g., description, analysis, grammar, references, etc.)
 - Scales can include terms (e.g., novice, intermediate, and proficient) or specific point values (0, 1, 2, 3, 4)

Holistic Rubrics

- Holistic rubrics provide overall evaluation guidelines that clarify how assessments relate to performance achievement
 - There is one overall score instead of discrete dimensions

Points to Ponder

1. The perfect data fallacy
 - Measurement in higher education is imprecise
2. Assessment is messy
3. The Power of Negative Evidence
 - Institutions (and individuals) generally fear the impact of negative findings.
 - Negative findings are most likely to induce positive action
4. Resistance to change
 - Individual and organizational inertia

Rules for the Upcoming Exercises

1. Each team must report only one score per artifact (i.e., as a team, you **must** agree on a single score)
2. The score you report must be a whole number—no decimals, no fractions

Writing Outcome

Outcomes Statement: Upon receipt of an associate degree from XYZ Community College, a student should be able to write a clear, well-organized paper using documentation and quantitative tools when appropriate.

Outcome Rubric:

6 = Essay demonstrates excellent composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, appropriate and effective organization, lively and convincing supporting materials, effective diction and sentence skills, and perfect or near perfect mechanics including spelling and punctuation. The writing perfectly accomplishes the objectives of the assignment.

5 = Essay contains strong composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, although development, diction, and sentence style may suffer minor flaws. Shows careful and acceptable use of mechanics. The writing effectively accomplishes the goals of the assignment.

4 = Essay contains above average composition skills, including a clear, insightful thesis, although development is insufficient in one area and diction and style may not be consistently clear and effective. Shows competence in the use of mechanics. Accomplishes the majority, but not all, of the goals of the assignment.

3 = Essay demonstrates only average composition skills including adequate development and organization, although the development of ideas may be trite, assumptions may be unsupported in more than one area, the thesis may not be original, and the diction and syntax may not be clear and effective. Minimally accomplishes the goals of the assignment.

2 = Composition skills may be flawed in either the clarity of the thesis, the development, or organization. Diction, syntax, and mechanics may seriously affect clarity. Minimally accomplishes the majority of the goals of the assignment.

1 = Composition skills may be flawed in two or more areas. Diction, syntax, and mechanics are excessively flawed (7 or more major errors on out of class work). Fails to accomplish the goals of the assignment.

Standards (i.e., the college faculty's expectation of the student body's overall performance): Ten percent of students who have met the requirements for an associate degree at XYZCC will earn 6 (excellent) on the writing rubric. Thirty percent of students earning an associate degree will score 5 (very good) or 6 (excellent). Eighty percent will earn scores of 4 (satisfactory) or higher and the top 98 percent will earn scores of 3 (minimal accomplishment of educational goals) or higher. The remaining 2 percent of the associate degree recipients are expected to earn the score of 2 (unsatisfactory) on the writing rubrics. The score of 1 represents a skill level beneath the expectation of all associate degree recipients at XYZCC. Hence, no associate degree recipients are expected to score at the level of 1 on the writing rubric.

Possible Assignments: You should submit the class set of one assignment (video of speech, presentation, oral report, etc.). Which would allow students the best chance to meet the criteria outlined in the speaking component of the Assessment Program. Briefly, an appropriate assignment would allow students to demonstrate oral presentation skills by asking them to:

1. Develop a clear central idea appropriate for purpose, occasion, and audience
2. Develop main points with appropriate and convincing supporting materials
3. Utilize appropriate and effective organization of content
4. Demonstrate a clear, coherent, and conversational speaking style using effective verbal and nonverbal skills

If you have created an assignment which gives students the opportunity to do all of the items stated above, then that assignment would make an excellent submission for the assessment study. If you have not made an assignment in which a student could demonstrate all items given above, then choose an assignment which allows students to demonstrate as many of the items listed above a possible.

Cash for Grades:

Does it Cheapen Education or Offer Motivation?

Scenario and Requested Action:

During the past decade, schools around the country have been experimenting with programs that offer students pay for performance. Students have been reported earning cash for a variety of academic tasks such as reading books, attendance in study hall, improvement of test scores, and meeting learning outcomes and goals.

Activate the link to [Read the Article](#) on the National Public Radio (NPR) web page. When finished, click on [Listen to the Story](#) to hear the broadcast discussing the concept of "Cash for Grades."

After carefully listening to the National Public Radio broadcast, write a letter to the editor expressing your position on the topic. To support your position, make sure to include information from the sources provided. In your letter, discuss alternative solutions to the problem.

Dear Editor:

After reading the article and listening to the broadcast, I decided to write you a letter expressing my position on the topic of paying and rewarding students for good grades. I think that there is still a lot to study on that matter and that it's a good idea to give students incentives for achieving good grades and generally doing well in school. On the other hand, I am sure that many students are more interested in the incentives than the learning experience.

As studies show, giving people incentives actually motivates them to succeed and do well. According to the article, many teachers are reporting good results from the experiment, saying that students are working harder and putting extra work when they are rewarded for it. Another study contradicting the statement above from the article, says that a study from the early 70's found that rewards programs may produce less engaged students.

To conclude my opinion, I think that studying for an incentive is better than not studying at all. Also, Each and every student has his own responsibilities and has the free will to decide if he wants to gain from the learning experience or not. I do not see the incentives as "bribes", they are a source of motivation for students and which can also be viewed as a cheaper education for the better students.