

Chapter 8

Co-Production of Assessment Rubrics in an Online Education Context

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ABSTRACT

Marking rubrics is hailed as a transparent and effective way of supporting student success; enhancing their ability to understand and use their learning environment to achieve their goals. Rubrics also enable staff to mark fairly and consistently. Yet, to be successful, rubrics must be understandable to all and there needs to be active engagement from students and staff alike. Understandability requires that the wording be inclusive and considerate of student diversity, and this is especially true when considering online courses where the student body is often more culturally diverse. Co-creation with students can promote inclusivity and the development of meaningful and successful rubrics. This chapter provides a step-by-step guide for co-creating and implementing rubrics in an online education context, developed through collaboration with the co-creation student panel from the online programmes at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, KCL.

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THE DEFINITION OF A RUBRIC

The word rubric can mean different things in different contexts. In a broad sense, a rubric is a collection of statements that simultaneously describe criteria and measure quality. In education, a rubric refers to a scoring tool composed of a set of criteria/descriptors and an accompanying scale illustrative of differing levels of student performance. A rubric is not an assessment brief, or the assessment criteria themselves. An assessment brief is the set of instructions provided for students that outlines what is required and expected of them to complete the task. In some instances, this may include information about the assessment criteria, which will inform the rubric and final grades, however, this is not always the case. The assessment criteria outline what knowledge and skills a student should be able to demonstrate on completion of the assessment. Assessment criteria are aligned with course and module learning outcomes and are to be used in the context of assessment standards, which usually include grade descriptors at a more general institutional level (Sadler, 2005). A rubric then links the assessment criteria to performance indicators, providing a series of statements that describe the quality of learning (Brookhart, 2018) in a clear scheme for scoring (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Effective rubrics can support both staff and students by facilitating more expeditious marking and providing more consistency (Jonsson and Svingby, 2007; Brookhart and Chen, 2015; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). This is achieved by providing clear expectations for students on how their performance will be assessed, together with the opportunity to measure the quality of their own work; whilst for staff they provide a framework that has been shown to reduce the time needed to evaluate a piece of work (Stevens & Levi, 2013) and contribute to consistency of grading across both students and modules. Yet, for rubrics to have a true impact they must be understood and successfully applied by all stakeholders, and co-creation can be key in achieving this.

The Importance of Co-Creating Rubrics

Assessments enable educators to evaluate the potential and actual achievements of students, and the linked feedback serves as a basis for enabling students to improve their future performance (Williams, 2000). Good assessment performance and meeting learning outcomes requires students to engage with materials and understand what is expected of them. However, there is a delicate balance between providing too little information around what needs doing to perform well and there being too detailed or prescriptive information made available that will prevent in-depth learning and give assessment more of a tick-box feel (Torrance, 2007). Rubrics should not limit or constrain students in what their assessments can include but give them clarity with appropriate degrees of freedom. To ensure these rubrics are pitched at the right level and optimise education experience, students need to be and feel heard (Murdoch et al., 2020) through engagement and interaction (Peacock et al., 2020; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). The aim is to prevent students from taking a passive role in their education, where they only do what the educator might expect of them to gain a good grade (Reynolds-Keefer, 2010). Co-creation moves beyond teaching students how to use rubrics, which again can result in them simply seeing it as a tool to gain the best mark, rather it is about inviting students' input in the creation of accessible and useful rubrics, making them an integral part of the design process. Evidence suggests such co-creation can have a positive impact on motivation, self-efficacy and hence depth of learning (Arter & McTighe, 2001, Andrade & Du, 2005; Andrade et al., 2009, Reynolds & Keefer, 2010) and, in this way, become an integral part of learning through reflection (Fraile et al., 2017) leading to students' and educators' common goal: better student performance. Moreover, increased belief in one's own ability to learn and complete tasks has

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