

## Chapter 9

# Facilitating Programme–Level Assessment Working Teams to Develop Shared Rubrics Across a UG and PG Programme Portfolio in Business Education

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter is a reflective study reporting on a College-wide common rubrics initiative in a Technological University (TU) in Ireland. Assessment and feedback are enduring issues for the higher education sector both in Ireland (as well as internationally). By addressing these priorities, we are focusing on the connected areas of marking practices and feedback processes in a College of Business. The chapter highlights the collaborative nature of an initiative on programmatic assessment design, its breadth of scope, and the high levels of support provided to staff and students through the design process. In particular, rubrics are the main focus of the chapter with an overview of Programme Learning Outcome (PLO) mapping provided as part of the context. Four interdisciplinary rubric working teams were formed across the College of Business to develop common rubrics in the areas of reflective practice, critical thinking, individual/group presentation skills and industry consultancy projects. This programme-based study differs from other previous work as it involves working on a consistent basis with the challenges of bringing cultures, practices and understandings of disciplinary teams together in a technological uni-*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6086-3.ch009

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*versity context. Findings from our collaborative common rubric working teams showed the importance of avoiding designing overly complex rubrics and of focusing on the student's work providing evidence of meeting, exceeding, or falling short of the quality being looked for. It also highlighted the importance of rubric literacy as we were using qualitative language in all the target statements and advised staff to avoid subjective language in favour of explicit guidance. We proposed the need for a common language on 'Teamwork' and on proceeding with this as a College-wide approach a similar structure or focus, using the same marking rubric was recommended. We advised staff to work as a team to master the rubrics, and to ensure that their students had m. Future work can explore the use of AI tools which can automate the feedback process and provide lecturers with customised rubrics based on their specifications.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although working collaboratively on rubric development is well-documented in the literature (Allen & Knight, 2009; Morton *et al.*, 2021), the seminal work of Sadler (2009) and Andrade (2005) was useful in turn for our specific context. The former for contributing to our understanding of how to design assessments to enable learners to demonstrate sophisticated cognitive abilities, integration of knowledge, complex problem solving, critical reasoning, original thinking, and innovation. The latter for using rubrics with undergraduate and postgraduate students.

In the context of this collaborative rubric initiative across a College of Business, there has been a clear intention to address grading, based on a realisation that the grade alone does not provide sufficiently informative feedback to students. Jutras (2023) argues that the question of grading schemes is a recurring topic in academic discussions where the key word is evaluation, in this instance of assignments and exams. By taking a college-wide approach to designing and using rubrics in common areas that deepen student thinking and learning, the aim of this collaborative work was to:

- help students improve their work by making assessment expectations explicit and aiding the feedback process; Panadero & Jonsson (2013) have previously reported that rubrics help learners clarify expectations, reduce anxiety, and improve self-efficacy.
- support student learning in an environment where independence and the ability to self-regulate is important; a key part of the context for the focus on rubrics is the College's signature pedagogy on student-centred learning, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and be more self-directed. As Sadler (2009) explained, the aim is for learners to become better able to engage in self-monitoring the development of their own works.
- aid programme teams in achieving higher levels of consistency when assessing student work; Jonsson & Panadero (2017) discussed how rubrics can help with reliability of grading when multiple markers are involved, and thus help with moderation of markers and quality assurance processes.
- improve efficiency for staff; it is known that rubrics are attractive to busy academics as they can save considerable time, especially as they reduce the number of queries from students - which was previously discussed by Honeychurch (2015) in a Business School context.

The context for this project is what was previously the College of Business and is now the Faculty of Business in Ireland's first Technological University - TU Dublin - which came into existence in January

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