

EVIDENCE: PROGRAM ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

February 2016

Do Rubrics Improve Student Learning?

By: Colleen Brust

Rubrics are an effective tool for grading, but can they help students learn? A well-written rubric makes the grading process more objective, not to mention faster. But the most important advantage of a well-designed rubric may be as a tool for identifying and assessing learning outcomes. What is the objective of the assignment? What should students learn writing it? How will they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding? If I could distill that information into a rubric, then surely students could also benefit from it.

I teach first year Biology labs. Students are asked to write lab reports that are scientifically rigorous and demonstrate their understanding of the concepts. But what makes a paper rigorous? How do they show their understanding?

It's challenging providing instructions that are concise enough that everyone will read them, yet detailed enough that following them will result in success. Rubrics are an easy-to-read alternative to paragraphs of text, and are certainly more effective than instructions given orally in class. Giving the students the rubric with the instructions improved results and made for happier students.

I surveyed my first year lab students after they'd used at least 2 rubrics in my class, and included ques-

tions aligned with the learning objectives of the assignment. Sixty-seven students responded.

Certainly students benefit from understanding the expectations of the assignment. But the data suggest that rubrics can reinforce specific learning goals, like understanding the scientific method, and the purpose of the lab activity. If you assign papers, then you know the frustration of having students repeat mistakes. Many students just don't read our comments, and miss this opportunity to learn; let's face it, no one enjoys reading about their mistakes. But I suspect that a graded rubric might be slightly less intimidating than comments added to the paper. I'll be following up on that with my classes.

Students respond favorably to being given a rubric, but there are additional benefits; they are given another tool for learning.



	Students who responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
<i>The rubric helped me understand how a lab report reflects the scientific method.</i>	97%
<i>The rubric helped me understand scientific writing.</i>	73%
<i>The rubric helped me understand the purpose of the lab activity.</i>	92%
<i>The rubric helped me understand my instructor's expectations for the assignment.</i>	98%
<i>The rubric helped me identify the most important aspects of my paper.</i>	98%
<i>I reviewed the graded rubric.</i>	94%
<i>The rubric helped me reflect on my performance</i>	80%

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Assessing Creative work and Risk-taking ideas – *Rubrics for Visual Arts Senior Portfolio*

By: Hannah Ueno, Visual Arts Program

I once (or more than twice) had a student who was talented and showed great potential, yet his grade suffered because he had too many absences and missed submitting many of his projects on time. But his ideas were always original and pushing the boundaries of the assignment's criteria'. His transcript included some Ds and many Cs, but he had a great portfolio when he graduated. After Stockton, he went on to Graduate School and is now a successful creative 'think tank' team at a company near New York City.

In the field of visual arts, fine arts, and applied art, having a well-produced portfolio is an equally important, if not more important criterion as having a good grade in finding a job or on applying for Graduate studies. Often, the portfolio IS his/her resumé. This is one of the reasons why our BFA seniors must take two semesters of Senior Project courses — To develop a body of work, and build a professional portfolio.

The Visual Arts Program has recently discussed using rubrics in the assessment of our Senior Portfolio. We have developed two sets of rubrics: A Rubric for Fine Arts; and one for Visual Communications.

What are the specific qualifying criteria for aesthetics and creative accomplishment? What about criteria for poorly executed work? After all, don't we even have a saying 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'? It is well known that many now considered 'masters' had to deal with earlier criticism of their work, which we now regard as masterpieces. Take Paul Cezanne for example, who is recognized as one of the major contributors to Cubism. His work was repeatedly rejected and criticized by the Salon during 1864 - 1869. Only after his death, the Salon d'Automne gave the recognition. "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by painter Johannes Vermeer was considered a work of the working class and provincial in quality during his time in the 1600s. These are only two examples from a long list. We can cite similar stories not just in art but in other areas. Innovation, risk-taking and creative ideas were not always regarded as "Great" until later. When Eduard Hoffmann first designed a font "Neue Haas Grotesk" with Max Miedinger in 1957, few people took notice of it until it started to circulate under a rebranded name Helvetica in the 1960s; the rest is a history.

Visual Arts faculty are always made aware of this when a student presents what seems as 'strange' or 'crazy' idea in class. As educators, we need to evaluate whether or not it is a noble idea that merits higher grade and further development. Then advise our students with the best of our professional ability. Assessing our student's creative progress is an ongoing process. In fact, it is part of the everyday studio experience from the 1000-level foundations to 4000-level advanced studio courses. Senior Exhibition and their final semester's portfolio is the visual dissertation of their undergraduate studies.

Although there is no one 'go-to' method in evaluating the work of art, this Senior Portfolio rubrics could be a constructive tool for assessing the strength and weakness of our curriculum. Developing some measurable tool could be helpful in visualizing (graphing) our progress. Our long-term plan is to compare individual student's earlier portfolio and their senior portfolio to record progress by using rubrics. We hope that this will serve as one of the ways for us to produce quantified data for accreditation application, as well as to gauge the Program standard.



Hannah Ueno

Summer Assessment Institute 2016

This summer assessment institute will help to prepare faculty for evidence-based approaches to student learning by using a backward design model to plan for the assessment of learning. Participants will consider and outline the types of statements that they would like to be able to make about student learning in their courses and programs, the evidence that they would need to support these statements, and most importantly the actions that would derive from collecting this evidence and reviewing it in the context of their classes and programs. Faculty can take a program-based approach to identifying the learning statements or a course-based approach. This institute will help faculty to develop two plans for integrating learning evidence to help them tell their students learning stories in an evidence-based way for one program course and one general studies course. The facilitator will orient the faculty participants in this institute to the array of assessment resources that are on-hand, the institutional assessments that are part of our available data, and the standardized tests of important outcomes for which we already have some baseline data. These resources will help them support or contrast their data with the existing information.

The institute is suitable for faculty in all stages of their career; past participants in assessment institutes are also encouraged to apply.

Application information is forthcoming!

Rubrics for ARTV Senior Portfolio Assessment — Studio Fine Arts

* Zero score may be given on an extremely poor performance or lack of competency in an indicated area.

Criteria	Excellent (5)	Proficient (4~3)	Developing (2~1)	Score
Format, presentation	Format and presentation are very well suited to the body of work, meeting professional standards.	Overall, format and presentation are appropriate to the body of work.	Format and presentation show a lack of care and consideration.	
Content. Synthesis of ideas, technique, and form	Work integrates the interrelations of form, content, and context. Work reflects a thoughtful engagement with issues of social, cultural, historical, or personal significance.	Work somewhat relates form, content, and context. Work engages somewhat with issues of social, cultural, historical, or personal significance.	Work shows little or no connections between the form, content and context. Work shows little or no engagement with social, cultural, historical, or personal significance.	
Artistic process and material problem solving	The body of work is the product of extensive experimentation, risk taking, and technical mastery.	Work shows exploration of materials and methods, with some accomplished technique.	Work shows little experimentation, risk taking, or technical accomplishment.	
Senior Essay	Clearly describes the core ideas and processes of a body of work. Substantively addresses social, cultural, and/or historical context. The essay has excellent style, grammar, and syntax.	Describes the core ideas and processes of a body of work fairly well. Includes some social, cultural, and/or historical context. The essay has fairly good style, grammar, and syntax.	Essay is poorly written, failing to adequately address core ideas or context.	
Knowledge of art history: Ancient — contemporary art, work of art and artists	Work and discussions reflect a broad working knowledge of artists and artistic movements. The student is able to contextualize his/her own work in historical and contemporary art practice.	Work and discussions reflect some knowledge of artists and artistic movements. The student is beginning to contextualize his/her own work in historical and contemporary art practice.	Needs work. No evidence shown. The student shows little or no knowledge of historical or contemporary art in work or discussions.	
TOTAL				

*Could possibly use as part of the Program Distinction.

* Create Expanded grade to gather data of graduating seniors' learning assessment

* Include in Assessment section of the Self Study for NASAD Accreditation

Assessing Student Reflection and Critical Thinking

By: Catherine Tredick

I often ask my students to reflect on or critically evaluate scientific papers or popular media articles related to topics we're covering in class. Not only are these tasks generally very difficult for students, but they tend to be very difficult for me to assess and evaluate as well. Many times student responses are overly vague ("This article was so interesting to me"), and fail to include adequate discussion and explanation of the student's personal thoughts and opinions ("I thought the authors did a really good job explaining their findings"). After the frustration of reading and trying to assess these vague, superficial responses, I would hand them back to students and review a long list of what they did wrong and how they could do things better for next time. After admittedly too many iterations of this vicious cycle, it finally dawned on me that perhaps I should provide students with

this long list BEFORE they turned in the assignment so they actually might have a chance at meeting my expectations for the assignment. It wasn't until much later after this that I learned I had the beginnings of a formal assessment rubric, and finally, during the Assessment Institute here at Stockton this past summer, I formalized this list into a practical assessment tool that would benefit both myself and my students.

As I developed my formal rubric for assessing student reflections and critical thinking, I found defining or "operationalizing" such complex, "fuzzy" concepts extremely challenging. What does good reflection or good critical thinking look like on paper? How do I outline my expectations in one rubric box without limiting or too strictly defining independent thought? It's enough to make your head hurt (a lot), but discussing and thinking things through with other faculty at the Institute was invaluable, and I finally got to a final rubric that works for me. Although my final rubric will no doubt continue to be updated and refined, the current product

has served me well this semester in helping students understand my expectations for effective reflection and critical evaluation. And, if we're lucky, maybe it will lead to some actual improvements in student reflection and critical thinking as well.



The learning business: the third page of the IDEA reports

How do you assess yourself as a facilitator of learning? What are your strengths and how do you know? A good place to start gathering evidence for this discussion is on the third page of the IDEA student rating report for each of your courses. The first page of IDEA certainly gets noticed and referenced; the "excellent teacher" and "excellent course" ratings are the attention grabbers and their prominent placement both numeric and graphic, makes it impossible for us to ignore them.

On the third page of the IDEA reports there is useful information for self-evaluation in courses by types and individually, and there is also substantive student report information to give you some feedback for your overall strengths, as students perceive them. The third page sometimes gets ignored.

On page three the instructors' behaviors are clustered into five methodologies that are known to support learning and these are rated as strengths, or there are suggestions for you to consider increasing their use. The summary also shows the average rating as well as the percentage of students that rated your 4 or 5 on each behavior in the methodology. This is the page that gives useful, actionable feedback on your process.

All five methodologies are known best practices in helping students to learn. Whatever you are teaching, and however your class is structured, establishing rapport, stimulating interest, fostering collaboration, encouraging involvement and structuring classroom experiences are good practices for student learning.

In our self-evaluation of teaching, page three should feature conspicuously in the evidence that you bring to bear on your statements about the effectiveness of your instructional processes.