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## **Guidance for the Development and Use of Rubrics for Capstone Assessments** **- Updated on September 17, 2012**

This memo provides guidance for creating, using, and interpreting the results of rubrics for programs' capstone assessments, part of CUA's student learning assessment initiatives. Rubrics are used by faculty as metrics to measure student learning outcomes and to aid faculty reflection and improvement of the curriculum.

### **Developing Rubrics**

To develop rubrics, faculty should examine the template for rubrics (see Table 1), a sample rubric (see Table 2), and the examples of rubrics on CUA's assessment website (<http://pir.cua.edu/learning-outcomes/faculty-resources/rubrics.cfm>). Faculty should then take the following steps:

- 1) Re-examine program goals for student learning. For undergraduate programs, also examine general education goals. Goals are posted on CUA's assessment website (<http://pir.cua.edu/learning-outcomes/goals/goals.cfm>).
- 2) Consider which goals are addressed by your capstone activity.
- 3) Specify levels of performance, typically with three common levels (Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations and Below Expectations).
- 4) Ideally, select 3 to 5 traits, or up to 10 traits at the most.
- 5) Describe each level of student performance for the traits. (Please note: the rubric is meant to provide insight into attainment by students (or a sample of students in large programs) in critical areas to provide information to improve programs. It is not necessarily the same as criteria used in scoring comps to determine pass/fail).

It is strongly recommended that the faculty pilot rubrics. To pilot, ask more than one faculty member to apply a rubric to assess work from the same students using samples from past terms, then compare and discuss the ratings. Revise the rubric as needed. Introduce the rubric to colleagues who will use it to score students' work from this academic year.

### **Using Rubrics**

Departments should provide faculty with scoring sheets for use when evaluating individual student's performance on capstones (see Table 4). After faculty members have scored all students' work, staff can tally the number of students falling at each level of performance (see Table 5). When the tallies are complete, the total number of students performing at each level for each trait is entered into the Table of Results (Excel document). The percentages of students falling at each level of performance for each trait will be automatically calculated. The Excel document will also automatically calculate means (averages) and standard deviations (variability) for the traits (see Table 6).

## Displaying and Interpreting Results

In the annual key assessment findings report, at least two types of data are presented annually: overall pass/fail data on comps and rubrics data from capstones. (See examples of the reports at <http://pir.cua.edu/learning-outcomes/student-learning-assessment/annual-findings/ay1011.cfm>).

- *Overall Comps Results*

Faculty should present the overall results of comps first (pass, fail, pass with honors, or high pass, if applicable). Include the pass/fail data table itself, but also comment on the findings briefly in the narrative.

The milestone data on comps should be entered into Cardinal Station for every attempt by students, including failures in the same year. David Sailer extracts the comps data annually (for Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters) and sends a table for inclusion in the annual key assessment findings report for each department/School.

To preserve confidentiality, the resulting comps data should not be presented in the annual report if there are fewer than 3 students taking the comps in the department in a year. Faculty should note this situation in the text of the annual report. Cumulative comps data can be presented in the five-year report.

- *Results from Rubrics*

The faculty should include the Table of Results based on the rubrics and their comments on the results in the annual report of key assessment findings. Again, faculty should describe the pattern of results narratively as well as include the table.

As with comps pass/fail data, preserve confidentiality. Rubrics data should not be presented in the annual report when there are very small numbers of students (fewer than 3). Rather note the reason for omitting this data and the intent to present accumulated data in the five-year report.

In the section entitled “Curricular Improvements”, note if there are implications for curricular change from the pass/fail data on comps or data from rubrics for capstones. Also note planned improvements to advisement, student supports, or assessment practices.

Table 1

**TEMPLATE**  
**Student Learning Assessment Rubrics**  
**Department/School Name**  
**Program Name**

**Rubric for \_\_\_\_\_ (identify the assessment activity, e.g. senior design project, comprehensive exam, etc.)**

Trait	Level		
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)	Meeting Expectations (2pts)	Below Expectations (1pt)
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			
5)			
6)			

7)			
8)			
9)			
10)			

**Instructions:**

- 1) In the “trait” column, please list three to ten major areas for student learning assessment. Express the “trait” simply (in 1 to 3 words).**
- 2) A three-level rating scale is presented in this template. Three-level scales are recommended since these are easier to construct and lead to good inter-rater agreement. However, you may elect another scale, such as a four-level or five-level scale. Simply add columns to the right and insert the names of the levels and point values.**
- 3) In the cells, describe the characteristics of performance for the traits corresponding to each level.**

Table 2

**Sample Rubric**  
**Department of Media Studies**  
**Student Learning Assessment Rubric**  
**Senior Comprehensive Exam**

Trait	Level		
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)	Meeting Expectations (2pts)	Below Expectations (1pt)
1) Critical analytical skill applied to interpretation of audiovisual text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extensive and insightful taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>● Extensive and insightful causal connections between media aesthetics and rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>● Insightful, persuasive expression of reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Correct and perceptive taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>● Causal connections between media aesthetics and rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>● Competent expression of reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incorrect taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>● Few clear causal connections between media aesthetics &amp; rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>● Incompetent expression of reading</li> </ul>
2) Knowledge of critical and production terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly fluent in critical and production terminology</li> <li>● Extensive mastery of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proficient in critical and production terminology</li> <li>● Working knowledge of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weak or flawed grasp of critical and production terminology</li> <li>● Weak or flawed knowledge of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>
3) Ability to demonstrate, via essay, comprehension of & engagement with a work of contemporary scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear, insightful thesis</li> <li>● Evidence always supports arguments</li> <li>● Strong grasp of work's relation to field</li> <li>● Organization fully supports thesis</li> <li>● Effective, graceful style abetting meaning, free of grammatical error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear thesis</li> <li>● Evidence generally supports arguments</li> <li>● Grasps work's relation to field</li> <li>● Organization generally supports thesis</li> <li>● No significant style or grammar problems interfering with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No clear thesis</li> <li>● Evidence fails to support arguments</li> <li>● Weak grasp of work's relation to field</li> <li>● Unclear organization</li> <li>● Persistent style &amp; grammar problems interfering with meaning</li> </ul>

This is a sample rubric for senior comps from the Department of Media Studies. It has three traits and descriptions of the characteristics for each trait at each of the three rating levels.

Table 3

Sample Table of Results

**Table of Results**  
**Student Learning Assessment Rubric**  
**Department of Media Studies**  
**Senior Comprehensive Exam**

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1) Critical analytical skill applied to interpretation of audiovisual text	0	#####	0	#####	0	#####	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	0
2) Knowledge of critical and production terminology	0	#####	0	#####	0	#####	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	0
3) Ability to demonstrate, via essay, comprehension of & engagement with a work of contemporary scholarship	0	#####	0	#####	0	#####	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	0

- Note: 1) The "N" represents the number of students at each level of performance for each trait.  
 2) The "%" represents the percentage of the number of students falling at the level performance for each trait against the total number of students.  
 3) The mean is the average of all scores across the levels within the trait.  
 4) The standard deviation (SD) is the measure of the variability of the data set, indicating how "spread out" these data are from the mean value.

This is a sample Table of Results that the Office of Student Learning Assessment prepares and sends to each department specific to the rubrics submitted. The numbers for each trait and level are inserted by the department. Statistics (percentages, means, standard deviations, and total number of scores) are calculated automatically on this Excel worksheet once the numbers are entered.

Table 4

**Sample Scoring Sheet**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Individual Student Code #**

Department of Media Studies  
 Student Learning Assessment Rubric  
 Senior Comprehensive Exam

Trait	Level		
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)	Meeting Expectations (2pts)	Below Expectations (1pt)
1) Critical analytical skill applied to interpretation of audiovisual text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Extensive and insightful taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>●Extensive and insightful causal connections between media aesthetics and rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>●Insightful, persuasive expression of reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Correct and perceptive taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>●Causal connections between media aesthetics and rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>●Competent expression of reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Incorrect taxonomy of formal audiovisual elements</li> <li>●Few clear causal connections between media aesthetics &amp; rhetoric in relation to social and historical context</li> <li>●Incompetent expression of reading</li> </ul>
2) Knowledge of critical and production terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Highly fluent in critical and production terminology</li> <li>●Extensive mastery of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Proficient in critical and production terminology</li> <li>●Working knowledge of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Weak or flawed grasp of critical and production terminology</li> <li>●Weak or flawed knowledge of audiovisual narrative conventions</li> </ul>
3) Ability to demonstrate, via essay, comprehension of & engagement with a work of contemporary scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Clear, insightful thesis</li> <li>●Evidence always supports arguments</li> <li>●Strong grasp of work's relation to field</li> <li>●Organization fully supports thesis</li> <li>●Effective, graceful style abetting meaning, free of grammatical error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Clear thesis</li> <li>●Evidence generally supports arguments</li> <li>●Grasps work's relation to field</li> <li>●Organization generally supports thesis</li> <li>●No significant style or grammar problems interfering with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●No clear thesis</li> <li>●Evidence fails to support arguments</li> <li>●Weak grasp of work's relation to field</li> <li>●Unclear organization</li> <li>●Persistent style &amp; grammar problems interfering with meaning</li> </ul>

**Student's Score**  
 (1, 2 or 3)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is a sample scoring sheet for faculty to use in evaluating each individual student. The individual student's performance for each trait will be rated based on the scores associated with each performance level, that is, exceeding expectations gets 3 points, meeting expectations 2 points, and below expectations 1 point.

Table 5

### Sample Rubric Tally

Department of Media Studies  
 Student Learning Assessment Rubric  
 Senior Comprehensive Exam

Trait	Level						Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1) Critical analytical skill applied to interpretation of audiovisual text			### ## ##		### ## 		30
2) Knowledge of critical and production terminology	###		### ## ###				30
3) Ability to demonstrate, via essay, comprehension of & engagement with a work of contemporary scholarship			### ## ## 				30

Tallying and aggregating students' scores. Tally the number of students for each cell based on their individual scores. The total N is the total number of students for each trait.

Table 6

**Sample: Table of Results**  
 Student Learning Assessment Rubric  
 Department of Media Studies  
 Senior Comprehensive Exam

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1) Critical analytical skill applied to interpretation of audiovisual text	3	10%	15	50%	12	40%	1.70	0.65	30
2) Knowledge of critical and production terminology	6	20%	23	77%	1	3%	2.17	0.46	30
3) Ability to demonstrate, via essay, comprehension of & engagement with a work of contemporary scholarship	2	7%	24	80%	4	13%	1.93	0.45	30

Entering data into the Table of Results. Enter the number of students scoring at each level for each trait from the tally worksheet into the Table of Results. Percentages, means, standard deviations, and the total number of students are automatically shown on the Excel sheet

