

# INCREASING OUR REACH WHILE PRESERVING QUALITY: CREATING AND USING INFORMATION LITERACY ASSESSMENTS AND RUBRICS FOR NON-LIBRARIANS

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## JUSTIFYING RUBRICS

Administrations and accreditation teams want proof that library Information Literacy (IL) initiatives are effectively educating their students. The United States Department of Education, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU), Education Policy and Improvement Center (EPIC), and Educational Policy Institute (EPI) are all encouraging educational institutions to focus on content mastered instead of content covered or class attended. With this move to mastery, libraries need to find ways to assess their students' mastery of IL content throughout a program of study or degree track, not just during a one-shot or even a credit-bearing IL course. Part of assessing programmatic learning is using standard rubrics so the same criteria are used across a department, school, or institution.

Creating and using rubrics allow libraries to increase their reach without requiring more librarian time, while demonstrating the quality of their IL programs and outcomes. The use of a common rubric provides standard assessment points between librarians, for commonality of data collected and similarity in those measurements. Rubrics also allow the library to increase its reach by training the non-librarians once, in a train the trainer type event, so the non-librarians are more aware of how to develop their students' IL skills towards mastery. The non-librarian faculty can then use rubrics to evaluate IL content in their classes without a librarian's active presence.

If non-librarians and librarians work together to create department or campus-wide IL rubrics, it can demonstrate the value of librarians as peers and IL as skills to be developed (Oakleaf, Millet, & Kraus, 2011). It also allows IL content to be tied into other disciplines' and institutions' core

competencies, such as writing, reasoning and logic, and metacognition. This further integrates IL into those departments and institutions, and into the holistic education of students and their lifelong learning.

## CREATING RUBRICS

Objectives are clearly stated in a course so that students know what is expected of them, and instructions are also explicitly given for assignments so that students know how to complete them. Faculty want their students to understand what is expected of them. The correlation between instructions and rubrics is as critical as the relationship between assignment instructions and student success: assignment instructions plainly illustrate how to complete an assignment and the grading rubric should plainly state how the assignment will be graded. The rubric is the foundation of assessing and aligning course objectives. As the assignment illustrates the mastery of the objective, so the grading rubric measures the degree of mastery.

Another common bond is the language that is used in the instructions and grading rubric. Terminology and expressions used in the assignment instructions should also be reflected in the grading rubric. When students recognize discourse in the rubrics that was present in the assignment instructions, they can connect the dots between the assignment and the grading rubric.

As the grading rubric is aligned with the instructions and objectives, it is essential that the rubric only assess what the assignment stipulates; it should not evaluate anything that is not covered or specified in the instructions. It is also important that the rubric evaluates fairly; point distribution should reflect the same level of emphasis placed during instruction.

As the rubric language reflects the language in the instructions, the wording should be specific and positive such as

- The student used three or more scholarly journals vs. the student did not use all scholarly journals.

As you envision the rubric with rows and columns, the specific language will be used in the cells where the rows and columns intersect. In most grading rubrics, the far left column will contain the criteria also known as the dimensions or characteristics of the assignment while the columns will specify the level of mastery of the assignment.

As an example in an Annotated Bibliography, the dimensions or characteristics that are being evaluated could be Types of Resources, Formatting, Citation Style, and the levels of mastery may be excellent, good, fair, and poor, complementing the school's grading scale.

Most designers suggest having an even number of columns to avoid the stereotypical middle ground/average/medium category. Graders may be tempted to classify mediocre assignments in an average category that occurs with odd numbers levels of assessment. With an even number of columns, the grader is forced to decide the degree of mastery the student attained for each dimension or criterion.

To create an even-numbered column grading rubric, first articulate the language for the two extremes: create the excellent category for each dimension and then create the absolute opposite, the poor category. Once the two ends of the spectrum have been identified, then the middle two columns should be worded to equalize and balance the boundaries.

When grading rubrics reinforce the objectives of which assignments demonstrate the mastery, students understand that the rubric fairly assesses the proficiency of the objective. And when the positive, specific language is used in the grading rubric, students should theoretically be able to score the assignment comparable to the instructor. With clean, intuitive design, grading rubrics can enable instructors in all disciplines to score any assignment with minimal subjectivity and maximum consistency.

## **APPLICATION I**

The LOEX 2013 presentation transitioned to the first application session where groups work together to create a single item rubric (Appendix A). The example was read, the audience was given five minutes to develop their one item rubric, and the presenters walked around the room answering questions. After five minutes, groups presented their rubric and shared how creating specific points takes time. This reaffirmed Oakleaf's (2008) findings on the limitations and dangers of using rubrics.

## **NORMING RUBRICS**

Bresciani et al. (2009) found a "remarkable level of agreement among judges in the use of the one rubric with evaluated undergraduate, masters, and doctorate level research in multiple disciplines" without norming, which seems to negate the need for norming (p. 4). The authors then hedge this by stating the process used to make the rubric included a broad range of faculty, many of whom were later using the rubric, and was very extensive, so it may have informally normed the rubric before it was used. At the authors' institution, IL rubric use resulted in more severe evaluation by librarians than non-librarians, so norming was used.

When conducting norming exercises, explain to the faculty what they can expect from it. Detail what the session will accomplish for them and their students, as well as its importance for accreditation, assessment, and other reasons. When the faculty have gathered, show them how to use the rubric by walking them through it. Next, have the faculty assess one paper or project actively together. Then have the faculty do a few by themselves. Review these as a group, with input from the faculty on why they gave these assessments, so they can come to a consensus on how and why each part of the rubric is applied. End by allowing the faculty to do their own assessments with the rubric. After the norming session, Blackboard allows administrators to check rubrics in classes to demonstrate that the faculty are staying consistent and valid. If one's learning management system does not permit this, one may norm or spot check rubrics from classes on a predetermined schedule.

## **APPLICATION II**

The presentation transitioned to the second application session during which the presenters demonstrated assessing one entry of the example annotated bibliography (Appendix C) with the second rubric (Appendix B). The presenters then asked the audience to rate one and explain their rating. Groups worked together for five minutes to assess the rest of the bibliography, and then shared their assessments with the rest of the audience. Some lessons from the audience were to make sure each part of the rubric evaluated only one idea or learning outcome, and that the rubrics can be used by librarians to assess one-shots by tracking student improvement from projects submitted before and after the instruction session.

## **IMPLEMENTING RUBRICS**

With the upgrade to Blackboard version 9.1 a useful tool that allows rubrics to be directly embedded into the assignment is available. Instead of the instructor having to refer to the rubric in a separate window the instructor can now utilize the embedded rubric tool provided through Blackboard. Through this tool, the instructor is able to assign points, make comments, and submit the rubric to automatically update the Grade Center within Blackboard. This function saves the instructor time and is more convenient for both the instructor and student. The following paragraphs will address the

implementation of embedded rubrics, guidelines for successful implementation of embedding rubrics, and some common troubleshooting tips.

The first step to implementing embedded rubrics is to determine if these types of rubrics are needed. In some instances the course may not be conducive to accepting embedded rubrics. Before creating embedded rubrics, take into account factors such as the instructor's technological abilities, amount of time spent creating the rubric, size of the course being taught, and the number of instructors. If it is determined to embed rubrics into the course, then the instructor must determine how the rubrics should be implemented.

Implementation can be done in two ways. First, a unique rubric can be created for each assignment. This rubric can be unique to the course and assignment which would require the course designer to create the rubric from a blank template. This causes additional time to be used for creation but is beneficial as it ensures specificity of assignment expectations. Secondly, the instructor could employ an embedded rubric that has been used or created in another course. To do this, he/she would export from the course the rubric is in and then import the file within the course he/she would like the embedded rubric. Once a rubric is created within a course it can be used for multiple assignments.

As with any task, it is a good idea to plan before creating. When creating embedded rubrics, keep the following information in mind. First, make sure that the rubric is easy to understand and follow. Since the rubric is a type of measuring tool, its reliability and validity is important (Stellmack et al., 2009). So make sure the language is clear, the student expectations are specifically stated, information is not duplicated from the assignment instructions, and the sum of the points add to the correct sum.

Secondly, make certain the format of points for the embedded rubric matches that of the entire structure of the course (whether it is with points, percentages, or point ranges). If the course is set up with percentages make sure the rubric is set to percentages also. The default setting is percentage so this will have to be changed if the course is to be calculated with points. Thirdly, ensure that the different grading levels are reflected with columns and rows in a way that is easy to understand and is consistent through the entirety of the course. A variance in the standard of receiving an A or a B should be consistent throughout the course.

Fourth, make sure to include a Word document or PDF so the rubric is accessible to the students. Otherwise, the students will not be able to see how the assignments will be graded prior to the completion of the assignment. If students do not know the assignment expectations prior to completion, their scores will be negatively impacted. Finally, ensure that other faculty or instructors are trained and able to use embedded rubrics. Many courses are designed solely for use of the developing professor. However, variant models of course design allow for a central course creator with multiple course facilitators. If this is the case, each facilitator must understand

how to use embedded rubrics. This can be completed through seminars or can simply be completed by providing a document to instructors that details how the rubric is to be used.

As with any technology, there are some common issues that require troubleshooting. Though Blackboard works hard to eliminate technical problems, some still remain. Common problems with embedded rubrics include inability of students to see their grades, point totals not matching, and incapability to link with the SafeAssign tool. By default, the student is unable to see the completed rubric once the instructor has graded the assignment using the rubric he/she created. The instructor must set the rubric to be seen by students with the rubric score. After the rubric is completed, the points may not add to the correct total. When creating the rubric, revise the points several times for accuracy. If a problem with points persists, the rubric can easily be adjusted. Finally, embedded rubrics are compatible with the plagiarism tool SafeAssign. The process of linking SafeAssign and embedded rubrics is different than that used to link other assignments.

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## REFERENCES

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Oakleaf, M., Millet, M. S., & Kraus, L. (2011). All together now: Getting faculty, administrators, and staff engaged in information literacy assessment. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 11(3), 831-852.

Stellmack, M. A., Konheim-Kalkstein, Y. L., Manor, J. E., Massey, A. R., & Schmitz, J. P. (2009). An Assessment of Reliability and Validity of a Rubric for Grading APA-Style Introductions. *Teaching Of Psychology*, 36(2), 102-107.

## APPENDIX A

**ACRL Information Literacy Competency (IL) Standard 5:** The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

*Performance Indicator 3:* The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.

Outcome a: Selects an appropriate documentation style and uses it consistently to cite sources

**Direction:**

1. Each entry must be cited in MLA format: 7<sup>th</sup> edition, <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?pid=1223>

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Poor
Citation in MLA format?	Totally correct citation	Have the correct information but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not formatted correctly or not in correct order</li> <li>or</li> <li>• missing information.</li> </ul>	Have most of the key information (author, title, year, and publisher or journal title), but missing some information; and not in correct order or not formatted correctly	Missing key information, not formatted correctly, and not in correct order.

**ACRL Information Literacy Competency (IL) Standard 3:** The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

*Performance Indicator 2:* The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Outcomes:

- a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias
- b. Analyzes the structure and logic of supporting arguments or methods
- c. Recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation
- d. Recognizes the cultural, physical, or other context within which the information was created and understands the impact of context on interpreting the information

**Direction:**

1. Add a measurable outcome from the IL standard and performance indicator listed above.
2. Create four levels of measurement that assess that outcome

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Poor

## APPENDIX B

**ACRL Information Literacy Competency (IL) Standard 3:** The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

*Performance Indicator 2:* The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Outcomes:

- e. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias

**Direction:**

- 2. Each entry must be annotated with grammatically correct sentences, answering all the following questions:
  - i. How did you find the source?

What search strategy was used to locate and evaluate each item?	<b>Excellent</b> Complete sentence(s) explain the search strategy (e.g., search terms, limiters or expanders, etc.) and reason for selecting this item.	<b>Good</b> Either list most but not all of the search and selection steps in complete sentence(s), or list all of the steps, but not in complete sentence(s).	<b>Acceptable</b> List some of the steps in searching for and selecting the item, but not in a complete sentence(s).	<b>Poor</b> List the search term(s), but not in a complete sentence(s).

## APPENDIX C

### REFERENCES

"History of India." *Maps of India*. N.p., 30 Nov. 2011. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.

I searched Google.com for "History of India" to find this website. I chose it from the first page of results because the site was established in 1988 and it had been updated often proving that the information is current and revised as the years progressed. This also seems to make it more dependable.

Ninian, Alex. "From Calcutta To Kolkata And Back." *Contemporary Review* 294.1704 (2012): 63-68. *Academic Search Alumni Edition*. Web. 5 Dec. 2012.

I found this popular magazine article by searching EBSCOhost for "History of India" and limiting the results to magazines. I chose it because it has more research and factual information in it than personal opinion and carries more weight in showing people the true history of India.

Robb, Peter. *A History of India*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002. Print.

I found this book by searching LUCAS for "History of India." The LUCAS search yielded a long list of sources, but I chose this particular book because from the Lucas preview of this book it appears that there was a wide variety of information regarding all the stages of the history of India.

Sharma, A. "Redirecting the History of India." *JOURNAL OF DHARMA* 28.2 (2003): 246-59. Print.

I found this scholarly article by searching Academic Search Complete for "History of India" and "History," and limiting the results to scholarly journals. I picked this article because the information within was very relevant to the forces that shaped the history of India.

Smith, Vincent A. *The Oxford History of India*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958. Print.

I found this book by searching WorldCat.org for "History of India." The results were numerous but I chose this book particularly because it was both scholarly and incorporated the British view of the history of India.

