

Assessment Rubrics: What's Important to Enabling Students?

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University-based enabling programs are an important pathway for non-traditional students aspiring to enter university education. The academic ability within these groups tends to be diverse but generally lower at commencement compared to traditional undergraduate entrants due to diminished educational opportunity from personal and socio-cultural influences. Information about written assignments needs to provide adequate direction and positive, constructive feedback so students can quickly develop their academic skills in preparation for undergraduate study. Assessment rubrics are an important tool that are generally created or adopted by the unit coordinator; with or without consultation of teaching staff. Currently, there is limited knowledge of how students use rubrics; both as a source of feedback and to inform attempts of future assessments. There is also an absence of research asking enabling students what they would find most useful in an assessment rubric for these purposes. Students enrolled in Murdoch University's enabling programs were asked to complete an anonymous, online questionnaire asking their perspective on the purpose of one of their essay assessment rubrics, and how they used it in practice. The results showed that 95% of students believed the rubric was designed to be used by both students and their tutors. Approximately 60% of respondents looked at the rubric both before and after they submitted their essay. However, 16% of students only looked at the rubric before they submitted their essay to try and work out what the tutor wanted in their essay. Almost half of respondents (43%) did not completely understand their grade when they received their marked essay and rubric back from their tutor. Following the questionnaire, students were invited to participate in a workshop where, as a group, they designed an assessment rubric that they believed would be most useful for their purposes, and these prototypes will be shared during this presentation before being trialled next semester.

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