



What's Good Enough? Setting Standards

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1. Terminology

- a. Outcomes: what students are expected to know, do, value
- b. Standards: define the levels of performance on the outcomes so decisions or classifications can be made
- c. Benchmark: a reference by which to measure; for comparison
- d. Performance categories (see performance descriptions handout)

2. Purpose: give scores meaning

- a. Clarify performance expectations
- b. Motivate greater levels of achievement
- c. Allocate resources
- d. Decide whether to award certificate, license, credit
- e. **Increase faculty engagement**

3. Key concepts

- a. Informed judgment: machines cannot set standards; informed participants need to do so
- b. Borderline student: the just good enough student; barely meets expectations; minimally competent practitioner

4. The session

- a. Explain purpose
- b. Describe consequences (use of results)
- c. Describe characteristics of the student group, their task/exam, scoring procedure
- d. Explain "borderline student"
- e. Carry out the process

5. Activity: Rubric-based method

- 1) Orientation
- 2) Practice, share, reflect

- 3) Estimate average score a borderline student will receive
 - 4) Collect average scores
 - 5) Share, reflect: to better understand one's own and others' rationale, not to force consensus
 - 6) Discuss. Revise
 - 7) Facilitators average participants' scores to obtain the "cut score"
6. Paper selection method
- 1) Orientation
 - 2) Review work from each score point without knowing scores
 - 3) Select work that represents borderline student
 - 4) Share, reflect: to better understand one's own and others' rationale, not to force consensus
 - 5) Revise selections of work
 - 6) Later, facilitators average the scores of selected work to obtain the cut score
7. Activity: Multiple-choice exam
- 1) Orientation
 - 2) Take exam
 - 3) Practice estimating probabilities
 - 4) Estimate probability that a borderline student will answer correctly
 - 5) Sum individual panelists' probabilities
 - 6) Share, reflect: to better understand one's own and others' rationale, not to force consensus
 - 7) Revise probabilities
 - 8) Facilitators average the summed probabilities to obtain the cut score
8. Set benchmarks/targets
- a. E.g., 95% will meet expectations (i.e., "4" or higher on the rubric)
 - b. Crucial outcomes: err on the side of a higher standard
 - c. Use previous years, national pass rates, professional accreditation requirements

9. Facilitation tips

Mahalo (thank you) for attending!



Performance Category Descriptions: Written Communication & Information Literacy¹

The descriptions are summative: the descriptions of *Does Not Meet Expectations* are assumed for the *Meets Expectations*.

Objective	Does Not Meet Expectations for SENIOR Level	Meets Expectations for SENIOR Level
Written Communication	Develops and presents coherent and substantially error-free writing for communication.	Constructs sustained, cogent arguments, narratives or explications of issues, problems or technical issues and processes, in writing
Information Literacy	Identifies, categorizes, and cites multiple information resources so as to create projects, papers or performances.	Locates, evaluates, incorporates, and properly cites multiple information resources so as to create projects, papers or performances in either a specialized field of study or with respect to a general theme.

Performance Description: Political Science BA Subject Knowledge

Note: the description is summative; the description of *Does Not Meet* is assumed for the *Meets Expectations*.

Objective	Does Not Meet Expectations for SENIOR Level	Meets Expectations for SENIOR Level
Political Science subject knowledge	Identify political science terms and methods in these areas: American politics, comparative politics, and international politics and global relations.	Apply political science terms, methods, and theory in these areas: American politics, comparative politics, and international politics and global relations.

¹ Adapted from the *Degree Qualifications Profile*

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

[ADAPTED, UNIV. OF HAWAI‘I-MĀNOA ASSESSMENT OFFICE]

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Definition. Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet “1” (column one) level performance.

	4	3	2	1
Context of and Purpose for Writing <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject , conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions* <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields</i>	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses polished language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

*Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, organization/structure, logic, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic.



Recording Form: Performance Expectation for Written Communication

Your name: _____

What is the average score on the rubric that a borderline student will receive?

You may use up to one decimal place, e.g., 0.8, 1.6, 2.2, 3.5.

Round 1 <u>before discussion</u>	Round 2 <u>after discussion</u>

Facilitation Tips

- A. **Follow general facilitation recommendations**¹ such as listen as an ally, validate every voice, get everyone to contribute, redirect inappropriate responses, etc.

Calling attention to an issue usually settles it. For example, simply stating, “I notice that we are speaking loudly to each other” is usually sufficient to create awareness and reduce the volume (loudness typically signals conflict emerging and people not feeling heard). Or, “we are interrupting each other and general ground rules state that one person at a time should talk” can reduce interruptions. Don’t diagnose, just state the observation.
- B. **Establish a clear reason** for setting standards that aligns with the campus/program’s assessment culture (e.g., if program assessment is for improvement, a reason may be to clarify performance expectations for faculty and students and encourage higher achievement).
- C. **Explain the consequences** for the institution, program, individual faculty, and individual students. Address fears by clarifying how standards will and will not be used.
- D. **Borderline student: will vs. should meet expectations.** I use *will*. *Should* seems to encourage personal reactions. *Should* represents an idealized, higher standard than *will*. If a borderline group is defined as a hypothetical group regardless of the actual students, *should* is likely more appropriate. If a borderline group is defined as a group of actual students (e.g., “our seniors”), *will* is likely appropriate.
- E. Session discussion is to **encourage participant self-reflection and increase understanding** from multiple perspectives (not to reach 100% agreement).
- F. With rubrics & student papers, ask faculty to read & score student work before attending the session.
- G. With student papers/projects, place the instructor guidelines after the student work so that faculty read the student work first and can reference the guidelines if needed.
- H. With exams, have faculty take the exam under similar conditions as the students.

¹ Facilitation sources consulted:

Brilhard, J.K. & Galanes, G.J. (1989). *Effective Group Discussion*. 6th Ed. Dubuque, IA: Brown.

Sanaghan, P. & Gabriel, P.A. (2011). *Collaborative Leadership in Action: A Field Guide for Creating Meetings That Make a Difference*. Amherst: HRD Press.



MULTIPLE-CHOICE EXAM STANDARD-SETTING ACTIVITY

Political Science BA Exit Exam (excerpt)

QUESTION	What is the probability that a <u>borderline student</u> will answer correctly?	
	Round 1	Round 2
1. A semipresidential system has a A. dual executive selected by a council of military and civilian leaders B. single executive selected by direct popular vote C. single executive and a unicameral legislature D. head of government chosen by the head of state E. President and a Prime Minister who share executive power		
2. The international economic order established by the Bretton Woods agreements included all of the following EXCEPT A. trade liberalization B. a gold standard for currency C. a means for currency liquidity D. assistance for reconstruction and development E. floating exchange rates		
3. In international relations, which of the following posits the peaceful benefits of having one dominant power in the international system? A. Hegemonic stability theory B. World system theory C. Balance of power theory D. Dependency theory E. Neoliberal theory		
4. The argument that mass culture tends to stabilize a system of political domination is most characteristic of which of the following? A. Liberalism B. Conservatism C. Critical theory D. Leninism E. Libertarianism		
5. Typically, developing countries endowed with large deposits of oil experience which of the following? A. Rapid democratic consolidation B. Slower economic growth than other developing countries C. Insulation from economic threats posed by changes in the global economy D. Low levels of corruption, on average E. Rapid industrialization because they can invest oil profits in other areas of the economy		

Source: ETS