

Achieving Internal Consistency with School-Wide Rubrics

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Below we describe three structures that we have used in our departments to promote consistent expectations for student work using our school-wide rubrics. These can be used in a variety of configurations and for several different purposes. We use them 1) to make sure we are giving consistent, fair grades when two or more teachers assess a common assignment, 2) to maintain consistency among colleagues who teach a solo course to make sure that the unique assignments in that class are graded on par with similar classes at that level, and 3) to examine our standards and expectations department-wide to ensure a logical progression in expectations as students progress through the program.

We tried to get our practices down clearly on paper, but want to emphasize that we freely adapt these structures to meet our purposes. When time is limited, we adjust. When clear areas for further discussion emerge, we decide what is essential to agree on for now, and what we need to discuss in future meetings.

For any norming session, we recommend...

- bring photocopies of student work and copies of the rubric for each participant
- remove the student name(s) to reduce bias
- establish some baseline expectations at the outset. For instance, is this a brand new assignment where all participants are equally contributing to establishing expectations? Is this a type of assignment where expectations are already benchmarked to some existing anchor papers?
- Keep to time limits!

Norming in pairs/trios

Time: 15-30 minutes

Goal: Achieve consistency on a common assessment.

This approach works well when two or three teachers teach sections of the same class with common assessments. It is also a good approach to take when time is tight but you still want to reserve time to align expectations.

To prepare for the meeting:

- Select 2-4 student work samples from your class.
- Prior to meeting, assess those in pencil using the rubric.

In the meeting:

- Each teacher brings 2-4 samples of assessed work.
- Frame the meeting with specific questions that arose for you while assessing.
- Trade assessments with each other and read the assignments and the assessment, noting where you may have assessed the work differently and where you are in alignment.
- Discuss as needed to align expectations.
- If time, assess one or two more papers side by side to check your alignment.

Norming in rounds

Time: 30-45 minutes

Goal: Achieve consistency on a common assessment OR align expectations among department members
This approach works equally well for aligning standards on a common assessment OR for working toward consistent expectations in different classes. Be clear up front which outcome you seek; when our colleagues use this method to align expectations department-wide, we act in more of an advisory capacity than when we aim to give the same score on a shared assignment.

To prepare for the meeting:

- One teacher selects and copies 2-3 samples of student work and rubrics for each participant.
- Identify a facilitator who will keep discussion on track during the meeting.

In the meeting:

- Start with one piece of student work. Take 5-10 minutes to read and score the work individually.
- Once everyone is done scoring the work, discuss each major category in the rubric.
 - *Option A:* Discuss in rounds, where each person at the table contributes their thinking around one category before the group moves on to the next. Track key areas of consensus as the discussion progresses.
 - *Option B:* Project a digital rubric on a white board. Each person places checks on the projected rubric matching their own rubric. Look for areas where the group held common agreement and where the range of the assessment was wider. Discuss these differences.
 - *Option C:* Start with the final assessment, asking everyone in the room to share their overall assessment, backing the decision with specific areas of the rubric.
- After reaching consensus, distribute the second work sample and repeat the process. Note where the group is better aligned than with the first piece of work.

Norming to established expectations

Time: 30-45 minutes

Goal: Achieve consistency on a common assessment OR align expectations among department members
This method works when you have an anchor paper or other exemplar that can be used as a basis for better unpacking the language of the rubric. We sometimes use this method with past exemplars that already met our standards, but we also sometimes task a colleague with selecting work samples that, in her judgment, already hit these marks, and we then calibrate to these standards.

To prepare for the meeting:

One teacher selects a piece of work that meets standards (e.g. "Level 4" or "A" work) and one that does not (e.g. "Level 3" or "B" work) and copies these for group members, along with copies of the rubric.

In the meeting:

Start with the piece of work that meets (or nearly meets) standards. Each participant reads the work silently, annotating the rubric to determine where/how the student meets the criteria. Once all participants are ready, discuss in rounds where and why the work meets standards, identifying specific places in the work sample that exemplify the expectations.

Move to the second work sample that does not yet meet standards. Read the work individually and assess it using the rubric. Once all participants are ready, discuss in rounds the scores in each category and the feedback the student would receive, referring to specific parts of the work sample.

If desired, repeat with a third work sample.