Assessing Student Learning

AGENDA

- Principles of Outcomes-based Assessment (powerpoint)
- Some General Advice on Grading and Giving Effective Feedback (handout)
- Understanding Niagara College Grading Policies (links included)
- Advice on Relating to Students
- Some Cases for Discussion
Assessing Student Learning

Centre for Academic Excellence

Mary Wilson
October 24, 2013
What are learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes are the essential and enduring knowledge, abilities (skills) and attitudes (values and dispositions) that constitute the integrated learning needed by a graduate of a course or program.

Setting learning outcomes can help...

• **instructors** to align instructional strategies, learning activities and assessment measures to achieve desired outcomes
• **students** to understand what is expected of them and the purpose of the course in their program
• **colleagues** to understand how their course might fit into the fabric of curriculum
• **employers** and other stakeholders to understand how our students are being educated
What are the characteristics of GOOD learning outcomes statements?

Good learning outcomes statements use action words to define what a student should know and realistically be able to do following engagement over time with a specific set of structured learning experiences.
Cognitive (Knowledge)

What will students know?

remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, create, define, identify, describe, differentiate, explain, apply, analyse, resolve, justify, recommend, judge, create

Psychomotor (Skills)

What will students be able to do?

imitate, manipulate, precision, articulation, naturalization, adapt, arrange, build, calibrate, construct, design, deliver, demonstrate, display, dissect, fix, mimic, operate, sketch, use, perform

Affective (Attitudes, Values or Habits of Mind)

What will students value or care about?

receive, respond, value, organize, characterize, challenge, demonstrate, discuss, dispute, follow, justify, integrate, practice, judge, question, resolve
What are the characteristics of GOOD learning outcomes statements?

Good learning outcome statements outline the **standards, conditions and terms** which must be met by students and specify the **degree of sophistication** in learning intended for students.
Standards, Conditions and Terms

- under time constraints or no time constraints
- open or closed-book
- in a simulated or real environment
- after one attempt or after multiple attempts
- individually or as a member of a group
- using any method or only following a specific series of steps

Degree of Sophistication

- novice
- intermediate
- advanced
What are the characteristics of GOOD learning outcomes statements?

Good learning outcomes statements focus on **observable, measurable** behaviours that can be used to gauge students’ successful achievement of learning objectives.
observable, measurable behaviours consist of...

• what a student writes
• what a student does
• what a student says
Some important questions to consider for an outcomes-driven approach to assessing student learning:

• Is the desired learning outcome the result of intentionally constructed and cultivated learning experiences tied to the lesson, course or program?

• How is the learning outcome observable and measurable and clearly related to a specified standard or set of conditions?

• Is the learning outcome attainable for most students with their prior knowledge and skill and in the time available?

• Does the learning outcome matter? Is it associated with greater curriculum aims?
SWiBAT – a helpful acronym to refer to when starting to prepare your course assessments:

SWiBAT (Student Will Be Able To) + Active verb (from Bloom’s taxonomy) + Condition (as a result of) + Measurement (as measured by or as demonstrated by ...) + When (at what timeline).
SWiBAT – a helpful acronym to refer to when starting to prepare your course assessments:

SWiBAT (Student Will Be Able To) + Active verb (from Bloom’s taxonomy) + Condition (as a result of) + Measurement (as measured by or as demonstrated by ...) + When (at what timeline).

A successful graduate of this course will be able to identify brain structures on physical models of the brain and describe their normal and abnormal neuro-chemical functions in relation to stimuli using equations and written descriptions of perception processes.
Good assessment and feedback practices should:

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards). To what extent do students in your course have opportunities to engage actively with goals, criteria and standards, before, during and after an assessment task?

2. Encourage ‘time and effort’ on challenging learning tasks. To what extent do your assessment tasks encourage regular study in and out of class and deep rather than surface learning?

3. Deliver high quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct. What kind of teacher feedback do you provide – in what ways does it help students self-assess and self-correct?

4. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes activate your students’ motivation to learn and be successful?

5. Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher student). What opportunities are there for feedback dialogue (peer and/or tutor-student) around assessment tasks in your course?

Good assessment and feedback practices should:

6. Facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning. To what extent are there formal opportunities for reflection, self-assessment or peer assessment in your course?

7. Give learners choice in assessment – content and processes. To what extent do students have choice in the topics, methods, criteria, weighting and/or timing of learning and assessment tasks in your course?

8. Involve students in decision-making about assessment policy and practice. To what extent are your students in your course kept informed or engaged in consultations regarding assessment decisions?

9. Support the development of learning communities. To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes help support the development of learning communities?

10. Help teachers adapt teaching to student needs. To what extent do your assessment and feedback processes help inform and shape your teaching?

Matching Learning Outcomes to Assessment Techniques

There are many good options for assessing student achievement of learning outcomes, but start by checking out:

*Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty*  
by Patricia Cross and Tom Angelo  

*Assessment for Learning* by Rita Berry  
*Assessment and Learning* by John Gardner  
*Classroom Assessment : Enhancing the Quality of Teacher Decision Making* by Lorin W. Anderson

Available as e-texts through the Niagara College Library.
cognitive (thinking)

affective (feeling)

psychomotor (doing)

BLOOM’S REVISED TAXONOMY

Creating
Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things
Designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing.

Evaluating
Justifying a decision or course of action
Checking, hypothesising, critiquing, experimenting, judging

Analysing
Breaking information into parts to explore understandings and relationships
Comparing, organising, deconstructing, interrogating, finding

Applying
Using information in another familiar situation
Implementing, carrying out, using, executing

Understanding
Explaining ideas or concepts
Interpreting, summarising, paraphrasing, classifying, explaining

Remembering
Recalling information
Recognising, listing, describing, retrieving, naming, finding

Higher-order thinking
Domains of Learning

Cognitive (Knowledge, ‘Head’)

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. There are six major categories, which are listed in order below, starting from the simplest behavior to the most complex. The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulties. That is, the first one must be mastered before the next one can take place.

Create
combining elements into a pattern not clearly there before
Verbs: combine, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, hypothesize

Evaluate
according to some set of criteria, and state why
Verbs: appraise, judge, criticize, defend, compare

Analyze
breaking down into parts, forms
Verbs: break down, correlate, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, infer, prioritize, separates, subdivide

Apply
Knowing when to apply; why to apply; and recognizing patterns of transfer to situations that are new or unfamiliar
Verbs: compute, construct, determine, develop, implement, operationalize, predict, produce, relate, show, solve, use, utilize

Understand
translating, interpreting and extrapolating
Verbs: summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss

Remember
shallow processing: drawing out factual answers, testing recall and recognition
Verbs: list, arrange, define, describe, identify, show, label, name, who, when, where
Psychomotor (Skills, ‘Hands’)

The psychomotor domain includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution.

---

**Origination:**
Creating new patterns to react to particular situations. Emphasis on creativity based on highly developed skills.
Verbs: builds, combines, composes.

---

**Adaptation:**
Skills are well-developed and the individual can modify to fit special requirements.
Verbs: adapts, alters, revises.

---

**Complex Overt Response:**
Skillful performance that involves complex movement patterns. Proficient in speed and accuracy.
Verbs: Same as Mechanism, but will have adverbs that indicate performance is quicker, more accurate and automatic.

---

**Mechanism:**
Intermediate skill in learning a complex skill. Includes habituation and proficiency.
Verbs: assembles, constructs, dismantles, displays.

---

**Guided Response:**
Early stages in learning a complex skill. Involves imitation and trial & error.
Verbs: copies, traces, follows, reproduces, responds.

---

**Set:**
Readiness to act includes mental, physical and emotional sets.
Verbs: begins, displays, moves, proceeds.
Affective (Attitudes, ‘Heart’)

This domain includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes.

**Internalizing (characterization):**
A value system that controls behaviour. Behaviour is pervasive, consistent, predictable, and characteristic of the values held.
Verbs: acts, proposes, discriminates

**Organization:**
Values organized into priorities. The emphasis is on comparing, relating, and synthesizing values.
Verbs: arranges, integrates, synthesizes, defends

**Valuing:**
Is based on the internalization of a set of values, and are expressed in overt and identifiable behaviour.
Verbs: Demonstrates, proposes, initiates, justifies

**Responding:**
Active participation. Attends to and demonstrates compliance, willingness or satisfaction in responding.
Verbs: complies, conforms, assists

**Receiving:**
Awareness. Willingness to hear. Selected Action.
Verbs: chooses, asks, replies, selects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>define</td>
<td>explain</td>
<td>solve</td>
<td>analyze</td>
<td>reframe</td>
<td>design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify</td>
<td>describe</td>
<td>apply</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>criticize</td>
<td>compose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe</td>
<td>interpret</td>
<td>illustrate</td>
<td>classify</td>
<td>evaluate</td>
<td>create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>label</td>
<td>modify</td>
<td>use</td>
<td>contrast</td>
<td>order</td>
<td>plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list</td>
<td>summarize</td>
<td>change</td>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>appraise</td>
<td>plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>classify</td>
<td>calculate</td>
<td>infer</td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>invent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>separate</td>
<td>separate</td>
<td>support</td>
<td>invent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>match</td>
<td>differentiate</td>
<td>choose</td>
<td>explain</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>hypothesize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognize</td>
<td>discuss</td>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>select</td>
<td>decide</td>
<td>substitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>select</td>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>discover</td>
<td>categorize</td>
<td>discriminate</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examine</td>
<td>extend</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>connect</td>
<td>recommend</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locate</td>
<td>predict</td>
<td>relate</td>
<td>differentiate</td>
<td>summarize</td>
<td>explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memorize</td>
<td>associate</td>
<td>show</td>
<td>discriminate</td>
<td>assess</td>
<td>evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quote</td>
<td>contrast</td>
<td>sketch</td>
<td>divide</td>
<td>choose</td>
<td>generalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recall</td>
<td>convert</td>
<td>complete</td>
<td>order</td>
<td>convince</td>
<td>integrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reproduce</td>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>construct</td>
<td>point out</td>
<td>defend</td>
<td>modify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabulate</td>
<td>estimate</td>
<td>dramatize</td>
<td>prioritize</td>
<td>estimate</td>
<td>organize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell</td>
<td>interpret</td>
<td>manipulate</td>
<td>subdivide</td>
<td>find errors</td>
<td>prepare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copy</td>
<td>express</td>
<td>paint</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>grade</td>
<td>produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discover</td>
<td>indicate</td>
<td>prepare</td>
<td>advertise</td>
<td>measure</td>
<td>rearrange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duplicate</td>
<td>infer</td>
<td>produce</td>
<td>appraise</td>
<td>predict</td>
<td>rewrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enumerate</td>
<td>relate</td>
<td>report</td>
<td>comprise</td>
<td>break down</td>
<td>role-play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen</td>
<td>restate</td>
<td>teach</td>
<td>advertise</td>
<td>calculate</td>
<td>adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observe</td>
<td>select</td>
<td>act</td>
<td>advertise</td>
<td>conclude</td>
<td>anticipate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omit</td>
<td>translate</td>
<td>administer</td>
<td>correlate</td>
<td>criticize</td>
<td>arrange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>ask</td>
<td>articulate</td>
<td>argue</td>
<td>conclude</td>
<td>assemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recite</td>
<td>cite</td>
<td>chart</td>
<td>deduce</td>
<td>consider</td>
<td>choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>record</td>
<td>discover</td>
<td>collect</td>
<td>devise</td>
<td>critique</td>
<td>collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repeat</td>
<td>generalize</td>
<td>compute</td>
<td>diagram</td>
<td>debate</td>
<td>devise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retell</td>
<td>give examples</td>
<td>determine</td>
<td>disteck</td>
<td>estimate</td>
<td>express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visualize</td>
<td>group</td>
<td>develop</td>
<td>evaluate</td>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>facilitate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Knowledge**: Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create
- **Understanding**: define, identify, describe, label, list, name, state, match, recognize, select, examine, locate, memorize, quote, recall, reproduce, tabulate, tell, copy, discover, duplicate, enumerate, listen, observe, omit, read, recite, record, repeat, retell, visualize
- **Application**: explain, describe, interpret, modify, summarize, classify, compare, differentiate, discuss, distinguish, extend, predict, associate, contrast, convert, demonstrate, construct, dramatize, manipulate, paint, prepare, produce, report, teach, act, administer, articulate, chart, collect, compute, determine, develop, employ, establish, examine, explain, interview, judge, list, operate, practice, predict, record, schedule, simulate, transfer, write
- **Analysis**: analyze, compare, illustrate, classify, contrast, distinguish, infer, separate, explain, select, categorize, discriminate, recommend, summarize, divide, decide, discriminate, order, point out, prioritize, subdivide, survey, advertise, appraise, predict, break down, calculate, conclude, correlate, criticize, argue, deduce, devise, diagram, disscet, estimate, evaluate, experiment, focus, illustrate, organize, outline, plan, question, test
- **Evaluation**: reframe, criticize, evaluate, order, appraise, support, compare, judge, decide, discriminate, integrate, estimate, find errors, grade, measure, predict, rank, score, select, test, arrange, argue, come, consider, critique, debate, distinguish, editorialize, justify, persuade, rate, weigh
- **Creation**: design, compose, create, plan, combine, formulate, invent, hypothesize, substitute, write, compile, construct, develop, generalize, integrate, modify, prepare, produce, rearrange, rewrite, role-play, adapt, anticipate, arrange, assemble, choose, collaborate, collect, devise, express, facilitate, imagine, infer, intervene, justify, make, manage, negotiate, originate, propose, reorganize, report, revise, schematize, simulate, solve, speculate, structure, support, test, validate
### SAMPLE GRADING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN WORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAY COMPONENTS</th>
<th>F (0% - 49%)</th>
<th>D (50%– 59%) MINIMALLY ACCEPTABLE</th>
<th>C (60%– 69%) ACCEPTABLE</th>
<th>B (70% - 79%) GOOD</th>
<th>A (80% - 100%) EXCELLENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THESIS</td>
<td>▪ no evident thesis</td>
<td>▪ thesis difficult to identify vague thesis unrelated to argument central ideas or terms are undefined thesis incomplete, implausible or unconvincing</td>
<td>▪ thesis is rather general many important ideas or terms left undefined unclear statement of argument thesis presents only the obvious lacks originality</td>
<td>▪ usually clear and specific some ideas or terms left undefined some aspects of argument left unconsidered sound, but not novel</td>
<td>▪ clear, precise, thorough, and well-defined insightful and elegantly stated plausible and persuasive maybe unique and sophisticated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE</td>
<td>▪ no transitions between ideas or paragraphs incoherent paragraphs (in part or whole) jumbled structure lack of planning and revision clearly evident</td>
<td>▪ transitions between ideas or paragraphs are confused or absent topics are not arranged logically into paragraphs paragraphs lack clearly defined ideas</td>
<td>▪ awkward or abrupt transitions between ideas or paragraphs some paragraphs or ideas are too weak or undeveloped some forced ideas more than one idea in a paragraph</td>
<td>▪ most paragraphs contain introductions, conclusions and/or transitions most paragraphs are definable, containing distinct units of thought there is generally a logical flow of argument</td>
<td>▪ transitions and connections between ideas and paragraphs are clear and smooth each paragraph contains distinct units of thought and are clearly introduced and concluded paragraph arrangements are logical and conducive to a persuasive argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAMMAR AND STYLE</td>
<td>▪ failure to follow writing conventions poor sentence structure frequent grammatical errors inappropriate word choice inappropriate tone</td>
<td>▪ few writing conventions observed major grammatical errors that should have been apparent during proofreading use of clichés and colloquialisms imprecise diction numerous instances of inappropriate or irrelevant argumentation and tone</td>
<td>▪ multiple, minor errors in adherence to writing conventions some major grammatical errors (subject-verb or tense agreement, comma splices, split infinitives) unclear, wordy, awkward or imprecise diction overly emotional or informal tone</td>
<td>▪ writing conventions are observed with minimal errors some problems with punctuation, grammar or style word choice is occasionally problematic some inconsistencies in tone not much variety is sentence structure</td>
<td>▪ all writing conventions are observed without error (margins, font size, spacing, citation style) very few or no errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sophisticated and persuasive tone and diction elegant and easy to read sentence structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SAMPLE GRADING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN WORK

### STUDENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAY COMPONENTS</th>
<th>F (0% - 49%) FAIL</th>
<th>D (50% - 59%) MINIMALLY ACCEPTABLE</th>
<th>C (60% - 69%) ACCEPTABLE</th>
<th>B (70% - 79%) GOOD</th>
<th>A (80% - 100%) EXCELLENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **USE OF EVIDENCE** | • lacks understanding of key concepts  
• minimal or no use of relevant source materials  
• evidence provided does not support argument  
• lack of referencing | • inadequate understanding of key concepts  
• factual or conceptual errors  
• confused or ineffectual use of source material as evidence  
• citations are not included or structured in accordance with conventions | • basic understanding of some core ideas evident  
• use of primary and secondary sources superficial or incorrect  
• incorrect or missing references, inconsistent citation style, but conventions largely observed | • evidence of a strong appreciation for the relevant research and concepts  
• use of suitable primary and secondary sources  
• some evidence of independent research that extends beyond classroom discussions and readings  
• more persuasive supporting evidence available for use, but not integrated  
• some minor errors in referencing | • evidence of intimate familiarity with relevant research and concepts  
• rich, detailed use of primary and secondary sources that supports argument  
• use of sources extends classroom discussions and assigned readings  
• references are correctly cited |
| **ANALYSIS** | • no evidence of analysis  
• reliance on disconnected lists and inventories of data without interpretation  
• misinformation or hearsay | • shallow analysis characterized by generalizations and statement of the obvious  
• fails to include or relate evidence to main argument  
• narration or description rather than analysis  
• frequent digressions  
• weak relationship between argument and evidence | • interpretation of issues digs just below the surface of the issue, but fails to grasp full relevance  
• relationship between evidence and thesis is not always clearly defined | • analysis is cogent and multi-dimensional  
• interpretation of evidence is balanced and insightful  
• all relevant concepts are noted, examined and related to thesis  
• critical stance evident | • isolates and defines most pressing questions  
• identifies the scope of the issues at hand  
• characterizes existing arguments and associated bodies of evidence  
• evaluates, ranks and judges each component in defense of thesis  
• accounts for complexities  
• draws conclusions that unveil deeper, novel implications of the questions and issues |
## WRITING FEEDBACK SYMBOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Faulty abbreviation or contraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGR (p/a; s/v; t, #)</td>
<td>Agreement problem: pronoun/antecedent; subject/verb; tense; number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>Awkward expression or construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Faulty capitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Comma splice problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DICT</td>
<td>Faulty diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGL</td>
<td>Dangling construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAG</td>
<td>Sentence fragment (incomplete sentence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>Possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Pronoun problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>Unnecessary repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Run-on sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Spelling error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STET</td>
<td>Let it stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WD</td>
<td>Wordy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWW</td>
<td>Wrong word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Faulty parallelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Insertion (word, space, punctuation as noted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>Deletion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Transpose elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td>New paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>①</td>
<td>Good point. Well Argued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>②</td>
<td>Good critical analysis and use of evidence in support of argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③</td>
<td>This is more descriptive than analytical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④</td>
<td>A more carefully constructed statement of argument is needed here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤</td>
<td>Unclear or contradictory logic or leap in logic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥</td>
<td>Unfounded or insufficiently supported claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦</td>
<td>Statement of introduction, conclusion or transition required here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑧</td>
<td>Improper word use, phrase use or diction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑨</td>
<td>Check grammar here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑩</td>
<td>Consult with the citation style guide for proper citation of source materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPONENTS</td>
<td>A (80% - 100%) EXCELLENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABILITY TO DEFINE A TOPIC</td>
<td>▪ topic was well-defined, related to a course topic, and explored the implications of the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
<td>▪ presentation was clear, informative and thought-provoking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USE OF PERSUASION</td>
<td>▪ all ideas were persuasively conveyed without bias or reliance upon emotional appeals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITTEN CONTENT</td>
<td>▪ content was written clearly and concisely with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISUAL LAYOUT</td>
<td>▪ layout was visually pleasing and contributed to the overall message; appropriate use of headings, subheadings, and white space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABILITY TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS</td>
<td>▪ provided informed responses to questions that reflected a critical understanding of issues under consideration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Best Practices and General Advice for Grading Written Work

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with, and ensure that the students are aware of Niagara College’s grading practices.
- Discuss expectations with students and colleagues in team-taught or multi-section courses with common assessments beforehand. If you are using student self or peer assessments for formative purposes, or if there is a team of people grading the same assignment, try to arrange for time in advance of the assignment deadline to discuss its purpose and to determine and review evaluation criteria.
- Give students clear instructions for the assessment. Spend time discussing the standards for performance prior to the test date or assignment deadline. If possible, provide them with anonymous examples that will help them to distinguish between levels of performance.
- Be open to having students approach you in advance (call, e-mail, visit before or after class, book an appointment or come to your office hours) with ideas and to provide an informal review of drafts.
- Do your best to ensure that the students know the criteria that will be used for evaluating their performance, that grading is based on an objective set of criteria and that the marks that you provide will be defensible.

Time Management

- Prioritize your time. Look at your calendar at the beginning of each term and endeavour to allow for time for out of class assistance prior to assignment due dates and set aside concentrated blocks of time for grading.
- When grading written assignments (particularly essays):
  - Skim through and find the stronger and weaker papers. Sort papers into tentative piles prior to marking.
  - Mark first by giving a letter grade and then determine a specific numerical grade for papers upon completion. This will ensure greater consistency.
  - Even if you are using a rubric, use short comments throughout, and then give an elaborated general comment at the end of the assignment. Try to start with a positive comment and then highlight a few areas for improvement.
  - Keep a “cheat sheet” of commonly used comments. This is a particularly valuable practice if you are providing feedback electronically.
  - Mark a small batch of papers at a time and take a short break to regroup. The task of marking will seem less daunting. Recognize that the first few assignments will likely be the most time consuming.
  - Note consistent errors (e.g. grammatical, structure, spelling) but avoid correcting them all. For longer papers, focus your detailed comments on the first 2-3 pages.
For exams that have solutions, process drawings or short answer questions, create a grading key and mark one question or page at a time for consistency. Take a break after about 3-5 questions to avoid frustration or distraction.

Keep good records, be meticulously organized with spreadsheet management, and create a dependable and secure backup of your recorded grades.

Providing Useful Feedback

- The goal of feedback is to provide guidance on how the individual student can improve and ultimately demonstrate greater mastery of the knowledge and skills under development.
- Feedback should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.
- It is difficult for anyone to respond to feedback that reads like a personal criticism. Endeavour to write feedback that judges only the merits of the student’s work, but does not judge the student. Try to avoid the use of personal pronouns in your feedback, or when you must, use ‘I’ statements (i.e. “I did not understand...”) rather than ‘You’ statements (i.e. “You failed to explain...”).

Dealing with Students’ Concerns

- Ensure that you understand your role and responsibility for responding to students’ concerns. For details, refer to the relevant College Practices on Academic Rights and Responsibilities and Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- Adhere to institutional policies, gather all pertinent information and then make a measured, timely decision (including the decision to refer the issue when appropriate) and communicate unambiguously with the student.
- Listen respectfully to helpful feedback from students on how to improve your skills in providing feedback that will help them to advance their learning.
- Ensure that the students understand their roles and responsibilities for appealing final grades as stated on the Appeal of Academic Decisions Practice which can be found here: Academic Rights and Responsibilities.
Creating and Using Rubrics

What is a rubric?
- It is a detailed summary of the criteria that will be used to evaluate the quality of student learning.
- Rubrics differentiate potential levels of achievement by stipulating the characteristics of work that demarcate a scale of competency and mastery.

What are some of the merits of using a rubric?
- sets clear expectations for students in advance
- helps graders to be more consistent
- more efficient means of providing feedback
- thorough feedback in multiple domains
- helpful in tracking and recording student progress

Designing rubrics
1. If creating a new rubric, start by considering:
   • the desired course and program learning outcomes
   • the range students’ relevant prior knowledge and experience
   • what the students have learned in the course so far
   • the specific learning objectives to be addressed by the assignment
2. Identify specific demonstrable knowledge, observable skills, or expressed values that you do, and do not, want to see evidence of in student work.
3. Brainstorm characteristics that describe each specific attribute.
4. Create a grid by setting the appropriate range or number of levels of performance along one axis, and then list the criteria for evaluation along the other axis.
5. Populate cells in the grid with defined descriptors for each attribute along a continuum of mastery or competency.
6. Collect samples of student work that exemplify each level to serve as helpful benchmarks.
7. Revise the rubric as necessary. Be prepared to reflect on the effectiveness of the rubric and revise it prior to its next implementation.

Using rubrics
- Quickly read over the assignment and your paper. Make quick comments and note errors and problems.
- Assign it a rough letter grade.
- Re-read the paper using the rubric provided by checking, circling or highlighting specific text within the grid of the rubric.
- Assign a final grade and overall comment.
Sample Grading Guideline

Grading Scheme
This is an example of a grading guideline that might assist you in developing your grading rubric, key or checklist.

90-100% A+ Exceptional
Exceeded expectations in demonstrating knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and exceptional skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

80-89% A Excellent
Demonstrated a thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and with a very high degree of skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

70-79% B Good
Demonstrated a good knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and considerable skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

65-69% C Satisfactory
Demonstrated a satisfactory level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and competence in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

60-64% C- Low Satisfactory
Demonstrated a level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and their application to the requirements of the course that was minimally satisfactory.

50-59% D Poor
Demonstrated minimal knowledge and ability to apply concepts and/or techniques in satisfying the requirements of a course.

0-49% F Fail
Failure to meet course requirements.