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Research and evaluation
Assessment rubrics and assignment models – Student interpretations; curriculum implications

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Abstract
Marking rubrics, providing text-based descriptors of criteria at different levels, are commonplace in the higher education sector. Assignment exemplars have also been used to help students interpret marking rubrics. Here we report on research following a project carried out in a large first year undergraduate unit of study. The aim of this project was to assist students in understanding what was required in a critical reflection report assignment. Part of the approach involved an online exercise where students used a marking rubric (later used to assess their own reports) to grade and comment on a student report from a previous cohort. In tutorials, students were then provided with an ‘expert’ marker’s annotations of the same assignment and engaged in a number of related learning activities. A sample of students’ grades for and comments on the exemplar before the tutorial activities revealed a number of differences between the expert marker’s assessment and the students’ assessments. Following the tutorial activities, there was closer alignment between the students’ and expert marker’s grades and comments on several criteria. Before the tutorial activities, for example, students equated the use of theory with surface features of the exemplar report such as referencing. After the tutorial activities, students were more aware of inaccuracies in the treatment of theory in the exemplar report. Our findings underscore writing (and written assessment) as a social practice (Lillis & Scott, 2007) tied closely with building disciplinary knowledge. Designing learning activities to support assessment, therefore, has the added potential to not only clarify the assessment task but to deepen disciplinary learning. We invite the audience to work with an assessment task and design a supportive learning activity.

References

Theme
Assessment that engages students in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional and community contexts (theme 1)