Assessment:
Criteria and their Standard Elements

Unlike holistic (integrated) assessment, criterion-based assessment focuses on specific features of student work which forms the evidence for assessment judgements.

In most cases a single assessment task can be used to assess more than one criterion. For example, a task might be used to assess both a knowledge-based criterion, and a communication criterion. In such cases the assessment record (e.g. mark book or spreadsheet) needs to note the specific assessment outcomes (marks, grades etc) of each criterion assessed. It is possible, for example, for a learner to demonstrate a higher standard on communication than a knowledge-based criterion.

It is important to remember that criteria are – in themselves – little more than convenient headings under which standards are grouped. It is the standards that are used as the 'measures' of student achievement, not the criteria (headings). In the example below, Criterion 2 ('communicates ideas through the creation of oral and multimodal texts') is the heading under which standards at the A, B and C ratings are grouped. Each individual standard is commonly referred to as a standard element.

Criterion 2: communicate ideas through the creation of oral and multimodal texts

The learner:

Rating A	Rating B	Rating C
creates written texts appropriate for different purposes and audiences integrating ideas and information from varied sources	creates written texts for different purposes and audiences drawing on ideas and information from a range of sources	creates written texts for different purposes and audiences using ideas and information from a limited range of sources
communicates ideas demonstrating fluency and consistent control of language and expression	communicates ideas using clear and appropriate language and expression	communicates ideas demonstrating some control of language and expression
adapts text structures and language features to effectively communicate ideas in a wide range of modes and text types	selects basic text structures and language features to communicate ideas effectively in a range of modes and text types	uses basic text structures and language features to communicate ideas in a limited range of modes and text types

Criterion

Standard Elements

Within any particular assessment task some criterion standard elements might not be assessed. For example, a communication criterion might have a standard element related to the use of tables and graphs as communication tools that would not be assessed in a formal essay. In these situations it is important to ensure that students know which criterion standard elements are (or are not) to be assessed in that particular task.

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An assessment matrix – the overall plan for course assessment – might form part of a scope and sequence, or be a separate document. In either case it maps to the time sequence for course delivery and notes:

- assessment tasks (and indicates if they meet course work requirements)
- the criterion or criteria to be assessed
- the relative weighting/significance of the task to the overall assessment of relevant criteria
- and – in best practice – the criterion standard elements to be assessed.

An assessment matrix allows for a top level view of planned assessment and allows checking of:

- the frequency of summative assessment
- provision of opportunities for students to demonstrate improvement / consistency of achievement
- the coverage of all criteria, in approximately equal proportion.

Enriching such a matrix by the addition of notations about the standard elements assessed in each task adds clarity and increases the rigor of the checking process. Just as all criteria must be adequately assessed, so all standard elements of each criterion need to be assessed in the totality of the assessment.

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