

The following questions and responses apply to the development of task-neutral, common scoring criteria as described in the [scoring criteria overview](#), designed in alignment with our [framework for proficiency-based learning](#). In this model, built on prioritized graduation competencies and performance indicators, scoring criteria describe the quality of evidence at different levels of achievement for each performance indicator.



### What is the difference between scoring criteria and rubrics?



Scoring criteria articulate a task-neutral progression of learning on a particular performance indicator.

A rubric is built from one or more rows of scoring criteria. Rubrics are task-specific and built to measure achievement on a particular assignment, project, or assessment by combining the scoring criteria for the specific performance indicators that the task measures.



### How many of our scoring criteria should we draft before we start using them?



There are two general approaches to drafting scoring criteria:

1. Develop scoring criteria drafts in all content areas concurrently. Implement use of the scoring criteria for a set period of time in order to collect and compile feedback before reconvening for potential revisions. This approach can promote cross-discipline coherence and ensure consistency of language and approach.
2. Develop a smaller number of scoring criteria (e.g., all of the indicators in one competency, the performance indicators for a specific project, etc.) and put it to use quickly. This approach can speed up the feedback loop between drafting, application, and revision, promoting deeper understanding of how scoring criteria work in practice and informing the development of additional scoring criteria.

Regardless of the approach taken, use scoring criteria and then calibrate with colleagues to identify any areas that need revision. Scoring criteria should be applied to authentic student work and discussed by teachers in order to be refined.



### How absolute are the four traits of effective scoring criteria?



While we recommend considering the four traits of effective scoring criteria each time you draft or refine your scoring criteria, there are rare occasions where adhering too rigidly to the combination of traits might make scoring criteria less clear or less aligned with the indicator and thus less useful.

Trait 3 regarding the use of affirmative language often presents the most challenges. Sometimes as we think about what student work at a specific level looks like, it is easier to list what traits the work doesn't include or doesn't demonstrate rather than what traits it does. A helpful question to ask in this case is, "What is the impact of that trait on the work?"

For example, if a description of a student’s use of grammar and mechanics could be, “Does not follow grammar rules,” the impact might be that an outside audience can understand the big ideas but not the connections between them. The scoring criteria could then be written as follows: “Use of grammar and mechanics make it difficult to understand the connection among ideas.” While the impact described is not a positive one, the language used is both more affirmative and descriptive than the original statement.

The performance indicator can also have implications for the four traits. Some performance indicators are about consistency, and in those cases, it is difficult not to talk about frequency (Trait 2). For example, in world language, a defining difference between performance levels may be the consistency with which students can use appropriate vocabulary in specific types of situations. In that case, the scoring criteria might include frequency to accurately address the performance indicator.



### **How do we account for content in scoring criteria if performance indicators do not include it?**



Both content and skills need to be accounted for within the larger system of competencies and assessment, but that does not mean that all scoring criteria have to specify content.

One approach to addressing skills and content maintains the focus on the skills within the scoring criteria, writing criteria in a way that can be applied across varied content. For example, if the performance indicator reads, “Design and construct scientific models to represent scientific phenomena,” the description for proficient performance might read, “I can design a model to represent scientific phenomena, explain scientific phenomena, and predict outcomes.” When the content is not detailed in the scoring criteria, it must be articulated and monitored in curriculum documents. This requires effective systems for monitoring implementation of curriculum to promote equitable access and outcomes.

Another approach is to write specific scoring criteria that include both skills and content for particular subjects or courses. For example, for this same performance indicator in life sciences the description for proficient performance might read, “I can design a model to represent photosynthesis and cellular respiration” while in physical science it might read, “I can design a model to represent the cycling of matter.” This ensures accountability to both skills and content because both are included in the description of proficiency.



### **How do we account for specific project requirements (formatting, number of sources referenced, specific content to be included, etc.) when I am using task-neutral scoring criteria?**



Teachers often create a checklist to accompany the assignment with requirements of this type (number of pages, variety of sources, types of graphs, etc.). This checklist might be used to determine if the task is complete before it is assessed, and students may be directed to incorporate all elements before submitting the work for scoring.

Students’ attention to all the items on the checklist might inform a score for habits of work.



## **Do we have to write new scoring criteria for every grade level? How do we use scoring criteria across multiple years?**



First, it is critical to note that whatever grade levels a set of scoring criteria apply to, all students must be provided opportunities to earn scores at any of the performance levels on that scale. For example, if there is one set of scoring criteria for students in grades 9-12, all ninth graders need the opportunity to complete the task assigned and demonstrate performance along the full range of scores on the scale.

Scoring criteria does not have to be written for every grade level. We recommend writing scoring criteria across grade spans for two main reasons. First, students develop skills at different rates, not always tied to grade level. Second, it can sometimes be misleading to describe distinct differences from grade to grade, particularly at the secondary level.

With scoring criteria that span grade levels, there are two common ways to account for differences as students progress through the grades:

- Vary the complexity of the tasks students are asked to do. For example, students in grade six are given primary and secondary resources and asked to find related evidence while students in grade eight are given primary resources, must find related secondary resources, and select evidence from them.
- Vary the complexity of the content students work with to demonstrate the skills of the performance indicator. For example, students in grade nine read “Bless Me, Ultima,” a text with a lexile of 840. Students in grade twelve read “Love in the Time of Cholera,” a text with a lexile of 1440.



## **How can we use existing rubrics when building scoring criteria?**



Many schools have invested significant time in developing rubrics, and all of these can serve as a foundation for developing scoring criteria.

Consider the following:

- How similar are past expectations to the current system of graduation competencies and performance indicators?
- How common are the rubrics? (i.e., To what extent are they used and understood by a range of faculty and students?)
- How aligned are the current rubrics to the four traits of effective scoring criteria?

Scoring criteria can be developed by revising existing rubrics. First, align rows of current rubrics to the new performance indicators. Then use the four principles of effective scoring criteria to review and revise the scoring criteria for each performance indicator.

This process is especially useful with common rubrics, shared by a department, grade level, or course team. If common rubrics don't exist, teachers can gather their current rubrics and collectively work to develop shared scoring criteria based on a composite of agreed upon elements from the current, individual rubrics, aligned with the four traits of effective scoring criteria.



## **What should we do if we believe the performance indicator or scoring criteria should be revised?**



The development of effective scoring criteria and performance indicators is an iterative process. The district, school, or team of educators doing the work should establish a process and timeline to collect feedback, review it, and revise performance indicators and scoring criteria. For example, the instructional team might discuss and make notes twice a year in grade level or department meetings but not revise until the end of the year when they can coordinate across teams. A shared document might be available to collect running feedback and a subgroup might review the feedback in the spring and suggest revisions for the following year.

Critically important is that all involved in revision know what the process will be, what their roles are within that process, when and how different steps will occur, and how decisions will be finalized.



## **How do we use scoring criteria to give grades?**



The use of scoring criteria does not necessitate using specific grading and reporting methods, although the way scoring criteria is built into the grading and reporting system should be clear to all stakeholders. Scoring criteria can be used to communicate student progress and ultimately inform course grades. For additional considerations about grading and reporting systems, see [Grading and Reporting for Educational Equity](#).



## **Now that we have scoring criteria, how do we use them?**



There are many ways to use the scoring criteria to promote more equitable outcomes for all students:

1. Use scoring criteria to help students understand expected learning and end results, to self-assess progress and set goals, or as a foundation for giving and receiving peer feedback.
2. Use scoring criteria as the basis for formative feedback. To help a student understand how to improve, use the description at the level above the student's current performance to determine next steps when providing feedback.
3. Use scoring criteria to collaboratively evaluate student work, calibrate expectations for proficiency, and promote horizontal and vertical alignment of instruction and assessment.
4. Use scoring criteria to facilitate the development of varied learning and assessment pathways that lead to common outcomes.