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Using rubrics to improve writing skills: a study in Kuwait

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Abstract

Rubrics for writing courses have become increasingly popular yet there have been few studies published from the GCC. This study investigated the effectiveness of rubrics in business writing classes at a Kuwait university. The participants were 104 students who were given a survey that evaluated their opinions of the rubrics. In addition, several instructors from these writing courses were interviewed. It found that a robust rubric may help ensure that grading is consistent and fair, and that it was highly useful as a guide for students when writing the assignments, and assisted students in crafting the essay. A proportion of students suggested that additional feedback beyond the rubric was desirable. The writing instructors were generally supportive of the value of rubrics, especially as a means to indicate to students what is required in classroom assignments. Overall, this study contributes to the body of literature demonstrating the value of rubrics for writing classes.

Keywords: Rubrics, Classroom assessment, Writing rubrics, Kuwait English teaching, Writing skills

Introduction

Rubrics are commonly used as a tool for grading student assignments, but in recent years they have also been used as an instructional tool in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Stiggins, 2001; Andrade & Saddler, 2004). And it is in this context, of rubrics as a means to foster learning, that the current study is situated. When teachers share rubrics with students and have them apply the criteria to their writing assignments this can improve the quality of the essays and involve students in the self-assessment process (Soles, 2001; Trinh, 2020). Mahmoudi and Buğra (2020) found that using rubrics is an efficient method for making teacher expectations clear, giving useful feedback, and helping students with their learning. Additionally, using rubrics can save time grading and allow for more immediate feedback, which can lead to more learning (Stevens and Levi, 2013).

Student-based learning necessitates progressive valuation methods that allow students to perceive learning as a procedure in which they build and use strategies to surpass assessment expectations. Only when students get consistent, timely, objective, as well as constructive feedback is ongoing development feasible (Vie, 2008). While completing

writing assignments, Andrade and Du (2005) noted that students must be informed of the level of their work and understand what makes a good performance. They must comprehend what constitutes exceptional and subpar work and be aware of how they might improve. As they concentrate on the criteria for the quality of student work, rubrics have gained popularity in higher education due to the increased emphasis on formative evaluation. Students supposedly know better what is being evaluated, on what grounds grades are awarded, and what standards are anticipated when rubrics and score guidelines are used. And according to Andrade and Du, (2005) students who utilize rubrics can create work of higher quality, concentrate their attention on the project's crucial elements, minimize the anxiety they get from their tasks, and even obtain better marks.

However, while the benefits of rubrics are well documented, there is limited research on students' perceptions on the use of rubrics in the Gulf region. This current study based on data collected at Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait, included a student survey and interviews with instructors and adds significantly to the body of evidence on the value of rubrics for writing assignments. The main research question for this study is how students perceive the use of rubrics to grade assignments. The study specifically focuses on using rubrics for grading assignments, their effects on the standard of work produced, and whether using rubrics for grading has positive effects on their work.

Literature review

Kennedy and Shiel (2022) found that rubrics allow “teachers and students to engage with the language of writing assessment and raise expectations about writing quality” (p. 1). According to Capuano et al. (2020), students find rubrics beneficial as they provide clear objectives for their work, allow them to track their progress, and make the grading process more transparent. They suggested that rubrics give students the ability to participate in important tasks such as determining the amount of work needed for a task, evaluating their own performance for quick feedback, predicting their grades before submitting assignments, and focusing their efforts to greatly improve their grades (Capuano et al., 2020) Andrade (2000) suggests that instructional rubrics are easy to use and understand, they clearly outline teacher expectations, they provide students with detailed feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, they support learning and skill development. And Alamri and Adawi (2021) in a study in Saudi Arabia found that rubrics for scoring writing are a useful way to correct and improve students writing.

Rubrics for checking consistency and fairness

Even when several raters are combined in assessing student work, the possibility of objective, consistent evaluation afforded by rubrics helps reduce variations in the marks that individual students obtain (“The Guide to Scoring Rubrics” n.d.). As Vie (2008) pointed out, using rubrics may help to ensure more accurate scoring during performance evaluations. According to Andrade and Du (2005), rubrics give students the needed transparency by providing them with explicit, available, and computable standards against which their work may be created and assessed. They make apparent the expectations of the instructor as well as the performance indicators via the use of clearly defined criteria, and they illustrate to the learners how their performance were evaluated

in addition to what is needed of them (Jackson & Larkin, 2002) Students agree that utilizing rubrics as part of the grading process results in a fairer system since it is much easier for them to judge whether or not they have achieved the conditions that Jackson and Larkin outlined (2002). Students observe less anxiety and greater self-assurance while doing their projects when the requirements are clearly outlined in the rubrics.

Learners' feelings of self-efficacy may be strengthened by rubrics, which call their attention to the most significant cognitive talents they need to refine to do well in a particular activity. As a result, rubrics may be crucial tools in helping students become learners who can self-regulate.

Against rubrics

However, this openness to assisting students in producing what the teacher requires more effectively and efficiently may develop instrumentalism. According to Qasim and Qasim (2015), the instrumentalist perspective is likely to restrict the scope of learning for children and prevent the development of abilities that go beyond what is expressly specified in the criteria.

Additionally, Qasim and Qasim (2015) argue that the instrumentalist perspective is likely to limit the breadth of learning for adults. According to Qasim and Qasim (2015) one of the potential solutions to this conundrum is to transition from summative evaluation of learning to formative assessments and experiential evaluation as a kind of learning. In place of the standard order, this would take its place. Laurian and Fitzgerald (2013) note that while some students agree with a favorable evaluation of rubrics others view the rubric as a tool for the teacher to use to satisfy the teacher's goals, as opposed to criteria that represent the required standards in a particular field of study. Thus, an issue is whether or not students see the use of rubrics as something necessary for them to learn and know or just as something that the instructor wants as a response to an assignment. Laurian and Fitzgerald (2013) suggest that the use of rubrics unintentionally hinders students' creative abilities by restricting them to meeting the expectations of the teacher. In their study, the authors presented the experiences of some teachers who argued that students are always conscious of earning positive grades and that rubrics limit them from exploring other ideas and having liberal thoughts concerning learning. As a result, students cannot create their voices because they cannot explore other ideas. In addition, several students voiced their worry by asserting that using rubrics to assess their work is equivalent to the instructor asking you to give them what they want and does not motivate students to investigate topics more in-depth (Laurian & Fitzgerald, 2013). They said that employing rubrics does not inspire students to think robustly and autonomously (Laurian & Fitzgerald, 2013). David (n.d.) conducted an experimental study investigating the relationship between grading satisfaction and the use of music performance rubrics. After using rubrics, the findings suggested that there was not any considerable variation in the mindset of either the students or the professor. Andrade and Du (2005) conducted an analogous investigation and came to contradictory conclusions. In a post-test design with two groups, they evaluated the literature for the master's thesis by using rubrics. The mean grades of students who were given rubrics vs. those who were not were compared using a probability technique. According to the findings,

there was no significant difference in the mean grades of these papers produced with or without rubrics.

Nevertheless it seems that provided the rubrics are well written and the teacher is explicit about what is expected in a writing assignment students do appreciate them. The students can plan and self-evaluate their work when they have these skills outlined, according to Duin and Tham (2020).

Rubrics as frameworks to improve learning

Valuation activities tend to concentrate mainly on checking as well as assessing student learning. However, the vast majority of the time, they give little or no scaffolding to facilitate learning. This is because assessment activities focus on monitoring and assessing student learning. According to Duin and Tham (2020) educators who accept that evaluating students is an essential component of the learning process also acknowledge that rubrics have the potential to fulfill both of these functions. Some studies suggested that if rubrics are only used to award grades this constitutes a wasted chance to educate and a case of the instructor as sole decider of quality paradigm (Ragupathi and Lee, 2021). Rubrics are conveyed to students and, at times, co-created with them to support student schooling and encourage a student-centered approach. This encourages an approach focused on the student (Ragupathi and Lee, 2021). Learners can then use rubrics to organize their assessment assignments, define their goals, establish and concentrate their effort where it is required, recognize challenges relevant to the task, and govern the process to generate high-quality work. Rubrics can also be used to define aims, establish and concentrate effort where it is required, recognize challenges that are relevant to the task, and govern the process. For instance, David (n.d.) suggests that using rubrics as a scaffold “may be more effective for writing valuation and the training of composition than any other notion or technology”.

Students can structure their response to a task by utilizing rubrics that provide realistic expectations as well as visual signals to the students. According to Van Helvoort (2010), students use rubrics as a tool for self-evaluation because they give a shared understanding of what constitutes acceptable performance and clearly describe the criteria. In addition, rubrics make it easy for students to compare their work to others. Students are allowed to challenge the evaluation and evaluate the significance of their work due to this (“Using Rubrics to Assess”, 2017). When students are compelled to use rubrics regularly, they quickly become aware of patterns of recurring problems. According to Scott (2012), it is feasible to implement a formative and student-centered assessment approach that uses rubrics as a component of the assessment method. The first step in implementing this method is communicating to the students and making clear to them the expectations that the teacher has for them. Consequently, the particular expectations may initiate a process that may result in improved academic achievement on the part of the students. This strategy is initiated by using rubrics, which perform both tasks.

Evaluation is a significant scaffold for enhancing a learner’s work. It is especially beneficial when it is applied to a specific valuation task, offered to students while completing the job, or supplied quickly after the assignment has been done (Ajeetyadav, 2022). Feedback is only beneficial if it assesses the quality of the job and offers precise advice on how the next level of enactment may be achieved. Instead of “placing a focus on

grades in assessment” Arter and McTighe (2001) propose putting the primary emphasis on giving descriptive feedback to students in order to develop personal growth. This is done to ensure that students succeed in their academic endeavors. The use of feedback that emphasizes self-evaluation and the goal of personal development is one method that may be used to promote intrinsic motivation. If students are provided with timely and relevant feedback on their work, it motivates them to improve both the work they have already done and the work they will do in the future. This pushes instructors to provide valuable feedback to students (Frey, 2013). On the other hand, the effect of the feedback on performance was reduced in direct proportion to the amount of time it took to get it.

As stated by Arter and McTighe (2001) more is needed to give students timely feedback; the students also need to be well educated to make use of the comprehensive information. It is helpful to have a better picture of the student’s strengths and shortcomings when detailed comments on the rubric are provided to the students. In addition to this, it helps students see areas where they have room for improvement, paving the way for them to devise personal strategies for advancing their skills (Guide to Scoring Rubrics, n.d.). A critique should not be used as a tool for a one-time quick repair; rather, it should be seen as a continuous process that includes numerous occasions of feedback as well as opportunities for students to develop their notions of themselves and their conduct (De Jong, et al., 2012).

Similarly, Frey (2013) found that a lack of training regarding the effective use of rubrics makes it highly unlikely that either reliability or validity would grow. Students need not just support in learning rubrics but also instruction in the appropriate application of rubrics to their pieces of work. It is essential to converse with students about the strategies that may assist them in comprehending how to utilize various grading tools and to engage students in projects that show them the benefits of grading tools for students to use rubrics successfully. It is also essential to converse with students about the strategies that may assist them in comprehending how to utilize various grading tools. Collaborating with the students in developing the grading rubric is another productive method that may be used. Suskie (2018) talks about how she developed a rubric for her classroom by working with her students in a collaborative effort. The first stage of the process involves studying examples of successful and failed student work. Afterward, the students are asked to “brainstorm criteria for their particular work,” which is the second stage of the process. As Suskie (2018) and others pointed out in their discussion of the issue, using this strategy helps build agreement on the relevance of the criteria employed in the rubric. They also point out that “students’ opinions” in the final rubric demonstrate respect for learners and encourage them to assume greater responsibility for their education.

Quantitative studies on rubrics

Sanger and Gleason (2020) suggested that rubrics may give constructive feedback to help students find growth areas. While some academics, like Suskie (2018), acknowledged the advantages of utilizing rubrics for assessment purposes, Sanger and Gleason (2020) maintained that rubrics could provide such feedback. However, Duin and Tham (2020) said that teachers might use rubrics as a training tool to encourage

active classroom education. The use of rubrics helps to explain objectives for students' work, assists students in regulating their development, and promotes more equitable and transparent grading.

According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Frey (2013) on 150 students who used rubrics in class, rubrics assisted students in understanding the critical issues that needed to be solved in order to complete their assignments, assisted students in evaluating their performance, and provided instant feedback on the student's strengths and weaknesses.

In another study, a total of 55 students participated in the research carried out by Andrade and Du (2005) using two different grading systems. The first grading rubric was given to the learners after the grades were turned in, but the second grading rubric was given to the students with their work before it was graded. According to the findings, the second rubric, which was handed in with the assignment, was seen as helpful by 88% of the students. On the other side, just 10% of the students considered the first rubric given to them after they had been graded beneficial. Jackson and Larkin (2002) carried out research along these lines during a post-graduate level class. They employed two different groups of students for the experiment; one group was given a rubric for the assignment at the start of the semester, whereas the other group was not given criteria for the assignment. Later, when the grades of students in both groups were compared, it was found that the students in the group that had been instructed to use rubrics had obtained much higher grades than the students in the other group who had not been instructed to use rubrics. In the study that Duin and Tham (2020) carried out, they used rubrics in the kitchen skills class they taught. During the semester, students were obliged to evaluate themselves as well as their peers concerning a minimum of three oral presentations. The findings revealed that students who used rubrics earned an aggregate rating of 94%, which is greater than the average score of 86% that students who did not use rubrics were able to accomplish during the previous semester.

Research questions

The research questions are outlined as follows:

1. How do students perceive the usefulness of rubrics to grade assignments?
2. What are the major effects that rubric has had on writing standards in the classes?
3. What are the specific roles played by rubric in the writing classes?

Methodology

Background to the use of the rubrics

Each writing course has an online repository for students where the full writing assignment instruction is kept and also the complete rubric. In addition, all instructors go over the rubric and writing assignment in class and use the rubric to explain the expectations of the assignments.

Participants

Students

The participants were students who had been taught using rubrics from fall 2019 to spring 2022 in Business Writing 201. A total of 370 students were sent an email in November 2022 and asked to participate anonymously in the survey, and a total of 104 completed the survey. All of the students had already completed their business writing classes.

Faculty

Three writing instructors—none of whom were involved in the writing of this study—were interviewed in December 2022. The instructors all have PhDs, in literature, linguistics, and education respectively and have been teaching writings classes at GUST for between 5 and 11 years.

Data collection

This study adopted a quantitative/qualitative approach to establish students' opinions concerning using rubrics in grading assignments. Cross-sectional survey questionnaires were administered to the participants in November 2022. The few months delay in administering the questionnaire after the final class ended was due to the time we took to finalize the questions and also because the Research and Development Office at Gulf University for Science and Technology examined the proposal and gave approval to commence. Students were required to respond to the questions and submit their feedback through the web survey (SurveyMonkey). The survey questionnaires were structured to give responses about the use of rubrics in grading assignments using a rating scale with five points; (disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and agree). The questions were divided into three main parts: the use of rubrics, the effect on the standard of performance, and whether the use of rubrics affects their work positively or negatively. The writers of the study discussed the questions and by this means were able to eventually reach a consensus on the final form of the questionnaire. We aimed for simplicity and directness in the questions in order to minimize confusion for students.

Concerning the use of rubrics to grade assignments, participants responded to the following questions:

1. I always used rubrics to inform me of the expectations of the instructor.
2. I liked having a rubric for assignments to help me understand what was correct in my writing.
3. I have never used a rubric in organizing my work.

Concerning the effect of rubrics on the standard of performance of the students, the participants will respond to the following questions:

1. A rubric raised the standards of my work.
2. The rubric made no difference in the quality of my work.
3. A rubric helped me to understand why I received a particular grade on an assignment.

Concerning the general impact of using rubrics, whether positive or negative according to the students, respondents were required to answer the following questions:

1. A rubric enabled me to self-assess my work before handing it in for grading.
2. A rubric helped me think about my future writing assignments to be a better writer and thus achieve a better score.
3. Written feedback on my assignments would be more advantageous for my writing skills than using a rubric.
4. I was generally satisfied with the instructor using rubrics to grade my assignments.

The data obtained was tallied and analyzed using a cross-tabulation method, then presented as students' mean, standard deviation, and opinion levels concerning the use of rubrics to grade assignments. The data was presented in charts.

The surveys were confidential and voluntary. There was provision for the respondents to skip some questions and participants were also free to withdraw from the study at the end of the survey if they wish not to proceed, and their responses would not be submitted for the study.

Ethical requirements

Participation of the students was voluntary and they were free to quit at any point that they felt uncomfortable. The students' names and personal detailed personal information were preserved, and they were assured that the information they availed was to be used in academic research only. The study was monitored and before the research began the Research and Development Office at Gulf University for Science and Technology examined the proposal and gave approval to commence. There was a provision for the respondents to skip some questions they may choose not to answer. The SurveyMonkey software the authors used was Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption and the data was collected anonymously without saving respondents' personal information like location addresses and usernames. The email addresses of the participants were not tracked ([Appendix 1](#)).

Results

The majority of the students' feedback on the rubric application was positive. They felt that rubrics let them know "what's expected" and contrasted this with the 'guessing game' they felt compelled to engage in when professor did not give rubrics or other rules for an assignment. In reality, the most often mentioned used of rubrics is to convey the teacher's expectations and so give "direction". In addition, students indicated that rubrics assist in identifying their work's strengths and faults when utilized to provide comments and that understanding "what counts" made scores seem fair. Both male as well as female students elaborated on how they utilized rubrics and the outcomes of using rubrics. The authors discovered no indication of gender disparities in the data.

Data presentations

The majority (42.31%) of the respondents strongly agreed that rubrics play a crucial role in understanding and expecting what to write about and what to include in the writing.

Furthermore, 36.54% of the respondents agreed with this question. However, 4.8% of the respondents did not agree with this question (Fig. 1 and Table 1).

The majority of the students (86%) agreed that they like having a rubric for assignments to help me understand what was correct in my writing. However, some (3.85%) disagreed with this fact by claiming that the rubric does not specify the qualities that constitute a very effective assignment (Fig. 2 and Table 1).

The majority of the students (70.62%) agreed that the rubric raised the standards of their work. However, some of the students (8%) disagreed because they believed that no one confronts one another about poor performance, which is beginning to harm them (Fig. 3 and Table 1).

The majority of the students (78%) agreed that having written feedback on my assignments was more advantageous for my writing skills than using a rubric. However, some students (2.88%) disagreed with the fact since they argued that the rubric needs to treat students fairly (Fig. 4).

Summary of the student questionnaire

Findings from the study suggest that using grading rubrics in the school enables students to understand what constitutes a standard of performance while completing a particular assignment. Students can better understand the amount to which the criteria they are being evaluated on are being met by their present performance, as well as the subsequent measures that may be done to improve their writing when effective rubrics are used. While rubrics are essential for grading and assessing student work, several writers argue that they may also be utilized as an educational tool to help students learn more effectively if well-designed.

Interviews with instructors

The three instructors replied to the following four questions in one-on-one interviews.

I always used rubrics to inform me of the expectations of the instructor

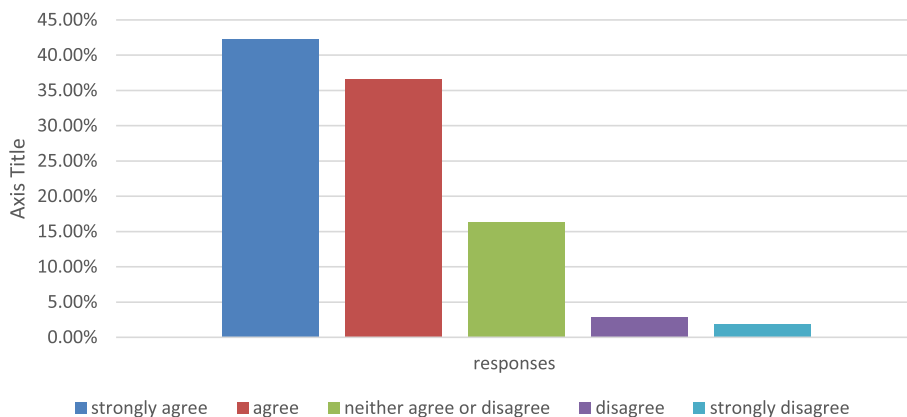


Fig. 1 I always used rubrics to inform me of the expectations of the instructor

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

| | Rubric informs expectations of instructor | Rubrics helps in understanding what is right in writing | Rubric raised standard of work | Mean | SD |
|----------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|------|----------|
| Strongly agree | 42.5 | 50 | 30 | 40.8 | 10.10363 |
| Agree | 37 | 35 | 40 | 37.3 | 2.516611 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 17 | 10 | 21 | 16 | 5.567764 |
| Disagree | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4.7 | 2.516611 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.57735 |
| Mean | 19.9 | 20 | 19.6 | | |
| SD | 19.29508 | 21.50581 | 16.34931 | | |

1. Do you go over the assignment requirements using the rubric?
2. Are the rubrics useful for the students before the assignment?
3. Are the rubrics useful for students after the assignments?
4. Would written feedback benefit students more?

All instructors stated they explained the assignment requirements using the rubrics and for all of them this was considered a valuable use of the rubrics.

Instructor 1 “I spend 10 to 15 min explaining the whole criteria, categories and everything, so that students can learn about my expectations for a certain grade. So it’s really a clear understanding of why a certain grid will be assigned to them. Rubrics perfectly match our expectations and students understanding”.

For question 3, there was some divergence. One instructor replied that “yes, because they can use this feedback as a tool to further develop their abilities. It’s the first thing, and then the rubrics will provide them with the concrete feedbacks on their writing piece of writing and display areas of strength and areas that need.”

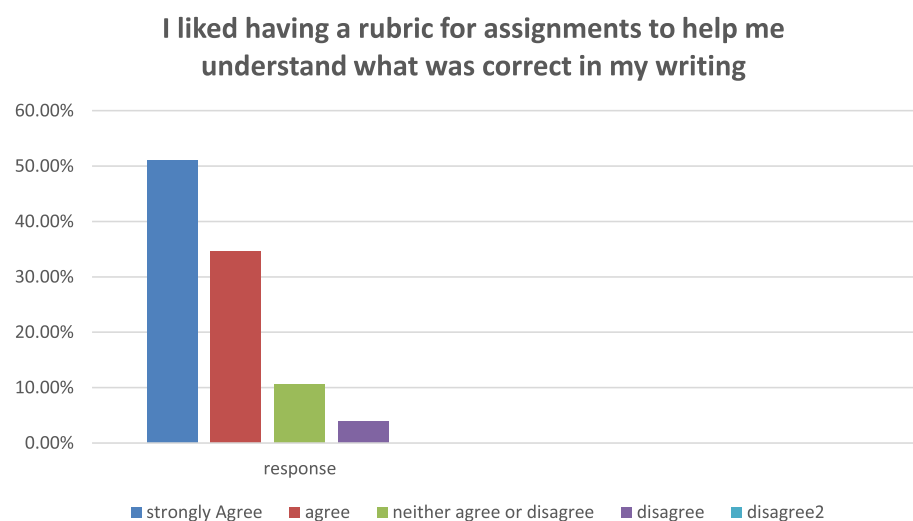


Fig. 2 I liked having a rubric for assignments to help me understand what was correct in my writing

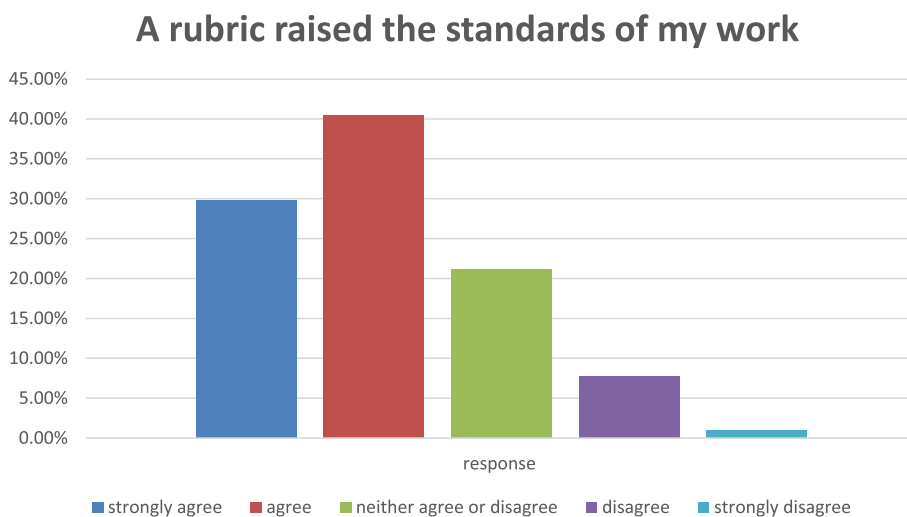


Fig. 3 A rubric raised the standards of my work

The second instructor thought it was very useful for a minority of students who could use it to improve their understanding and would lead to improvement in future assignments. He noted that students who missed class explanations of the rubrics would need help to understand them later.

The third instructor thought in general that students did not read over the rubric results as most of them were only interested in the final grade. He added additional written comments for most students (there is a section under the rubric in Turnitin where this can be easily done) and felt that students are more likely to focus on those.

One comment was that the rubric was of benefit to the instructor as he could quickly show the reasons why a student received a particular grade in case of complaints.

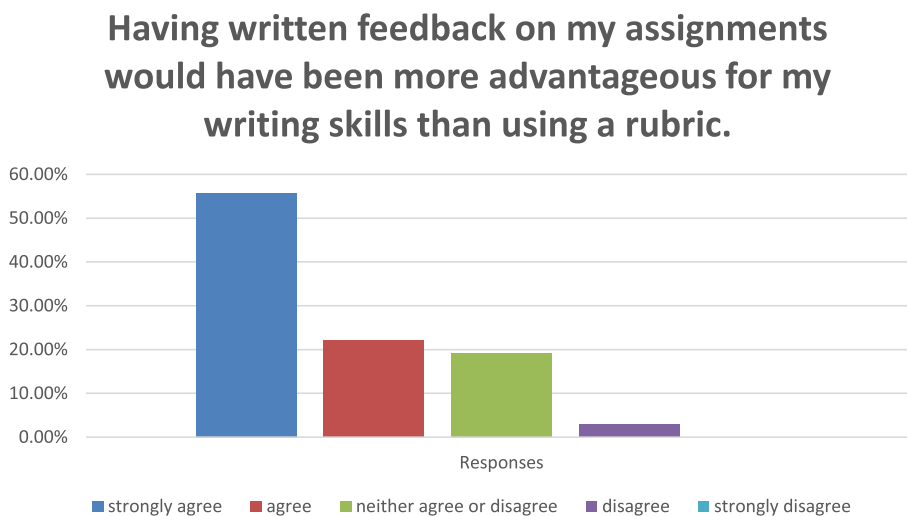


Fig. 4 Written feedback on my assignments would have been more advantageous for my writing skills than using a rubric

Discussion

Allen (2014) suggested that emphasizing rubrics before they begin writing allows students to self-monitor and this study confirms that students understanding and confidence of what is required in the assignment is improved by the use of rubrics.

The study involved 104 participants and 42.5% strongly agreed that they always used rubrics to inform them of the expectations of the instructors. Thirty-seven percent of the participants only agreed and 17% neither agreed nor disagreed. Two percent of the participants disagreed with only 1% of them strongly disagreeing. Based on this data representation, the majority of the participants supported the fact that they used rubrics to inform them of the instructor's expectation. In addition, these results answer the last research question, which asked the specific roles that were played by the rubrics in the current system of education. Thus, an important role of rubrics in this case is informing the students concerning the expectations of the instructor. The rubrics, provided they are introduced by the instructors during class time, improve learners' awareness of the importance of specific areas of writing and teachers' requirements for their writing work.

The participants responded about whether they liked having rubrics for assignments to assist them in understanding what was right in the writing. Fifty percent of the participants strongly agreed, 35% agreed, while 10% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5% disagreed. In this case also, the majority of the participants were in support of the fact that they liked having rubric for assignments to assist them in comprehending what was correct in their writing. The response at this point focusses on the second research question, which concerns the major effects of the rubrics on education. And the response is, it assists the students in comprehending what is correct in their writing.

While 30% of the participants strongly agreed that rubric raised the standards of their work, 40% agreed but not strongly. Twenty-one percent of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed and 7% disagreed. Generally, the majority of the participants in this case also upheld the fact that rubric raised their standards of work, with only a few of them disagreeing. This also responds to the second research question that rubrics raise the standard of the students' works.

The outcomes of this study provide further support for Stevens and Levi's (2013) cyclical technique of genuine assessment, where for the process to succeed, students must be able to identify the aim, consider the evidence about their work's role in that objective, and understand how the gap might be closed. The students who were invited to take part in survey for this research generally reported that they used rubrics to make each of the three steps more manageable. Maghsoudi and Haririan (2013, p.60) suggested that writing is complex and that it "stimulates thinking, compels students to concentrate and organize their ideas, and cultivates their ability to summarize, analyze, and criticize". Obviously introducing rubrics to a writing course does not ensure these elements are fulfilled but it does assist students to think carefully about the assignment before, during and after the exercise and can be considered as an aid to these factors. It seems to make the most of the performance improvement that may be accomplished via rubrics; teachers need to go beyond the position of just being prescriptive in their responsibilities. Sanger and Gleason (2020) argued that although rubrics are used to establish the requirements for work, it is not reasonable to presume that all students would have an explicit knowledge of what is required of them or how they ought to approach the

assignment. In addition, according to Suskie (2018), students have a better probability of success if their professors give more precise help on how they might reach a particular grade or outcome. And the interviews with the instructors indicated that they appreciated that a key aspect of using rubrics was giving detailed explanations of the rubrics in relation to upcoming assignments. One instructor commented that students who missed classes where the rubric was explained often needed additional help in later classes.

It should be noted that rubrics rely on student's interest and as one instructor commented they are helpful for motivated students but for less willing students direct verbal input may be more useful. Thus, while this study showed mostly positive responses to the use of rubrics the numbers who did not find them helpful indicates that rubrics are not a cure all.

Limitation of the research

The study confirmed that rubrics have the potential to encourage self-regulatory behavior by students, but there are a few limitations. One is that the study was only conducted with 104 students at one university. More confirmatory studies are needed. Also, research should be carried out on how the rubric content impacts students' perceptions of rubrics.

Conclusion

Generally, the results of this study confirm that instructors and students benefit from rubrics. Rubrics help them in the assessment of the assignments consistently from one student to another. In addition, they enable the instructors to refine methods of teaching through the evaluation of the rubric results. Rubrics are also helpful to the students in that they aid them in the comprehension of the components and expectation of an assignment. They also help the students to improve in their work through detailed and timely feedback.

The data for this research came mainly from the students' response to the questionnaire. The most important conclusion that can be drawn from this research is as follows: students shared their experiences of utilizing rubrics in a meaningful way, a few of which recommend that grading rubrics have the potential to encourage self-regulatory behavior patterns such as goal-setting and revision. In light of these results, it would be prudent to do more study on the students' views of and misunderstanding about assessment as well as methods to the use of rubrics.

Currently, rubrics are used as an educational tool across various subjects; yet, the number of instructors using rubrics could be higher. Although the application of rubrics to evaluate different performance-based activities has grown widespread, many instructors are still ignorant of rubrics and their advantages. In judging the performance of their pupils, the majority of instructors rely on their own opinion, which may be unpredictable and even discriminatory. Sometimes, students allege that their professors evaluate them unjustly and that they deserve better grades. Consequently, if teachers explain their evaluation philosophy to their learners by utilizing rubrics when assigning class assignments some of this perceived injustice would vanish. With rubrics, students may comprehend what is required to get an "A" on a project or activity. Occasionally, students ask their professors for a few additional points, but with a rubric, the teacher may point to the rubric, as well as give an explanation. Consequently, rubrics are a useful grading tool that may lead to more consistent, transparent grading, and improved writing.

Appendix

Table 2

Table 3

Table 2 Rubric for long memo

| | Excellent 100 | Good 80 | Average 70 | Below average 50 |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Function (15 pts) | Audience and purpose are strong and clear. Assignment topic is well understood and accurately implemented. Understanding of the rhetorical situation encompassing author, message, and audience is firm | Audience and purpose are present but could be stronger. Assignment topic is generally followed but needs minor adjustment. Understanding of the rhetorical situation encompassing author, message, and audience are good but can be improved | Audience and purpose are not very clear. Reading of the assignment more accurately is needed. Better recognition of the rhetorical standing of the author, message, and audience is needed | Audience and purpose are not clear. Serious revision of the function and purpose of the assignment must be done |
| Format (20 pts) | Format is adhered to professionally. Each section includes all of the required elements. Paragraphs are single-spaced and perfectly aligned vertically. Size is twelve to fourteen, and font is Sans Serif. Three to four paragraphs are used. Addresses (if required) of recipients are indicated clearly. In the instance of an Email and Memo, the elements such as To, From, Date, and Subject are utilized | Format guidelines are often used; however, one or two major elements are missing. Line spacing and alignment may be imperfect at times. Spaces between paragraphs may be slightly off. Irregular font whose size is incorrect is occasionally used | Format is less followed. Between three and four major elements are missing. Line spacing, margins, and alignment need revision and improvement | Format is not followed. Five or more major elements are missing. Line spacing, margins, and alignment are not followed |
| Content (50 pts) | Ideas are relevant to the subject of the assignment. Paragraphs are coherent and discuss one central idea. Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed, and of varied structure | Relevance to assignment is closely followed, but a few ideas need further elaboration and elucidation. Sentences are complete and well-structured. Paragraphing is generally performed well but some mistakes are in need of correction | Sentences are generally complete, but many sentences are left unedited and incorrect. Paragraphing needs attention | Many sentences are incomplete/unclear and incorrectly structured. Paragraphing needs significant attention |
| Grammar and mechanics (15 pts) | Language style is suitable for the audience. Contains none or only one grammatical, punctuation, or spelling error. Colloquialisms and clichés are minimized. The person used is the third, not the first or the second, unless absolutely necessary | Language style is suitable for the audience. Contains two to four errors in mechanics and/or two to four errors in grammar that do not distract the reader from the content. A few major grammatical or mechanical errors may be present | Language style is less suitable for the audience (noted slang and/or abbreviations/contractions). Five to six major grammatical or mechanical errors appear such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, parallelism, tense shift, its/it's, their/there, errors, capitalization, etc | Language style is not suitable for the audience. More than six errors in mechanics and/or grammar making it unreadable. Command of English is weak and in need of significant improvement |

Table 3 Long report rubric

| | Excellent 100 | Good 80 | Average 70 | Below average 50 |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Title page/table of contents | Includes title, name of recipient, writers, date and a thorough and detailed table of contents. Page numbering is accurate. Formatting and use of white space are professional | Missing one element: title, name of recipient, writers, date, and table of contents. Page numbers included. Formatting and use of white space are professional | Missing two or three elements. Table of contents is incomplete and/or page numbers are missing or inaccurate | Table of contents or title page is missing four or more elements. Unprofessional formatting |
| Executive summary | Presents the most important elements of the report. Formal tone provides details on the problem, research, findings and conclusions. If necessary, a decision could be made based on the information provided here | Presents some elements of the report. Mostly formal tone provides details on the problem, some of the research, findings and conclusions | Too lengthy or too brief to accurately summarize. Uses some unprofessional language. Missing one or more elements | Fails to accurately or thoroughly summarize report details. Uses informal tone. Could not be used to make a decision on this proposal |
| May include: introduction, analysis: tables/charts, discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations | Full and rich development of content including problem, background evidence of research and findings. Tables and charts clearly and accurately represent data gathered to support findings. Recommendation is well supported and represents critical thinking skills | Development of content is adequate. Information is clearly presented but may be better reinforced with further research. Recommendation is reasonable | Development of content is incomplete or unclear. Lacking background, research and discussion of findings. Recommendation is based on too little information | Simplistic statement of content. Research is not evident or not well represented. Recommendation is unsupported or represents poor decision making |
| Organization and formatting—including APA formatting | Logical outline format or section headings are used to make the document readable. Well-crafted tables, charts or graphs are used where appropriate. Appearance is high quality and professional. APA formatting error free | Generic headings are used. The document is readable but some information in long paragraphs could be placed on tables or charts. 1–2 minor errors in APA formatting | Formatting was not in a logical sequence. No headings or sections are shown. Lacks a professional appearance. 3–4 errors in APA formatting | Attention to formatting is not apparent. Five or more errors in APA formatting |
| Grammar and mechanics | Error-free grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. Professional writing style | 2–3 errors in grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation. Professional writing style with occasional inconsistencies | 4–5 grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation errors. Writing style (including vocabulary) needs improvement | Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure errors interfere with comprehension. No evidence of professional writing style |

Authors' contributions

Ronnie Goodwin conducted the survey. Robert Kirkpatrick conducted the interviews. Both authors wrote and revised the article and both agreed on the final draft. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

There was no funding.

Availability of data and materials

All data and relevant material is available at a database as per Springer requirements.

Declarations**Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Received: 12 December 2022 Accepted: 7 February 2023

Published online: 20 March 2023

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