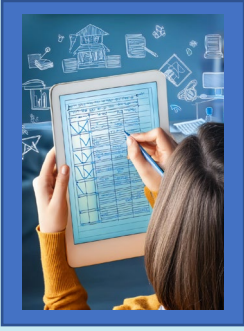# Teesside University Excellence Case Studies

2024/2025

Using Rubrics To Improve Marking Efficiency

Ruth McGrath

Ruth McGrath
*Principle Lecturer
(Learning and Teaching)
School of Social Sciences
and Law
Ruth.McGrath@tees.ac.uk*

> ❝ *"It halved the marking time for me"*
>
> **Ruth McGrath**

Background

As a department, we made the collective decision that we needed to speed up our marking approach. After some meetings, and consultation with the Digital Learning Team, we decided to embrace the use of Rubrics.

With increasing student numbers, our marking workload was increasing, and so it was hoped that using Rubrics would help alleviate some of the time constraints required to mark student work.

Approach

In the past, I've been wary of using rubrics. I was concerned about the time it would take to create a rubric and with other teaching duties taking priority, I wasn't sure I had the capacity to set aside some time to develop this skill. I also had some concerns about a generic marking system that might reduce the flexibility to provide individual feedback to students.

However, through department meetings, it was agreed something needed to be done to speed up marking and keep student satisfaction high. It was therefore decided to explore the use of rubrics as a way forward. This initial decision was focused on using a rubric using the new University Generic Marking Criteria as a basis, via a Word document, which was then attached to the student work as a feedback document.

To begin with, I ran a pilot in a module with a small cohort size. I wanted to see for myself whether using a rubric was in fact quicker. The results were very promising. I found that it halved the marking time for me, something I was very impressed with.

The next step was to integrate this approach into the large cohort module, specifically using Turnitin as the assessment portal. I soon realised that a limitation of Turnitin is that it doesn't allow for the direct attachment of a file.

After conversations with the Digital Learning Team, I decided to embrace the use of Turnitin's rubric system. After some consultation and a few experiments, it was apparent that the Turnitin Rubric System replicated our original rubric with minimal changes required.

There was a small learning curve in using the Turnitin Rubric Manager interface, but once I was pointed in the right direction, I was able build my rubric to my own satisfaction.

Benefits

When I first looked at using rubrics, the original idea was to speed up the marking process.

> ❝ *"There was a small learning curve"*
>
> **Ruth McGrath**

However, after using rubrics, I discovered there were a number of unexpected benefits from moving to using rubrics.

1. Consistency – everyone can use the rubric that I created in the system. This ensures we're all marking on the same criteria and so provides an equitable service for both markers and students.
2. External Examiners – as our Externals were familiar with rubrics, this approach allowed them to understand our marking system, giving them a more efficient workflow.
3. Minimal Impact on colleagues – as I was the one who set up the rubric, it was one less thing my colleagues had to do. We have conversations before hand about the rubric to make sure we were all in agreement, but I created the rubric, which can readily be adapted for use in other modules with minimal work.

Lessons Learned

Once a rubric has been used to mark something, it can no longer be edited. However, it is possible to duplicate a rubric. The duplicated rubric can then be edited as required.

This let me move forward rapidly, rather than having to start from scratch.

Outcomes

So far, I haven't received any complaints from either colleagues or students. In fact, the one student that failed during the pilot replied to say he understood where he had gone wrong. I'd like to think the rubric helped him with this and provided a way for him to take his feedback forward in a positive light.

Future Plans

The experience has been very positive. I would go as far as saying I'm now a convert to Rubrics! So much so, I'm now "training" colleagues to help them create theirs. Taking this forward, I think we will be using rubrics more often.

Contact Information

For more information on using Rubrics in Teaching, Learning and Assessments, please contact Digital Transformation (DX) in SLAR.

"A number of unexpected benefits using rubrics include consistency"

Ruth McGrath