

What do *Students* Think of Rubrics?

Summary of survey results: Student Perceptions of Rubric Effectiveness

Rubrics have become an integral part of teaching and learning at the AAU over the past few years. Instructors, directors and faculty developers have engaged in discussions in faculty meetings, in lunchrooms, at the teaching conferences and at WASC accreditation-related meetings. Benefits they report include clearer communication with students, better communication of standards within departments, fewer grade complaints and more focused teaching. Of course there are also teachers who have reasonable reservations about rubrics: making a good rubric takes a lot of time, and some teachers are skeptical about breaking down grades and feedback into specific criteria and categories in art and design classes.

Through it all, there had been one voice missing from our campus-wide discussion about rubrics: the voice of the student.

Faculty Development conducted a survey on Student Perceptions of Rubric Effectiveness in Spring 2008. With the help of our Institutional Researcher, Bill Cash, we sent out the survey to 2619 students enrolled in classes in which their instructor reported using a rubric. We had 319 complete responses and 106 partial responses; however, 50 duplicate records were removed, resulting in 375 useable responses, or a 14% response rate.

Here is a brief summary of our findings, with complete survey results attached. The number after each finding refers to the corresponding survey item.

Most students surveyed said that:

- they learn more when they have a rubric. (#11)
- when a teacher uses a rubric, students are more organized, produce stronger work, work harder, and have fewer questions about assignments. (#10)

- they usually read most of the rubric. (#6-7)
- rubrics have no effect on their creativity (28% reported that rubrics help them to be more creative). (#13)

Not to be ignored, of course, are the minority of students who said:

- rubrics stifle their creativity. (#13)
- rubrics have no effect on their learning. (#11)

Students also volunteered a number of suggestions for what can teachers do differently to make rubrics more useful to learning. (#15)

While these results give us confidence that overall, rubrics do benefit student learning in specific ways, it will take closer examination of exactly how faculty use rubrics to foster creativity, and what types of rubrics in which courses are most beneficial to learning.

We extend a huge thanks to the students and faculty and who participated in the survey, especially those of you who invited us to your classes to pilot the survey in its early form: Claudia Holm, Diane Choplin, Ryan Kasmier, Carol McEwen-Bergeman.

We look forward to hearing your comments and questions:

Jennifer Russell jrussell@academyart.edu and
Natasha Haugnes nhaugnes@academyart.edu

November 2008 | updated 2014

*By Natasha Haugnes & Jennifer Russell | Office of Faculty Development | Academy of Art University, San Francisco, CA
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Results from 2008 SPORE:

Student Perceptions of Rubric Effectiveness- revised 2014

DATA RESULTS

There were 2619 surveys sent. We had 319 complete responses and 106 partial responses; however 50 duplicate records were removed, resulting in 375 useable responses, or a 14% response rate).

About you:

1. What is your class standing? (choose one) (n=375)

34% Freshman	26% Sophomore	11% Junior	4% Senior	24% Grad student
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2. Is English your first language? (n=374)

68% Yes	32% No
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3. What is your major? (n=373)

3% Advertising	8% Interior Architecture & Design
3% Architecture	2% Industrial Design
16% Animation	12% Illustration
10% Fine Art	7% Motion Pictures & Television
19% Fashion	6% Photography
8% Graphic Design	8% Web New Media

Note: This captures majors, not classes, so ESL and Liberal Arts classes are hidden within the results.

About rubrics:

4. When and why do you refer to the rubric (s)? (Check all that apply)

- 70 % Before starting an assignment to clarify the assignment and/or plan out my work
- 61% While working on an assignment to make sure I am on track
- 28% During critiques or peer reviews to focus my comments
- 47% Before turning in a final draft of an assignment to assess my own work.
- 51% After I have received a grade—to help me understand why I got the grade I did.

5. When does your teacher hand out the rubric? (n=284)

- 67% When giving the assignment, or before
- 4% While I am working on the assignment
- 11% When returning the assignment to me along with the grade and/or feedback.
- 2% During the critique
- 17% I'm not sure.

6. How much of the rubric do you read **before you turn in an assignment**? (choose one) (n=281)

- 48% All of it.
- 33% Most of it.
- 9% I read only the descriptions of the grade(s) I'm hoping for.
- 10% I never look at the rubric at all before turning work in.

7. How much of the rubric do you read **after you get an assignment back**? (choose one) (n=278)

- 23% All of it.
- 28% Most of it.
- 30% I usually read only the parts that my teacher has circled for me.
- 18% I never look at the rubric at all after I've gotten my grade.

8. Does your teacher write extra "personalized" comments on the rubric? (choose one) (n=279)

36% Yes	23% No	41% Sometimes
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9. Rubrics help me better understand the standards and expectations of... (check all that apply)

- 78% My individual teacher
- 46% My department at the AAU
- 36% My chosen professional field

10. Below is a list of comments from students about rubrics. Decide whether you agree or disagree and click on the appropriate response. If you think that the item does not pertain to you, or if you have no opinion, leave it blank.

When a teacher uses a rubric...	Strongly agree or agree	neutral	Strongly disagree or disagree	n=
a. I have fewer questions about the assignment	64%	26%	10%	278
b. I am more organized	66%	25%	9%	278
c. My work is stronger	64%	26%	10%	276
d. I work harder	59%	29%	12%	276
e. I do a more complete job on my assignments	69%	22%	9%	278
f. I am less surprised by my grade	67%	23%	10%	276
g. I feel confused	12%	19%	69%	277
h. Instructor feedback is clear and consistent	63%	27%	10%	277
i. I can argue more effectively to have my grade changed	44%	41%	15%	283

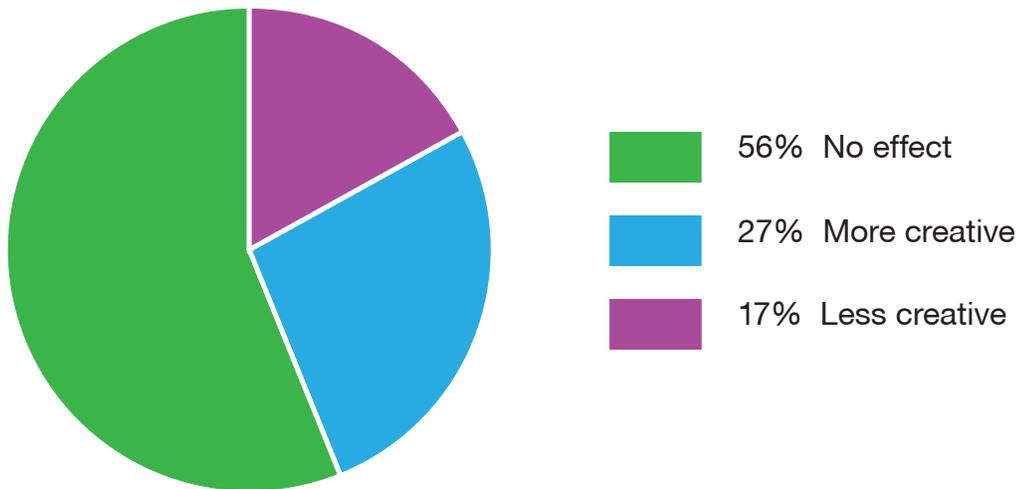
11. Overall, how does having a rubric affect your learning? (choose one) (n=278)

- 45% I learn much more if I have rubrics in a class.
- 30% I learn a little more if I have rubrics in a class
- 21% Rubrics don't make a difference.
- 1% I learn a little more without rubrics
- 3% Rubrics get in the way of my learning

12. In which classes and/or departments would you like to see more rubrics?

Results are being shared with department directors.

13. What effects, if any, do you feel that rubrics have on your creativity? (choose one) (n=276)



14. Please comment about how rubrics affect your creativity:

141 students wrote comments in this section. These are examples of comments from the largest categories:

28% of the received comments stated that rubrics **provide direction or clarify expectations**

- *Helps clarify expectations so I am more focused on what's important and less uncertainty*
- *They give you a better idea of what the teacher is expecting.*
- *So far, they haven't affected my creativity. However, they raise my level of expectations for myself. They also provide a benchmark for where my skills are at.*

15% of the comments say that rubrics **help creativity**

- *Creativity is like raw power. Uncontrolled it is sporadic and useless, but if you can harness that creativity through guidelines put out in the rubrics, than great things can be achieved.*
- *Having limitations sometimes allows me to narrow down ideas and/or give me new ideas.*

15% of the comments say that rubrics **limit creativity**

- *When I have a rubric to refer to, I find myself thinking more in terms of how I can fulfill the "A" standards and less about how I can create an engaging and successful piece of artwork so my results are often stiff and flat.*

- *It stops me from thinking. Then I only focus on what the teacher wants or circles instead of thinking critically for myself.*

13% of the comments note that the rubric **addresses something that is separate from creativity**

- *They set your standards and from there you add to it your creativity*
- *Rubrics give me more of an idea how the teacher wants me to do my work. I then take that and add my creativity to it.*

12% of the comments stated that the rubric **has no effect**

15. What can teachers do differently to make rubrics more useful to your learning?

130 students wrote comments in this section. These are examples of comments from the largest categories:

21% said to **hand them out earlier/refer to them more**

- *I think the Rubric ought to be posted in the First Module, so that Students have that in mind during the entire course, as a kind of Target for their works.*
- *Give them to you in the first week of school so you can look over them, then when the assignment comes up they should go over them with more detail.*
- *Mention specific points during the term when it is pertinent to review the rubric. I've only ever had a teacher say "read the rubric" at the very beginning of a class.*

12% wanted **more personal notes** or the **rubric more tailored** to the individual teacher

- *The teachers should write little comments on your rubric to explain why you got what you got. so you know all of the exact details.*
- *personalize it instead of having the same one in all of our classes.*
- *add a comment box*

9% wanted **more consistency**

- *Follow them during critiques. Usually you think you are doing fairly well during the weeks of critique, and then you get your grade back and it does not reflect the critique comments.*
- *Teachers need to make sure that the Rubrics and the assignment are the same. On a couple of occasions the assignment and the Rubrics differed and it caused confusion.*

8% wanted **more examples**

- *Use good actual student work (visual samples) as well as a list of standards. So the student has both written and visual criteria.*
- *Provide examples of work that are considered A to D grades.*

16. Please share any other comments you have about rubrics in the space below:

Results are being shared with campus stakeholders.

