Student Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Rubrics
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Abstract
The goal of this research study was to determine student perceptions of the effectiveness of rubric usage across different colleges, age groups, gender, academic levels, and first-generation vs. non-first-generation college students. The research questions that propelled this study were: What are students’ perceptions of rubric usage? How do students perceive rubrics’ standardization of assignments? Do students perceive that rubrics have a positive or negative impact student work? This study recreates a previous study by Simona Laurian and Carlton Fitzgerald (2013) that investigated the effects of rubrics on the writing grades of university students in a Romanian and Children’s literature class. The active objective of both studies was to determine the percentage of university students who believe that the use of rubrics positively or negatively impacts their learning. The results and objectives of the previous study inform the current study. Although the studies share similar goals, this study deviated from the previous study in numerous areas. Laurian and Fitzgerald’s (2013) study focused solely on students in a literature course, whereas this study intended to broaden the survey to include current students across five colleges in an entire university. An additional deviation from the original study is that the current study included demographic information, whereas the previous study did not. Data was divided according to demographic differences in an effort to answer the research question accurately.

Purpose of the Study
- The researcher examined student perceptions and feedback on rubric use to uncover potential pitfalls that may inhibit a rubric’s effectiveness.
- The researcher examined differences in students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of rubrics as separated by demographic characteristics.
- The current study was designed to expand the previous study by Laurian and Fitzgerald (2013) by using a larger sample to evaluate the probability that students in some demographic categories may find rubrics more effective than those in other categories.

Problem Statement
- This research study departed from previous research on the subject of rubric effectiveness by shifting the orientation of the evaluation from questions such as, How do we design effective rubrics? and What do the results say about scores associated with rubric usage? to something more specifically aligned with What do the individuals who use rubrics the most think of them?, and Do students perceive rubrics as effective?

Research Question
- What are students’ perceptions of rubric usage?
- How do students perceive rubrics’ standardization of assignments?
- Do students perceive that rubrics have a positive or negative impact student work?

Methodology
- An internet survey, constructed in Qualtrics, was distributed by email blast to the student body of a major American Midwestern University.

Participants
Incomplete surveys were removed, reducing the sample from 242 to 228.

Instrument
The data collection instrument used in this study consisted a fifteen-question internet survey, constructed in Qualtrics, in which students were prompted to respond to questions concerning the use of rubrics along a five-point Likert scale. The survey questions were separated into three scored categories: rubric usage, perceptions of standards, and positive or negative impact. The survey instrument is illustrated in Handout A.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research
- The timeline for this study was condensed into eight weeks, and as such, limited the scope and depth of the research.
- The abbreviated timeline meant that the researcher was limited to using a pre-existing instrument due to validity purposes.
- A larger sample is recommended for future research to ensure that results are not merely a product of a more geographically diverse region.

Discussion
- There was slightly less positive feedback from graduate-level students. Graduate-level students seemed to find less usage for rubrics and responded less positively to their employment. It is possible that rubrics are utilized less frequently in graduate-level courses. It is worth examining whether undergraduate students who prefer rubrics see a difference in assignment scores.
- The findings seem to suggest that the students in colleges that center on creativity, such as the College of Fine Arts and Design and the College of Liberal Arts, find rubrics less impactful and more stifling. It is understandable that students in those fields that value creativity and more abstract theoretical principles would find rubrics constrictive. Future rubric design should focus on exploring design processes that mitigate the chilling effect that rubrics have on creativity.
- The same could be said for the questions that fell under the construct regarding whether or not students perceive that rubrics impact achievement. The responses were nearly identical to those of the standardization construct. It is reasonable that students who find rubrics restrictive are less likely to use them and therefore see any impact.

Results

References available upon request