CONTEXT
Rubrics are evaluation protocols, and they are one of the most widely adopted tools to facilitate more holistic, equitable, efficient review. Faculty in a variety of fields use rubrics for evaluating the quality of student work. The process of developing one with one's colleagues is useful in both creating common understandings of what should / should not be considered in admissions, and as a step toward a more equitable review process.

OBJECTIVES
By participating in this session you will:
1. understand how evaluation rubrics can facilitate holistic review
2. think through core criteria of a rubric for your program
3. articulate what different levels of quality look like on key criteria
4. practice putting a rubric to use through sample personal statements

START WITH EQUITY-MINDEDNESS
Aiming for equity-mindedness: As people and professionals, we are all at different places in our knowledge and experiences with issues around equity. Yet we collectively aspire to equity-mindedness, a "mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. Figure 2 highlights components of equity-mindedness.

Figure 2. Components of Equity-Mindedness. Reproduced with permission from the USC Center for Urban Education

KEY FEATURES OF HOLISTIC REVIEW
Holistic review is "the consideration of a broad range of candidate qualities including 'noncognitive' or personal attributes" (CGS, 2016, p. iii).
COMPREHENSIVE

- Numerous and diverse criteria, drawn from different parts of the application
- Consider the whole person and the sum of their potential
- Remember that diverse perspectives improve scholarly work
- Consider that socio-emotional competencies are necessary for outstanding professional performance

CONTEXTUALIZED

- Metrics in context
  - Note intrinsic error, as all statistics have
  - Note societal patterns in who has access to opportunities that lead to high scores
- Achievements in context
  - Distributions of opportunities relative to societal patterns
  - Achievements don’t always signal aptitude or ability
- Admissions in context
  - How students aid your program’s identity, mission, and broader goals

SYSTEMATIC

- Base review on shared, predefined criteria with structured protocols, for efficiency & consistency.
- Create space for flexibility, nuance.
- Build in safeguards & checks to promote equity and limit biases.
- Carefully select & train gatekeepers
- Coordinate evaluation with recruitment and yield efforts

NOTES
INCORPORATING NON-COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES

- Social and emotional skills that we use to navigate life.
  - Initiative
  - Persistence
  - Conscientiousness
- Measurable
- Results from decades of psychology research (developmental, social, and industrial-organizational)
  - Predict academic/job performance
  - Little, if any, group differences by gender and race
  - Orthogonal to cognitive measures (e.g., GPA, SAT/GRE)

Correlating professional performance with admissions criteria and non-cognitive competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Didactic</th>
<th>Clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Cognitive</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Cognitive ability and knowledge are threshold aspects of professional work, necessary but not sufficient for outstanding professional performance."
Victoroff and Boyatzis, J. Dent. Ed 77, 416 (2013)

SELF-MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

**Relationship Management**
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Communication
- Building Bonds
- Conflict Management
- Influence
- Change Catalyst
- Inspirational Leadership
- Developing Others

**Self Management**
- Optimism
- Trustworthiness
- Achievement Orientation
- Conscientiousness
- Adaptability
- Emotional Self-Control
- Initiative

**Social Awareness**
- Cultural Awareness
- Organizational Awareness
- Empathy
- Service Orientation

**Self Awareness**
- Self-Confidence
- Accurate Self-Assessment
- Emotional Awareness
## RUBRICS
Comprehensive, Contextualized, & Systematic

### WHY RUBRICS?
Rubrics offer benefits that redress common drawbacks in many programs’ admissions’ process.

- **EFFICIENCY** is enhanced by expediting review, reducing faculty load.
- **STRUCTURE** for a process in which many applicants are compared on multiple dimensions.
- **SPECIFICITY** about what reviewers should be looking for may reduce implicit bias, creating a more equitable process.
- **TRANSPARENCY** about evaluation criteria is good for decision makers, their colleagues, and applicants.
- **RELIABILITY** of evaluations across raters can be assessed.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** to head off charges of unfairness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Preparation</td>
<td>A- or better in all core STEM courses AND B or better in non-STEM courses; received at least one academic honor</td>
<td>B or better in all core STEM courses; Concerning grades have a reasonable explanation</td>
<td>Lower than a B in 2 or more core STEM courses; Grades of C or lower do not have a reasonable explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly potential</td>
<td>Clear commitment to and enthusiasm for research AND experience at least equal to a senior thesis</td>
<td>Clear commitment to and enthusiasm for research, BUT experience less than a senior thesis</td>
<td>Signals that a PhD is more of a next step than a clear passion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Contributions</td>
<td>Has been an active advocate for diversity, equity, and/or inclusion</td>
<td>Some evidence of engagement with diversity, equity, and/or inclusion</td>
<td>Limited evidence of engagement with diversity, equity, and/or inclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with Program</td>
<td>Research interests align with multiple faculty AND stated career goals align with program training</td>
<td>Research interests align with one faculty member AND stated career goals align with program training</td>
<td>Limited alignment with faculty research interests OR limited evidence of alignment between career goals and program training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic Self-Appraisal</td>
<td>Clearly delineates strengths and weaknesses AND clear evidence of effort on self development</td>
<td>Basic statements about strengths and weaknesses AND does seek positive and negative feedback</td>
<td>Over or understates abilities; indications that self-assessment or learning from experiences are limited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for long-term goals</td>
<td>Clearly communicates long-range goals beyond the PhD AND has a record of engaging in long-term endeavors</td>
<td>Clearly communicates long-range goals beyond the PhD OR Has a record of engaging in long-term endeavors</td>
<td>Goals are short range (e.g., specific coursework); limited history of engagement in long-term projects</td>
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</table>
## SAMPLE RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Concept</td>
<td>Expresses confidence they can complete challenging goals, makes positive statements about abilities</td>
<td>Shows confidence and independence but may be unsure about adequacy or skills</td>
<td>Is unsure they can complete the program, exhibits low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic Self-Appraisal</td>
<td>Can clearly and realistically delineate strengths and weaknesses, works on self development</td>
<td>Has trouble identifying strengths and weakness but appreciates/seeks both positive and negative feedback</td>
<td>Over or underestimates abilities, does little to no self-assessment, does not appear to have learned from experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for Long vs. Short Term Goals</td>
<td>Clearly communicates long-range goals beyond the PhD</td>
<td>Primary goal is PhD completion</td>
<td>Is vague about long-term goals, or goals are short term such as coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Person Availability</td>
<td>Can define a professional support network including mentors</td>
<td>Expresses support from one individual, or family or community mentor</td>
<td>Expresses little or no support from family or institution for goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/Community Involvement</td>
<td>Demonstrates involvement and leadership ability in either academics, family, community, religious group, or athletics</td>
<td>Demonstrates involvement in groups in academia or extramural but has not shown leadership</td>
<td>Not involved in institutional or community group, no demonstrated leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge in a Field/Non-Traditional Learning</td>
<td>Has engaged in, and learned from, experiences outside the classroom, i.e. performed independent research, extramural activities, self-taught skills</td>
<td>Shows some evidence of non-traditional learning experience</td>
<td>Has not engaged in or indicated learning from experiences outside the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Can describe a time they failed or encountered an obstacle and successfully coped</td>
<td>Can identify a time they hit an obstacle but has trouble defining how they overcame the challenge</td>
<td>Has little experience with failure/obstacles. Cannot provide an example or describe response</td>
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</table>

Modified from Sedlacek

Source: Fisk-Vanderbilt Master’s to PhD Bridge Program [https://www.fisk-vanderbilt-bridge.org/toolkit](https://www.fisk-vanderbilt-bridge.org/toolkit)

### WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THIS RUBRIC?

### WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RUBRIC?

RUBRIC DESIGN & USE
RUBRICS
Comprehensive, Contextualized, & Systematic

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you choose to require GRE scores, fold GRE scores and grades into a single judgment of academic preparation, to prevent anchoring bias and/or attributing small differences in scores/grades into large differences in overall quality.
- Create space for comments to justify assessments: Leave open the possibility of naming unique strengths that merit special consideration.

SOME TIPS FOR USING RUBRICS

- A rubric is only as beneficial as users’ fidelity to it.
- Calibrate and increase inter-rater reliability by having all members independently rate two applications, then meet to discuss how they came to their scores.
- Ensure each application is reviewed by 2+ people. If there is significant divergence in the ratings, bring in a third reader.
- Prepare in advance a plan to subject very unique cases to a different sort of evaluation.

HOLISTIC REVIEW IN CONTEXT

- Holistic review is just one part of improving selection and rubrics are just one tool to facilitate it
- Useful for identifying talent from many underrepresented groups
- “To fully realise its potential as a policy intervention though, it is most helpfully part of integrated support for students” (Mountford-Zimdars, 2016)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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<th>HIGH</th>
<th>Non-Cognitive Competencies: Realistic Self-Appraisal</th>
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