

Determining criteria and writing standards descriptors

key messages

1. Informed teacher judgment is at the heart of assessment.
2. Judgments about students' achievements should be based on explicit assessment criteria and established standards.
3. Criteria (criterion, *sing.*) are fundamental to appraising student work.
4. Standards underlie judgments about the quality of performance: not only what students know and can do but also how well they know it and can do it. The highest standard represents a goal that students aim for.
5. Three constructs will provide a common frame of reference for reporting on student achievement:
 - Knowledges (factual, conceptual, procedural)
 - Processing
 - Self & Others.
6. Criteria for assessment should complement the constructs for reporting.
7. Reported judgments of student achievement should be defensible, comparable, and based on sound evidence and a shared understanding of standards.

Criteria

Function

- To declare broad performance dimensions on which a range of student performances can be represented

In determining the criteria (for a particular assessment task), ensure that they

- Embody curriculum intent
- Reflect what is valued by the assessment task
- Complement the three constructs for reporting

In determining the criteria (for a particular assessment task), ensure that they are

- Identifiable/observable in student work
- Manageable/workable in number and grain size
- Sufficiently different from, and independent of, each other
- Easily interpretable for use by teacher-assessor

Standards Descriptors

- Cover a range of performances on a particular criterion
- Clearly describe the qualities of each of the performances in the range
- Involve two variables—element and degree—applied together or separately
- Are sufficient in number to enable differentiation of performances
- Are coarse- rather than fine-grained
- Can be instantiated in student work
- Are written in positive terms
- Are written in language that is suitable for the audience(s)
- Are capable of being represented in a variety of formats

definitions

Criteria - Those properties, dimensions or characteristics by which student performance is appraised.

Standards - Fixed points along the criteria representing qualitative differences in performance.

Standards descriptor - Statement or list of statements that succinctly conveys the required quality of, or features in, student work in order to be awarded the corresponding grade on a particular task.