

Applied Geology Communication Standards

Rubric creation reflection

Creating a series of graduate attribute standards for Applied Geology (AG) has been a worthwhile, albeit occasionally frustrating, experience. While it was intended to be a team effort from the beginning, this was not possible due to the deadline timing and extremely heavy workloads of all academic staff in our department. Thus, the bulk of the job fell to me to create draft rubrics (five in total) to then circulate and solicit feedback from key stakeholders.

Written communication was selected as the first rubric to tackle as it is the most universal to all branches of applied geology and paired well with the embedding English language development project running concurrently. The key hurdle to overcome was accepting that writing rubrics is hard. It wasn't until a colleague pointed out to me that this is what some people do professionally as a career that I was able to relax and accept that I wasn't somehow deficient. She also provided examples of rubrics for English as a second language that helped me grasp the appropriate style and degree of specificity.

I wove together the AG Course Learning Outcomes and the generic attributes provided in the templates to create comprehensive degrees of achievement. For written communication, this process was straightforward and required little adjustment of the original template. The first draft was reviewed by an academic language and learning colleague for clarity, then circulated to all AG staff and our advisory board for further comment and provision of exemplars.

The five rubrics were the primary focus of a two-hour long discussion at a staff meeting with our advisory board on 24 November. Our industry and government partners made it explicit that they expect graduates to be capable of clear, concise and coherent written communication, however this is not what they commonly find. More often than not, capable geologists are poor writers and struggle to do their job adequately because they are unable to communicate clearly. The advisory board agreed that it is valuable to build this skill development into the AG degree and emphasize to students that it is expected by employers.