ASSURING GRADUATE CAPABILITIES

Course Learning Outcomes and Standards
Templates adapted from the AAC&U

The VALUE Rubrics describe levels of achievement in fifteen capabilities (referred to as Essential Learning Outcomes by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The VALUE Rubrics are intended as the bases for institutional and course adaption:

> The VALUE Rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all fifteen of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialogue and understanding of student success.

Examples of US institutional adaptation of the VALUE rubrics are available here. The **VALUE Rubrics** communicate shared expectations for learning that teaching staff can use in the classroom, and that students can use to make judgments about their strengths and weaknesses.

The main dimensions of the VALUE Rubrics are:

Problem Solving VALUE Rubric				
	Capstone 4	**Milestones** 3	**Milestones** 2	**Benchmark** 1
Define Problem	demonstration of achievement by a graduate	key characteristics of progressive learning from early learning to completion of degree		learning skills and abilities observed in beginning students
Identify Strategies		[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]
Propose Solutions/ Hypotheses	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]
Evaluate Potential Solutions	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]
Implement Solution	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]
Evaluate Outcomes	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]	[text descriptor]

The adapted VALUE Rubrics may be helpful in develop Course Learning Outcomes and Standards statements for Australian higher education using these templates (download here):
- *Written Communication Standards Template*
- *Oral Communication Standards Template*
- *Critical Thinking Standards Template*
- *Inquiry and Analysis Standards Template*
- *Creative Thinking Standards Template*
- *Problem Solving Standards Template*
- *Quantitative Literacy Standards Template*
- *Information Literacy Standards Template*
- *Reading Standards Template*
- *Lifelong Learning Standards Template*
- *Teamwork Standards Template*
- *Civic Engagement Standards Template*
- *Ethical Reasoning Standards Template*
- *Integrative Learning Standards Template*

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The VALUE Rubrics are also available in *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and tools for Using Rubrics*, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes (2010) which is available for purchase at the AAC&U.

How to use the adapted templates to create Course Learning Outcomes and Standards in the Australian context:
1. Assemble a small representative group, preferably including teaching staff, students, industry representatives
2. Choose one graduate attribute or capability to work on--choose whichever seems most do-able, or most urgent. You may wish to choose a capability associated with professional competencies or graduate attributes or threshold learning outcomes from the ALTC Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project
3. Decide how you will present the rubric: use a table, keep it to one page per capability, list the performance criteria on the vertical axis, and the performance levels on the horizontal access (see example templates here).
4. At the top of the page, define the capability (eg if it is about problem solving, briefly describe what that means (see examples here)
5. On the horizontal axis, use each row for an aspect of the capability.
6. On the vertical axis, describe broad levels of performance. Suggestion: keep it broad and simple using such headings as "Exceeds minimum standard", "Minimum standard" and "Yet to meet minimum standard".
7. In the remaining cells, briefly describe the expected level of performance. Be clear and succinct, and start with the "minimum standard" column to describe the "good enough" graduate.

 Share your first draft with the wider team, and refine it based on feedback. Then, test your next draft on a broader range of users--students, new graduates, industry, clients, and so on in focus groups, advisory boards, by invitation, or whatever suits your context.

Reality check: does your rubric clearly communicate what new graduates need to be able to do? can these standards be evidenced and assessed in a range of ways, and is the assessment likely to be manageable by students and by assessors.

Add examples: Over time, add examples such as images, movies, texts, audio files. Most importantly, **communicate and encourag**e **students** to
*   use the rubric as a broad guide to the level of performance required to (1) demonstrate the minimum standards in the course and better still (2) aim higher and show that they exceed the bare minimum (employability is likely to be enhanced
*   keep a portfolio of evidence of achievement of the standards as communicated in the rubrics

Encourage assessors to use the rubric as a broad guide to an agreed and comparable level of performance as they set and assess tasks within each part of the course. There is much to be gained by sharing with colleagues in other disciplines and institutions, as part of the national and ongoing conversation about standards.