Assuring Graduate Capabilities
Evidencing Levels Of Achievement For Graduate Employability

Reflections on rubric development

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We undertook to develop a rubric on Written Communication as obviously this is one of the essential capabilities for a journalism graduate.

We held some initial team discussions and then we were assisted by Asoc Prof Margaret Wallace from the UOW Academic Development Unit who joined us for a final session and facilitated our thoughts and discussions by asking questions as an informed outsider. This helped to clarify our thinking as members of the disciplinary team. Margaret also took notes and provided written feedback on suggested elements for the rubric which were added to the initial framework developed by Marcus O'Donnell after the team discussions.

This process of drawing on expertise from inside and outside the discipline helped us develop a set of capabilities which we hope are nuanced and easily understood by both journalists and those outside the profession.

The essential change that we have made is to reframe the rubric from one dealing with "Written" communication to one dealing with "Multimedia" communication. This reflects the changing nature of journalism and the move from a model that has privileged written texts (not just in print journalism but even for broadcast through scripts) to one which emphasizes the necessity of all journalists being multi-skilled across a range of written, visual and aural media. In the new world of digital, convergent journalism the development of single skill sets in written and audio-visual skills cannot be isolated. Current multimedia journalism necessitates the strategic development written, visual and aural literacies as a set of intrinsically interlocking capabilities. Thus we have attempted to define a rubric for multimedia communication, an essential part of which is the capacity to identify, order and combine the most appropriate genre and media for the story idea at hand.

In attempting to articulate our definition of Multimedia Communication we also became aware of the intersecting nature of these capabilities with other capabilities such as teamwork and problem solving. Given the multiple iterations that a piece of journalism goes through: from the original idea, to the initial interpretation and commissioning by an editor, the development by the journalist and their sources, and then through contributions of designers, technicians and sub editors in production, even the simplest form of "old fashioned" print journalism is team-based "writing". This is even more the case in the production of multimedia communication. Similarly, journalism is

essentially the solving of "communicative problems" – how do we tell this story in the most engaging, thorough, clear and fair way?

Thus we realized that a Multimedia Communication rubric only makes sense in combination with a Problem Solving Rubric and a Collaboration Rubric so we are currently in the process of developing associated rubrics that will then form a basic trilogy to guide the essential skills development in our program.

The other key elements underscored by the UOW Graduate Qualities of graduates *Informed* by the discipline and *Responsible* within an ethical framework will be incorporated as key elements of the top "Context and purpose" row of each of our rubrics. The UOW quality of *Independent Learner* is included in many of the processes identified in the problem solving matrix but also counter balanced by the Collaborative rubric. Thus this process provided us with a new way of conceptualizing and operationalising the current UOW Graduate Qualities and a way forward to think about further work on Threshold Learning Outcomes and AQF standards.

The process of developing these rubrics gave us new insight into ways of conceptualizing the skills progression across beginner, novice, competent graduate through to new professional and expert. We will now use them to better map a variety of assessment tasks at each of the key stages of the courses we teach, although the exemplars that we have added to demonstrate each stage indicates that our fundamental course structure is sound.

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