



Rewarding Learning

USING RUBRICS TO SUPPORT PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE TS&PCs



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Introduction

We advise that you review this material along with the generalised rubrics for the five strands of the TS&PC framework:

- Rubric for Managing Information
- Rubric for Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Rubric for Being Creative
- Rubric for Working With Others
- Rubric for Self-Management

This document sets out a suggested method for constructing rubrics to use when monitoring and assessing pupil progress in the TS&PC.

The generalised rubrics use the strands of the TS&PC framework to provide a top-level description of the levels of performance in pupils' work as they make progress in TS&PC. The rubrics are broken down into sub-sections of each strand, using terms from the progress maps (pages 40–49 in the guidance booklet, **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for Key Stage 3**). They provide generalised descriptions that tell you what to look for when considering the progress pupils are making in acquiring and developing TS&PC.

This example illustrates the bias, reliability of evidence, and corroboration dimensions from the Thinking Problem-Solving and Decision-Making rubric:

Pointers for progression	Novice (N)	Apprentice (A)	Practitioner (P)	Expert (E)
<p>Pose questions about the reliability of evidence and the consequences for reaching conclusions (bias, reliability of evidence, corroboration).</p> <p>Pupils discover how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make predictions, examine evidence, and distinguish fact from opinion. 	<p>When prompted, can recognise where assumptions have been made or there is room for doubt.</p>	<p>Approach evidence with appropriate scepticism, questioning assumptions and probing evidence to establish value or reliability.</p>	<p>Anticipate likely outcomes based on observations. Suggest reasonable grounds to credit a statement or position, and challenge unsupported assumptions.</p>	<p>Propose criteria for making judgements about evidence before developing conclusions, questioning their own and others' assumptions and searching for corroborative evidence.</p>

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Regarding the TS&PC, breaking down the rubrics into separate sections helps you to identify aspects of thinking that can serve as the focus for learning and teaching about a particular topic. In practice, the strands don't happen in isolation and the boundaries between them are blurred. For real activities, several approaches to thinking will probably be involved as pupils process information and incorporate their understanding into a response to an assignment or activity. Using the top-level generalised rubrics is a way for you to highlight some key aspects that are particularly useful or that you want pupils to focus on in a planned activity.

Here, the top-level rubric addressing bias, reliability of evidence and corroboration describes in general terms what you might see in a classroom activity where the quality of evidence is important. The next step is to recognise how to apply that general approach to a particular subject or activity. If we consider Key Stage 3 History, for example, pupils could investigate the authenticity and reliability of sources, which is a key part of judging how to interpret accounts of events that come from different perspectives. You could apply the same format for a rubric when weighing evidence in a History context, but you would use a more specific set of descriptions, as seen in the table below:

Pointers for progression	Novice (N)	Apprentice (A)	Practitioner (P)	Expert (E)
<p>Pose questions about the reliability of evidence and the consequences for reaching conclusions (bias, reliability of evidence, corroboration).</p> <p>Pupils discover how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make predictions, examine evidence, and distinguish fact from opinion. 	<p>Rely on the teacher to point out that a source is not contemporary and comes from a writer recording what happened many years after the events took place.</p>	<p>Recognise that it's useful to check the dates of the source/ author against the time of the events in question.</p>	<p>Look for confirming evidence from another source to corroborate the version of events seen in the source under consideration.</p>	<p>Consider the relative value and reliability of several sources to corroborate the version of events, applying criteria such as: is the information from a contemporary account; is similar information available from more than one source; or does the account come from a source already credited as reliable on other matters.</p>

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When you describe progression in this way, you have a reference point for what to expect when planning lesson activities that include a focus on TS&PC. Like the progression maps in **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for Key Stage 3**, rubrics can help you recognise where to enhance existing activities by highlighting an aspect of TS&PC. The benefits come from considering and planning in advance: What are the components of understanding necessary to grasp and make use of a particular topic, skill, technique or process?

Once you have identified a specific focus, then the top-level rubrics can help you decide how a particular strand can help to support learning intentions. For example, you might think about when you want pupils to compare and contrast, when you expect them to practise some creative thinking, or when there is a problem-solving method to apply.

Writing a rubric

If you want to customise a classroom activity to address specific TS&PC, start by deciding on the success criteria for a piece of work. Consider another example from History. If you want to focus on TS&PC for a sequence of history lessons, you could ensure pupils understand the need to consider carefully what information to accept as accurate and reliable, and when to question whether the source is subject to bias or partisanship.

Imagine that your class has been learning about the Easter Rising and the Partition of Ireland. After hearing about the main events and examining a range of information (including portions of the film *Michael Collins*), you give pupils several documents relevant to the issues. Based on the material covered in class, pupils must produce an account of the main events that draws attention to the different contemporary perspectives in Dublin, Belfast and London, and how the period is now interpreted.

Assignment: *You have four documents related to the Easter Rising. One is the Proclamation of the Irish Republic as read out on the steps of the GPO by Patrick Pearse, one is a report on the events from the Belfast Telegraph in 1916, one is the communication from General Sir John Maxwell to Prime Minister H.H. Asquith about the court martial of prisoners after the rising was put down, and one is an account of events from a biography of David Lloyd George. What does each source tell us about how the Easter Rising was seen at the time? Write an account of the Easter Rising comparing how it was seen at the time and how it is viewed now.*

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Success criteria	Novice (N)	Apprentice (A)	Practitioner (P)	Expert (E)
Tell the story of the Easter Rising and how the events led to the partition of Ireland.	Need reminders and help to make a list of the main events and people involved.	List the main events and people, say which side they belonged to and what happened next that led to partition.	Describe the sequence of events and the roles played by each of the main figures, relating their positions to what happened to bring about the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.	Describe and explain the sequence of events, the motivation and roles of the main figures, and explain how the events influenced opinion in London and in Ireland leading to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.
Refer to sources to explain how the Easter Rising was seen by observers at the time.	Need prompting to find the relevant information in the sources.	Say where each source comes from and how their position shows the source to be for or against the Easter Rising.	Explain the relevance of each source and give reasons for the different perspectives.	Compare the significance of sources, explaining the reasons for the opinions and positions to be seen in each of them.
Comment on how the Easter Rising is now seen as a key moment in Irish history.	Need reminders and prompts to include a short summary of the importance of the Easter Rising.	State why the Easter Rising is an important event in Irish history.	Explain how the Easter Rising is now portrayed and the different place it occupies in history north and south of the border.	Explain why the Easter Rising is significant and how it is now portrayed differently from the way it was reported at the time, depending on the perspective of the commentator.
Use sentences and paragraphs, spelling the main names and terms correctly.	Use sentences for some parts of their account, while some parts are mainly lists. There are some mistakes in the names and terms.	Use sentences and some paragraphs. Most of the names and terms are given correctly.	Use sentences and paragraphs in a well-thought-out manner to make the account clear and easy to follow. Use of names and terms is accurate.	Carefully planned use of sentences and paragraphs to get the main points across effectively. Spelling is consistent and accurate.

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Three of the success criteria above relate directly to the subject content under consideration, and an additional criterion is used to emphasise what to expect regarding the form of the pupil response. The rubric is a useful summary of the standard of History learning needed to make progress from 'novice' to 'expert' in this topic, but also relates to the specific strand of Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making that is relevant to the activity (in this case, **make predictions, examine evidence, and distinguish fact from opinion**). It distinguishes the relative quality of the thinking that pupils will exhibit in each category.

In this example, pupils begin as novices, heavily reliant on the teacher to guide understanding. They move through intermediate stages of developing understanding and insight towards the 'expert' category. The expert category describes the performance of pupils who have thoroughly grasped and assimilated the information about the Easter Rising and are able to refer to sources, while drawing attention to different perspectives visible in accounts from different interest groups.

What to include in a rubric

The Easter Rising example follows an established pattern to construct rubrics, by putting the individual success criteria in a column on the left, and then constructing a scale for each criterion that describes the kind of performances you expect to see. Three or four success criteria are plenty, and typically, the scale uses four or five descriptions ranging from novice to expert. Ideally, how you define the characteristics of performance should have continuity, so that the same terms are used in each category. However, the description of the performance makes it clear what the expert can do that is absent in the practitioner category, and so on. The description of a performance should make it clear what characteristics differentiate it from the description that is lower or higher on the scale. Using qualifiers like 'more sophisticated' is not as desirable as a straight description of pupils' performance.

When planning lessons, you will often have elements of this approach in mind when anticipating the kind of responses you expect from pupils. However, these expectations remain tacit and form part of teacher observation. It's common to use checks like this to evaluate how individuals in a class are coping with various aspects of a task or activity. Sometimes this will simply be a question directed to gauge how well an individual understands something; sometimes it will consist of a short test to confirm comprehension. Every now and then it can be useful to make the details of the expected performance more explicit by sharing them as success criteria. Rubrics express gradations within the success criteria so that pupils can see the stages involved in completing the activity or assignment. Expressing the success criteria in this way means that pupils can see in advance what they have to do in order to achieve a particular standard.

You can also use the rubric as a tool to review performances and identify where individuals need more consolidation, more information, or more practice to be secure in their learning.

Rubrics and Assessment for Learning

Formalising and describing the characteristics of performances in terms of progressive mastery is a useful way to place markers on the way to deeper learning. You can specify performance using a rubric for formative assessment to identify when interventions are needed and what future actions to consider. This kind of assessment can also serve as a small-scale summative record of progress at a point in time. If you describe what pupils need to do to improve repeatedly, it helps them see how to progress. You can also use a rubric to provide specific feedback. Once the pupil can see the position they've reached in the rubric (because it describes their performance in an activity), then they will understand what they have to do to move on. By emphasising success criteria in this manner, it is possible to build pupils' habits of self-regulation, so that they can identify what they have to do and where to go next.

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Planning a rubric helps you think about what to include in the teaching and learning that leads up to the assessment activity: *What will pupils need in order to be prepared for an assignment that requires some independence?* 'Thinking like an assessor' and anticipating what you want pupils to be able to do when creating a rubric is a powerful way to reflect on planned activities. The rubric provides a structure by differentiating demand so that the task is accessible to all pupils in the class.

Rubrics in pupil language

Early experiences of working like this can result in rubric descriptions that articulate the performance you want to see in teacher language. However, you may need to revisit these to put the rubric in terms that are accessible to your classes. Similarly, the rubric helps you check how you've pitched the level of demand in the task: if most pupils are performing as 'experts', then that's a sign they're ready for greater challenge. If few are getting past the 'novice' stage, that's an indication that the class needs more topic preparation to get them ready for an assignment that requires them to be independent. This is a good way to use TS&PC to support learning. Once you and your pupils are familiar with rubrics, they will be a useful addition to your Assessment for Learning techniques.

There are several layers of description within the strands of the TS&PC framework. These can help you describe the learning intentions for an activity in more detail. The strands of the framework are described in increasingly specific terms in the **guidance materials**. The 'from-to' progress maps are the most generalised and the subject examples in the KS3 progression maps are the most specific. However, even these are expressed in quite general terms: they identify typical approaches within each of the strands. You can find out how your pupils are coping with an activity by customising the performance description to the actual context you are planning to use.

Rubrics and metacognition

Therefore, you can harness all of the benefits of using the TS&PC by choosing the appropriate strands and making them specific to your planned activity. You can combine these with other TS&PC techniques (such as using thinking frames) to make the thinking more visible, and to support the sequence of learning and teaching from plan, to do, through to review. If you use the rubric when conducting a plenary or end-of-lesson summary, it prompts pupils to consider the specifics of their own performance.

Rubrics can be especially useful when the topic you want pupils to grasp becomes more subject-specific. Within a subject there will be ways of thinking that are part of the discipline and specific to the topic. You can generalise about some aspects of the developing repertoire of thinking, at least in the initial stages of work, even if the detail is subject-specific. As pupils begin to recognise where they need to engage with specific types of thinking, they expand their repertoire of thinking skills. If pupils understand and reflect on what's involved in coping successfully with specific aspects of a subject, then there is scope for deeper learning. Use questions such as: How did you make that work? or What did you do to solve that problem? to reflect on the specific actions involved in a successful performance. This kind of reflection on what worked and why, which actions led to success and which resulted in barriers to success, builds metacognitive insight.

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Next steps

Add examples to illustrate the different gradations within the rubric. These examples should show pupils what a performance that matches the rubric description looks like. Show classes examples of work that matches with a novice performance, for example. This is part of modelling the thinking involved. It also makes your expectations clear to the class.

Once pupils are used to using rubrics that you have designed, get them to consider useful criteria when creating a rubric for a newly introduced topic. That is, get the pupils 'thinking like an assessor', anticipating what success will look like and describing good indicators to use to characterise degrees of success. If pupils understand the requirements of your subject to the point that they can recognise successful performance, that is a strong indication that their subject learning is deep, secure, and well-consolidated. It also helps pupils to understand the subject so that they become more 'self-regulating'.

In this sense, planning for assessment of the TS&PC is closely aligned with the principles of Assessment for Learning, but is concerned specifically with the thinking, attitudes and dispositions that lead to effective learning and progressive mastery of the topic.

Using rubrics to analyse what is involved in achieving success helps you reflect on what is working. It uses a form of assessment as what Dylan Wiliam calls the 'bridge between teaching and learning':

As every teacher knows, what students learn as a result of any particular sequence of instruction is hard to predict—what students learn is not necessarily what we teach. This is why assessment is perhaps the central feature of effective practice—assessment is the bridge between teaching and learning. It is only by assessing that we can find out whether the instructional activities in which students have engaged have resulted in the intended learning.

Without assessment, we might as well be speaking our lessons into a video camera that is relayed to students in another room.
From a presentation Formative assessment: The bridge between teaching and learning in high school mathematics at NCTM High School Interactive Institute, August 2nd, 2013: Washington, DC.
Available from: http://www.dylanwiliam.org/Dylan_Wiliams_website/Presentations.html

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Summary

- Use the generalised rubrics to spot opportunities for TS&PC in existing activities.
- Draw up success criteria for the activity in question.
- At the most, use three or four success criteria; fewer will do.
- Describe characteristics of performance in each success criterion from novice to expert.
- Make descriptions consistent: use the same terms but escalate demand.
- Avoid using qualifiers and keep the terms descriptive.
- Keep the rubric in pupil language.
- Use the rubric to discriminate between performances when making assessment decisions about what individuals have produced.
- Teachers and pupils use the rubric to reflect on performances and think about the thinking.
- Use rubrics to structure feedback.
- Provide pupils with examples of completed work that are matched to descriptions of performances in the rubric.
- Once pupils are familiar with the approach, get them to 'think like an assessor' and draw up their own rubrics for new activities.