

# **Transforming practice: Designing rubrics for cumulative and integrative assessment of disciplinary learning and development of students' language communication**

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While it is widely recognised that university graduates should be good communicators, and that close attention be paid to the development of students' communication skills within their disciplinary learning contexts (Arkoudis, 2014; Johnson, Veitch, & Dewiyanti, 2015), it remains open to debate how an effective and sustained focus on language communication can be achieved within disciplinary curricula. The past few years have seen major efforts to identify good practices in teaching language communication, yet as Arkoudis (2014) notes, these are often fragmented and not explicitly linked to disciplinary assessment. The existing literature on language communication consistently points out that designing assessment tasks and rubrics with built-in linguistic development will make a significant difference to students' language learning and development (Baker, 2015; Briguglio, 2014; Dunworth, 2013). However, current observation of practice across the disciplines indicates that un-theorised attempts to integrate 'language' into assessment rubrics tend to translate into a simplistic deduction of marks for superficial grammatical infringements. Addressing this significant gap in higher education practice, this presentation showcases the aims, method, and preliminary findings of an interdisciplinary collaborative project to design, trial, and evaluate a set of cumulative and integrative assessment rubrics of two coursework programs. The project involves two phases: the first is an initial diagnostic process that involves the collection and analysis of course material, learning outcomes, subject outlines and assessment rubrics in two courses, one undergraduate and one postgraduate, followed by interviews with subject coordinators, to evaluate whether and how communication development is framed, enabled and evidenced at a whole of course level. The second phase is developmental, drawing on the diagnostic data collected in phase one to collaboratively articulate discipline specific communication standards across different year levels, ensure assessment design enables these and assessment rubrics are designed to assure them. The project will provide a coherent framework and guide for the University to maintain and confidently expand its efforts to evidence language development and assure quality outcomes for all students in English communication.