

Marking

Introduction

The Curriculum Council recommends the use of analytical marking for both school-based and external assessments¹. Analytical marking uses marking keys that are developed to assess students' achievement on a specific task. These marking keys will vary according to the course and assessment type, but they have two things in common:

- There is a separate key for each of the distinguishable performance criteria to be assessed.
- Each key has marks (0, 1, 2, 3 etc.). The marks represent increasing quality of performance. The number of marks varies according to the number of distinguishable performance categories.

This approach provides a straight-forward way of discriminating between student performances, thus ensuring the correct rank order and relative separation of students' performances. The precision comes from the detail in the marking guides and locates a student's performance on a learning or developmental continuum.

In addition, analytical marking enables the provision of detailed diagnostic feedback to help the student focus their future learning and the teacher to inform future instruction. The level of detail can be related to broader course criteria and standards.

If constructed correctly, analytical marking keys improve reliability and validity of assessment, increase objectivity of marking and reduce possible 'halo' effects.

Although teachers may choose their own marking method, they need to be aware of the need to ensure precision and that differences between student performances are able to be acknowledged in the marking scheme². It is extremely important that teachers are aware of the principles of assessment such as reliability and validity and of the measurement consequences of their marking decisions. This is particularly true for assessments that contribute to a student's final mark.

Developing analytical marking keys

Typically, students demonstrate their ability through a performance on an assessment task, for example a short answer question, an essay, a calculation.

The first consideration in developing an analytical marking key for a question is to identify 'the best' performance students might demonstrate on the task. Ideally, this is done with reference to the students' work, but for school-based assessments teachers typically produce a 'model' answer as the basis for the key. Ideally, this key may be modified in light of student responses.

The second consideration is to determine the number of distinguishable performance categories between 'the best' performance and 'the weakest' performance on each criterion. There may be several criteria and more distinguishable categories for some, than others e.g.

- Criterion 1: 4 distinguishable performance categories
- Criterion 2: 3 distinguishable performance categories
- Criterion 3: 2 distinguishable performance categories

Analytical marking keys can be represented in several different formats. (One format is demonstrated in the appendix.)

In summary, the key feature of analytical marking which distinguishes it from holistic marking is that analytical marking uses criteria that are made explicit through the analytical marking key and each criterion has one or more performance categories which arise directly from the task.

Practical considerations

Most teachers of TEE subjects are accustomed to using numerical marking. However, some of these use more holistic or impressionistic judgement methods (where criteria are broader and implicit) to determine a score for an item (e.g. an essay marked out of 20).

Irrespective of the approach taken, it is essential that marking keys are used in marking.

- They make the criteria that will be used to allocate marks clear and explicit. This helps ensure a consistent interpretation of what marks are to be awarded for and also provides the basis for feedback to students.
- Ideally they are based on student responses or answers to an assessment task or item.
 - In reality, when the key is initially set, students will not have completed the assessment.
 - Typically, teachers develop marking keys based on 'ideal' or 'model' answers that they would expect from the 'perfect' student.
 - Generic marking guides are frequently customised by teachers to develop specific marking keys.

Over the next four or five years, teachers will be supported as they review, adapt and refine their current marking approaches to achieve assessment outcomes that will derive from the application of analytical marking so that all students' assessments are afforded the same level of objectivity and precision.

In the interim, teachers of wholly-school assessed subjects who are accustomed to marking using the 'V', 'H' and 'S' ratings against the performance criteria of the common assessment framework subjects are asked to use analytical marking as they implement new courses.

In TEE subjects where more holistic marking may be used such as extended responses, it is still expected that teachers will assess across a range of performance categories and against a number of criteria which derive directly from the task and have been made explicit through a marking key. This will result in the effective ranking of student performances.

An experienced teacher will have an idea of 'the very best' script/answer possible, an excellent script and so on, including what would be a minimum quality for satisfactory achievement. This effectively allows the teacher to generate a 'scale' for that task and then to place students on that scale.

Teachers who use this approach should have checks in place to ensure that marks are reliable and that they accurately differentiate between different responses.

A key focus of the work of the Curriculum Council in 2008 to 2010 will be to develop teachers' understanding and expertise in the development and use of analytical marking.

Notes

- 1 Andrich, D. (2005). *A report to the Curriculum Council of Western Australia regarding assessment for tertiary selection*. Osborne Park, WA: Curriculum Council of Western Australia.
- 2 Tognolini, J. (2006). *Meeting the challenge of assessing in a standards based education system*. Osborne Park, WA: Curriculum Council of Western Australia.

Appendix 1: Sample assessment task from Business Management and Enterprise

Assume that the business you have been studying plans to double the number of stores across Australia over the next five years.

Discuss the overall impact of such expansion on employees' performance.

Suggest one strategy which would combat possible negative effects of the expansion on staff performance and motivation within the organisation. Use one theory of human resource motivation to justify your suggestion.

Marking key

Criterion 1: Impact of expansion (3 marks)				
Does not identify any impact of expansion. (0 marks)	Identifies some effects e.g. greater span of control; many people to induct (1 mark)	Analyses some effects e.g. greater span of control brings communication challenges; induction logistics could reduce quality of induction (2 marks)	Evaluates combined effect of expansion e.g. greater span of control and large numbers of new people to be inducted bring communication and training challenges which could result in reduced sense of belonging for new staff and less ability to identify with the organisation (3 marks)	
Criterion 2: Strategy to combat negative effects of expansion (2 marks)				
Suggests an ineffective strategy OR Does not suggest a strategy (0 marks)	Suggests a general strategy which could combat effects (1 mark)	Suggests a strategy which suits organisation and combats effects (2 marks)		
Criterion 3: Use of motivation theory and justification of suggestion (4 marks)				
No relevant theory mentioned or justification provided (0 marks)	Identifies a motivation theory but relationship to strategy not explained (1 mark)	Explains a link between motivation theory and suggested strategy without consideration of the particular organisation (2 marks)	Explains a link between motivation theory and suggested strategy in this organisation (3 marks)	Uses understanding of motivational theory as applied to this organisation to recommend and justify an effective strategy (4 marks)
Criterion 4: Language and terminology (1 mark)				
Does not use business language and terminology correctly or at all (0 marks)	Correct use of business language and terminology (1 mark)			