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A grounded theory study exploring the design, development and contextualization of rubrics for the purpose of assessing learning outcomes

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The use of rubrics, as marking guides, in higher education has become a solution to charting the attainment of learning outcomes (LO) with regard to student academic progress. This project, a grounded theory study (GT) (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), aims to identify processes that academics engage in in the design and development of rubrics. The rationale aligns with internal (university) and external (accrediting bodies) education policy related to enhancing the student experience through constructive alignment. The objectives, then, were to: 1) review the current literature; 2) examine a range of rubrics being applied at Deakin and other higher education settings; 3) locate rubric design within discipline contexts; 4) interview academics using rubrics in their teaching, at both individual and program level; 5) design a set of rubrics grounded in the data; 6) develop rubrics through a pilot study then apply them in teaching and learning contexts and garner student feedback and performance outcomes; 7) develop PD events for lecturers to support their continued use of rubrics. This presentation, an interim report, will discuss the literature and its role in locating the study within a conceptual frame, the design of research instruments, the analytic techniques of GT with emergent categories that are shaping the research, a summary of data from informal interviews and a demonstration of the attempted rubric designs. The implications can support course teams in their application of rubrics, and furthermore provide a case for Deakin's quality drive towards assessing LO and enhancing student experience through consistent and transparent assessment feedback.