**PROJECT**

**GUIDELINES/ RUBRIC**

Graduate programs that require the project or offer the project as an option to fulfill the culminating experience requirement for the degree must provide students with information regarding the expectations to meet this academic requirement. The project should assess the degree to which each student has achieved some or all of the program learning outcomes. This document provides guidelines for programs to develop a project rubric that assesses achievement of program learning outcomes.

As a minimum, projects must follow California state policy as described below:

[Title 5 Description of Projects](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/IF41B2430D48211DEBC02831C6D6C108E?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)) for Culminating Activity

A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology and a conclusion or recommendation. An oral defense of the project may be required.

**Guidelines for Developing a Project Rubric**

1. Include a description of the purpose of rubric to provide students with clarity regarding expectations for the culminating project;
2. Identify how the program intends to use rubric (for program assessment/PLOs; individual; feedback to students; to norm among faculty reading project).
3. When programs may consider using the rubric:
   1. During orientation so that students can make an informed decision when selecting a culminating experience;
   2. During the advancement to candidacy advising appointment;
   3. As feedback during process of writing project report (e.g., to highlight areas to improve);
   4. At oral defense or recital/perforamnce/exhibit, if required, to have a standard evaluation of the project
   5. As aggregate data to assess program effectiveness (e.g., for program review; accreditation data)
4. Match rubric domains to PLOs.
5. Learning outcomes and related rubric domains should be included in syllabi of specific courses designed to prepare students to complete their culminating project. To communicate expectations and standards for the culminating project. Also, to ensure that students are gaining the knowledge and developing the skills to successfully complete a culminating project before they are expected to complete this work independently.
6. Faculty may decide to weight criteria based on discipline specific standards or importance. Below is a list of rubric domains to consider, each graduate program should decide which are most relevant:
   1. Written Communication
   2. Theoretical Background/Assumptions
   3. Significance/Impact on the Field/ Contribution to the Public Good
   4. Purpose of Study/Identification of Problem
   5. Methodology
   6. Results
   7. Discussion/Analysis:
   8. Ethical Considerations

For Sample Rubrics see [Assessment Resources](https://www.calstatela.edu/apra/assessment-resources) weblink.

**DESCRIPTIONS OF RUBRIC DIMENSIONS**

Below is a list of project rubric dimensions that a graduate program might include in the final project rubric to collect assessment data. It is not necessary to assess each of these areas using theses; some of these areas may be assessed through assignments in specific courses or through other departmental or programmatic assessment activities. These descriptions can be modified to suit needs of the department or program. We encourage you to meet as a department (assessment committee, faculty, etc.) to discuss which of these reflect standards in your discipline.

**Written Communication**

Because a project requires an extensive amount of writing, theses make great sources of data for assessing graduate students’ writing skills. Organization, style, clarity, tone, style manual application, and mechanics are just a few areas of written communication skills that could be assessed within a project.

For an example of rubric scales for assessing Written Communication, visit our [assessment resources webpage](https://www.calstatela.edu/apra/assessment-resources).

**Theoretical Background/Assumptions**

Students will describe key theoretical influences that inform their current study. Students may describe theoretical models, relevant previous scholarship or analysis on the topic, key terms and concepts, and/or current gaps in the literature.

**Significance/Impact on the Field/ Contribution to the Public Good**

At the graduate level, students contribute to the advancement of their discipline through original research, scholarship, and creative activity. This contribution can be described in a project in terms of knowledge generation, professional application, and/or positive social change. The student may describe how their scholarship contributes to overall well-being of local community, region, and/or discipline.

**Purpose of Study/Identification of Problem**

Students will provide a description of what their study intends to contribute to the discipline (e.g., adding new knowledge to the field, applying existing theory to a new population, replicating a published study, proposing new theoretical models to inform discipline, critical analysis of existing work). Students will provide hypotheses or research questions.

**Methodology**

Students will describe the process by which their data was generated, gathered, and recorded or the source from which secondary data were pulled. Students will describe their sample and any relevant demographics. For students who are analyzing or interpreting text, literature, or visual art in their research, inclusion criteria and the reasoning behind them will be described. Students may also describe how they plan to analyze the gathered data.

**Results**

Students will report the findings of their study and how they address the hypotheses or central research questions. Statistical analyses, if any were performed, will be described. In some cases, content analyses may be used to identify and describe themes in literary work. Visual graphics of data and findings (e.g., charts, tables) may be presented in this section.

**Discussion/Analysis**:

Students will interpret the findings reported in the Results section. Students might discuss the results in relation to existing literature, highlight the implications for theory, practice, and policy, and/or describe limitations of the study and offer suggestions for future scholarship on the topic.

**Ethical Considerations**

Students may need to provide evidence that ethics were considered, understood, and applied within the project. Ethical consideration may be showcased by an acknowledgement of the IRB approval process or through descriptions of the research process (e.g., how research procedures were designed to pose minimal risk, etc.). Ethical considerations may also be inherent in the subject matter of the project (e.g., focus on vulnerable population, sensitive topics, etc.) and how the data can be used (e.g., proposing new or questioning existing policy and practice).

Before developing project rubrics for assessment, revisit your **learning outcomes** and **curriculum map**. You may also consider reviewing Cal State LA’s [Institutional Learning Outcomes](https://www.calstatela.edu/apra/learning-outcomes). Identify which PLOs relate to the project rubric dimensions listed above or which PLOs could be best measured using theses as sources of data and include those dimensions in the rubric. Programs should consider designing the project rubric so that it will provide assessment data on outcomes or competencies that are not being assessed elsewhere in the department’s **assessment process or plan**.

If you’d like to learn more about the terms in bold, consider attending our [Assessment Workshops](https://www.calstatela.edu/apra/spring-2021-assessment-workshops), which cover introductory and advanced topics in assessment, including the assessment of graduate-level learning outcomes.