



Self Guided Assessment

Co-creating assessment criteria for an unconventional assignment

THINKING | Critical Thinking

→ What you will need:

- 👤 Up to 30
- 📋 Workshop, group and individual
- 🕒 2 hrs preparation
- 🕒 5.5 hrs, in 3 sessions
- 📄 sticky notes, markers, sheets and paper

→ Related Tools:



[Intervision on Inner Development](#)



[Navigating Uncertainty](#)

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“Embrace growth beyond grades. This tool helps define learning objectives, reflect on personal growth, and co-create assessment criteria for a challenge-based task.”

—Hebe Verrest





I. Overview

Tackling complex global challenges requires innovative solutions that are constantly reimagined and refined through new experiences and knowledge. Educators can help develop these skills by creating assignments that challenge students to step out of their comfort zones, encouraging them to try unfamiliar tasks and adopt new ways of thinking.

Yet, students often feel overwhelmed by such challenges. In an education system focused on grades and test performance, the willingness to experiment and learn from failure has declined (Lau, 2016). This aversion to uncertainty limits their ability to take risks, fail, and grow—key components of critical thinking.

This learning activity develops these essential skills by:

- 1) Engaging students in co-creating assessment criteria for an unconventional assignment.
- 2) Encouraging reflective learning through completing and (peer) assessing the assignment.

This tool focuses on co-creating a rubric for an unconventional assignment designed to foster critical thinking. While the primary focus is on developing the rubric, the assignment is a valuable learning experience, helping students build skills such as openness and learning mindset, creativity and perseverance.

Learning outcome



The student is able to critically identify learning objectives, translate them into assessment criteria and reflect on their learning and personal growth



II. Learning Activity

Students work together to design and apply an assessment rubric for an unconventional assignment. They then reflect on their learning, both through the rubric creation process and their experiences completing the assignment.



1. Introducing the unconventional assignment & Brainstorming 20 mins

Present the description and learning objective of the unconventional assignment.

Examples include writing a film review (see Unconventional assignment example), designing an infographic, producing a podcast, or creating a satirical news article. Highlight that these tasks push students out of their comfort zones, encouraging radically different ways of thinking.

Explain that creating the rubric to assess the unconventional assignment is a critical thinking exercise. Involve students in determining the assessment criteria to give them greater ownership of their learning process.

Divide the class into an even number of groups, with up to five students in each group.

Individually, each student reviews the assignment description, followed by 10 minutes of brainstorming on potential assessment criteria, writing down their ideas on sticky notes and placing them on a shared sheet within their group.



2. Clustering and Refining Criteria 35 mins

First, each group reviews their brainstormed criteria, identifies patterns, organises related items into clusters and names each cluster.

Then, pair two groups to compare and refine their criteria into 4 to 8 shared categories.



Display all subgroup results and hold a class discussion to merge them into a final set of 4 to 8 overarching categories with clustered criteria. Encourage students to justify their choices and collaboratively resolve any disagreements.

Tip: remind students to listen actively to each other, question assumptions and critically evaluate the proposed criteria. Ensure that every group member contributes their perspective to the process.



3. Crafting a Rubric 45 – 60 mins

After reaching a common agreement on the categories and criteria for the rubric, students collaboratively create detailed descriptions for each assessment criterion in a World Café format.

Divide students into as many groups as there are assessment categories (e.g., if there are four categories, create four groups). The process involves three rounds of discussion and refinement in a World Café set-up:

- Round 1 (15–20 minutes): Each group uses the sticky notes from the brainstorming session to create detailed descriptions for their assigned category. They define the criteria for assessment based on three performance levels: “above expectations,” “meets expectations,” and “below expectations.” Groups should write these descriptions in three boxes using keywords to differentiate between the three levels.
- Round 2 (15 minutes): One student stays as the group’s representative, while the rest move to the next table/category. The representative explains the group’s work to the new group. The new group reviews the descriptions, discusses them, and suggests improvements. After 15 minutes, they move again, leaving a new representative behind to brief the next group.
- Round 3 (10 minutes): The final group reviews the work from the previous group, refines the descriptions, and makes the final adjustments. This round ensures the descriptions are clear, consistent and agreed upon by all students.



Tip: during the discussions, students can consider the following questions:

- Is the description comprehensible?
- Are the most important aspects included in the valuation criteria as formulated by the previous group?
- Are there important aspects missing?
- How can the text be refined and/ or reformulated?



4. Rubric Finalisation ⌚ 35 mins

To prepare for this session, compile the outcomes of Step 3 into a draft rubric. Include clear definitions for each category, the criteria with assigned performance levels, and detailed descriptions. Ensure the draft is organised and ready for presentation.

In class, share the draft rubric with the class and facilitate a structured discussion to review and refine it collaboratively.

Encourage all students to contribute feedback, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. Allocate time to review each category thoroughly.

Aim for consensus, but be prepared to make final decisions if needed. Once the class approves the changes, finalise and present the completed rubric to the group.

Tip: composing the final rubric will take some work. We recommend doing this in between two sessions.



5. Assessment and Reflection ⌚ 2 hrs

Before class, make sure you have assessed the students' unconventional assignment using the rubric which was developed in co-creation. Additionally, each student self-assesses their work and evaluate the work of a peer using the same rubric.



Once the three assessments (self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment) are completed, students compare the evaluations. They will then participate in a peer discussion to reflect on any contradictions or agreements among the assessments.

Encourage students to explore the following reflective questions during their peer discussion:

- How did you feel about completing the unconventional assignment?
- What was the impact of co-creating the rubric? Did this influence how you approached the assignment?
- How did developing the rubric shape your learning experience with the assignment?
- After comparing the three evaluations of your assignment, what skills and knowledge have you gained? What areas still need improvement?

Tip: encourage students to take detailed notes during the peer discussion, as these reflections can offer valuable insights for their critical reflection report.



III. Assessment

Assess the student's learning, focusing on their rubric creation and different assessments of the Unconventional Assignment. The reflection emphasises the critical thinking involved in both phases.



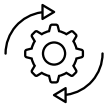
Purpose

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



Roles

Self-assessment and peer assessment



Characteristics

Authentic and assessment with rubric



Materials

Critical reflection report and reflective questions for peer reflection



Assessment

Assessment

Write a 500-word critical reflection on your learning experience. Your report should address the following questions:

1. How did designing and using the rubric influence your understanding of the assessment criteria and expectations?
2. What did you learn from assessing your work and that of your peers?
3. In what ways did the feedback from your peers and the teacher challenge or confirm your self-assessment? How did this feedback influence your perspective on your work and your approach to learning?
4. Reflecting on the overall experience, how has completing an unconventional assignment changed your understanding of learning and personal development?
5. Based on this experience, how would you approach an unconventional assignment in the future?





Assessment

Reflective questions

Use the following questions for the reflection with your peer:

1. How did you feel about completing the unconventional assignment?
2. What was the impact of being involved in creating the rubric? Did this change your approach to the assignment?
3. How did working on the rubric influence your learning from the assignment?
4. Considering the three evaluations of your assignment, what skills and knowledge have you gained, and what areas still need improvement?





IV. Key Advice

The **Unconventional assignment example** (Step 1) and **World Cafe Set-up** (Step 3) can be downloaded below. The World Cafe is a versatile methodology for facilitating large group dialogues, structured around five key components:

- Creating a welcoming, cafe-like setting;
- Introducing the process and setting the context;
- Conducting multiple rounds of small-group discussions with crafted questions;
- Rotating participants to foster diverse interactions; and
- Sharing insights with the larger group through visual documentation.

While the process is simple, being an experienced host can enhance the effectiveness of the World Cafe format, and various resources are available to support new hosts (The World Cafe, 2023).





Key Advice

Unconventional Assignment example

This assignment, from the course *Urban Perspectives in International Development* at the University of Amsterdam, asks students to write a film review—a task they are unfamiliar with. Many students feel uncertain about how to approach such an assignment and what criteria the teacher will use for assessment.

The Assignment: Film Review (1000 words)

Select a film (not a documentary) that you believe is relevant to one of the course topics. Using the ideas developed in the Lewis et al. (2013) article “*The Projection of Development*” as a starting point, build a compelling argument for why this film should be considered critical viewing for those studying urban inequality.

Your film review will be marked based on how effectively you:

- Present a coherent argument explaining the film’s relevance for understanding specific urban inequalities (specifically, the issues of your choice) and justify why the film offers critical insights compared to similar academic work.
- Connect the film’s narrative or analysis of the urban issues of your choice to academic analyses, particularly those explored in the course readings.

Simply summarising the film will not suffice. Your review must reference relevant course materials to demonstrate its academic significance.

Assessment Rubric Example

One of the co-created rubric criteria might include a breakdown of performance into levels. While this example uses four levels, you can adapt it to your context and use three or five instead.





Critical Analysis (40%)					
Critical Analysis of film in relation to the theme(s) of the course. (understanding of urban issue represented in the movie; relating film and urban issues to literature and theory)	<p>40 to >32.0 Pts Full marks</p> <p>Theme of the film is linked to urban inequality and/or to a theme of the course. These are integrated in-depth. The concepts are well chosen and a wide array of readings and examples has been convincingly applied and resulting in a strong analysis of the film in relation to the chosen theme. The student shows thorough understanding of critical theory approaches and takes a well-argued, creative position in the debate(s) and articulates this view clearly.</p>	<p>32 to >28.0 Pts Good</p> <p>Theme of the film is linked to urban inequality and/or to a theme of the course. The concepts are well chosen and enough relevant readings and examples have been convincingly applied and result in the student presenting an analysis of the film in relation to the chosen theme. Student shows a proper understanding of critical theory approaches and articulates a clear and fitting position.</p>	<p>28 to >22.0 Pts In development</p> <p>Theme of the film is linked to urban inequality and/or to a theme of the course. Concepts or ideas used are relevant but are not convincingly applied to develop a solid analysis of the film in relation to the chosen theme. Student shows sufficient understanding of critical theory approaches. The student's view could be better articulated and/or the approach is not well integrated in the paper. Enough relevant readings are integrated in the text.</p>	<p>22 to >0 Pts Insufficient</p> <p>Theme(s) of the film is not discussed in relation to urban inequality or to a theme of the course. Student shows hardly or no understanding of critical theory approaches and is unable to articulate a view in relation to the film. Insufficient use of the readings for the course (depth and breadth).</p>	40 pts

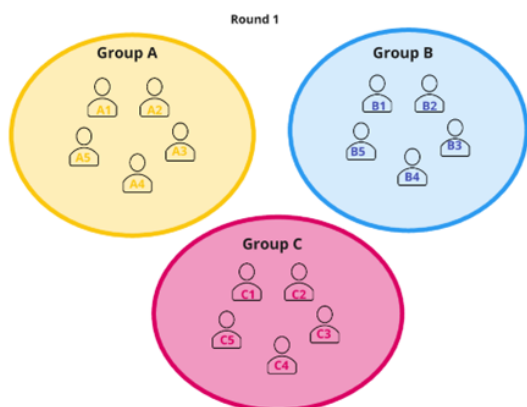


Key Advice

World Cafe Set-up

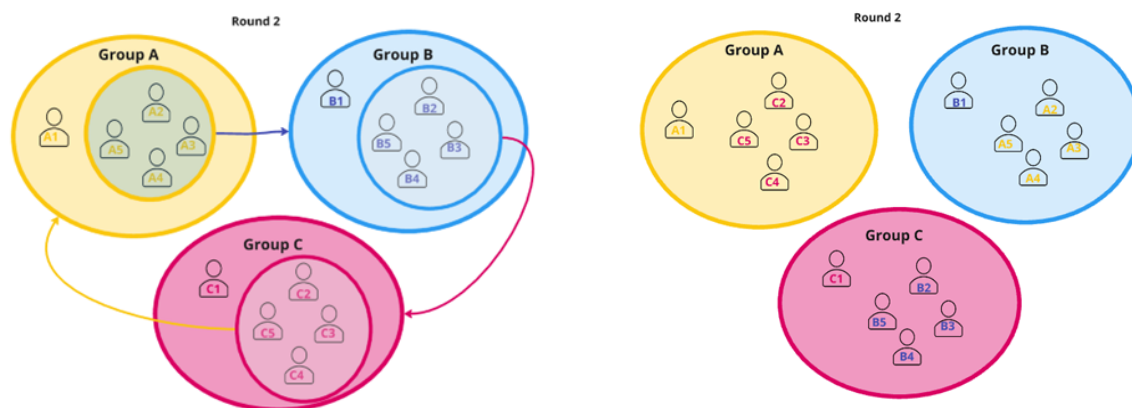
Students will formulate descriptions that define the criteria for assessment in three rounds. Below you will find a visual explanation of the set up.

Round 1 (15 to 20 minutes)



Using the post-its from the previous steps as input, each group discusses and composes an elaborated description of their assigned category and criteria for assessment based on three performance levels: above expectations, on expectations, and below expectations. Ask students to write these descriptions in three boxes using keywords to differentiate between the three levels.

Round 2 (15 minutes)

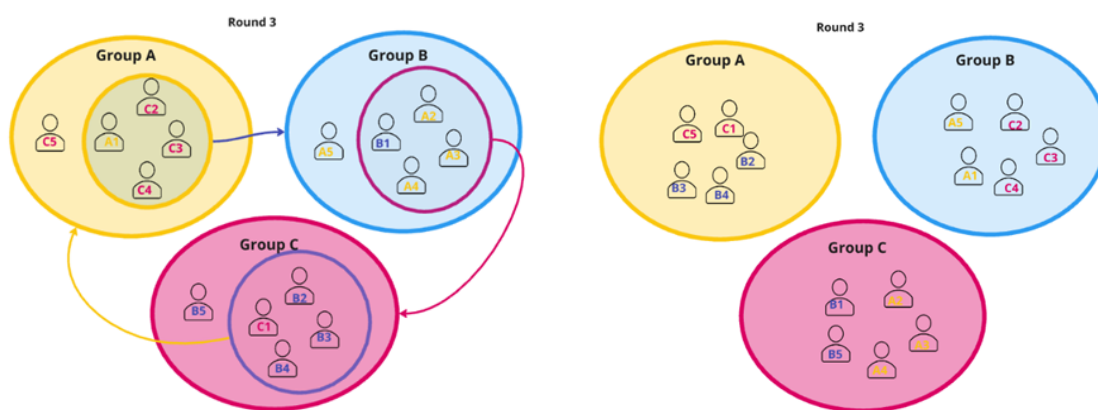




One student per table remains as a representative of the group. The rest of the group moves to the next table/category. The representative briefs the new group. Students review the work of the previous group, discuss the descriptions of the category, criteria, and expected levels, and suggest adjustments. After 15 minutes, the group moves to the next table once more, leaving behind a new representative to brief the incoming group.

Round 3 (10 minutes)

The representative briefs the new group. Students review the work of the previous group, discuss the descriptions, and make final adjustments and alterations.



Tip: during the discussions, students can consider the following questions:

- Is the description comprehensible?
- Are the most important aspects included in the valuation criteria as formulated by the previous group?
- Are there important aspects missing?
- How can the text be refined and/ or reformulated?

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