**Understanding Learning Progressions**

Gonski 2.0 (May 2018)

Recommendation 7:  
Strengthen the development of the general capabilities, and raise their status within curriculum delivery, by using learning progressions to support clear and structured approaches to their teaching, assessment, reporting and integration with learning areas.

**Key Words and Terms**

A learning progression is a carefully sequenced set of building blocks that students must master en route to mastering more complex knowledge, understanding and skills. These building blocks consist of sub-skills and bodies of enabling knowledge. Learning progressions assist teachers to differentiate teaching and learning experiences to support student progress. They are also used to provide feedback to students about next steps in their learning.

A developmental learning progression is not linked to year levels, for example, the Australian Curriculum Literacy and Numeracy Progressions.  
<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/national-literacy-and-numeracy-learning-progressions/>

If a learning progression is linked to year levels, it may be called *Learning Continua,* for example, the General Capabilities each have a Continuum based on year levels.  
<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/>

**Achievement Standards**An achievement standard describes the quality of learning (the extent of knowledge, the depth of understanding and the sophistication of skills) that students should be able to do, know and understand by the end of the year, at each year level. They contain cognitive verbs. The achievement standard also allows teachers to monitor student learning and to make judgements about student progress and achievement.  
<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/structure/>

**Cognitive Verbs**Cognitive verbs can be identified across each of the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum, and signal to students the type of mental operations they are to use when demonstrating what they know, understand and can do. The QCAA has identified 70 important cognitive verbs.<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/frequently-used-resources/cognitive-verbs>

The QCAA has also developed a practical and comprehensive toolkit for teachers and students  
<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/frequently-used-resources/cognitive-verbs/primary-cognitive-verb-toolkit>

**Cognitive Verb Progressions**For each cognitive verb, a progression may be built based on increasing levels of mastery. <https://www.janetfarrall.com.au/teacher-resources>

**Assessment Ladders**Assessment Ladders, based on a particular cognitive verb, show what the verb looks like at different levels A-E. These may be used for designing assessment tasks, formative and summative assessment and for assisting students to understand what they need focus upon next. <https://www.janetfarrall.com.au/teacher-resources>

**Learning Ladders**These are progressions that move from the simple to the complex in a particular skills, for example, posing questions. <https://www.janetfarrall.com.au/teacher-resources>

**Qualifiers**A qualifier is a word that limits or enhances another word's meaning, for example, *in-depth, comprehensive.* <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/qualifiers/>

They are used in rubrics that are designed to evaluate a final product.   
<https://www.ais.sa.edu.au/australian-curriculum/audit-tools-rubrics-and-matrices/>

Qualifiers for Assessment Elements in Rubrics  
<https://www.ais.sa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/Pages/Australian_Curriculum/Rubrics/Qualifiers-for-Rubrics-v4-2019.pdf>

**Rubrics**A **rubric** is typically an evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote the consistent application of learning expectations, [learning objectives](https://www.edglossary.org/learning-objectives/" \o "Learning Objectives" \t "_blank), or [learning standards](https://www.edglossary.org/standards/) in the classroom, or to measure their attainment against a consistent set of criteria. Rubrics are also used as scoring instruments to determine grades or the degree to which learning standards have been demonstrated or attained by students.  
<https://www.edglossary.org/rubric/> Most rubrics use qualifiers.   
  
**Developmental rubrics** are rubrics that do not use qualifiers. They are used to determine a level or development rather than evaluate the quality of a final product. (<https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/feedback-grading/rubrics/Pages/types-of-rubrics.aspx#developmental>)

See also VCAA 2019.

**Performance Standards** (SACE Board of South Australia)Student work is assessed using performance standards. These standards are provided in each subject outline and describe the quality of student learning required to achieve each grade (A to E for Stage 1 and A+ to E− for Stage 2).

Qualifiers are used to distinguish between grade levels  
<https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/teaching/assessment/performance-standards>

**References**

Claxton, G. et al., (2011). *The Learning Powered School*, UK: TLO Limited

Popham, W. (2007). ‘ Lowdown on Learning Progressions’ in *Educational Leadership*, Vol 64, No. 7  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr07/vol64/num07/The-Lowdown-on-Learning-Progressions.aspx>

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority. (2018). *Categories of common cognitive verbs* - based on Marzano and Kendall (2007) <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ac_categories_cognitive_verbs.pdf>

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2019) *Guide to Formative Assessment Rubrics*, Melbourne: VCAA

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