Using Competency-Based Rubrics to Track Student Development

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KEY POINTS
- Tracking competency development is an important part of accreditation.
- Using universal outcomes and competency-based rubrics in Canvas allows students greater grading transparency.
- Using competency-based rubrics gives the department data to use for program improvement.

INTRODUCTION
Accreditation programs such as the AUPHA, CAHME, and CEPH are placing greater emphasis on competency based education. Standards set by accrediting bodies require programs to focus on and document competency development. The Master of Healthcare Administration program at UNLV is testing a tracking system that allows faculty to assess students’ competency attainment through their coursework in both online and in-class courses using Canvas, the learning management system (LMS) UNLV utilizes.

Rubrics, tied to the key competencies in each course allow students to know faculty expectations and give faculty an objective tool to use in grading, assessing competencies, and giving students feedback. Providing students with timely, personalized task or process related feedback can increase student success in online courses (Figure 1).

RESULTS
Tracking and documenting student performance in competency attainment can be challenging for many programs. Moreover, there is greater emphasis on how attainment of competencies can be accessible to students. Documenting student competencies and outcomes in an online tool can allow students, instructors and program directors to track student performance and identify the areas in which they need to improve as they progress through the program. By having the evaluation instrument available in their “community” room online, they can visualize how well they are achieving their competencies or outcomes.

Once the initial assignment is graded, the instructor will normalize the competency scores and input data for the competency rubric (partial example in Figure 2). When this is done, several points of data can be collected from an administration account in Canvas Reports. “Outcomes” reporting can be pulled for competency attainment at the program level. An example of this is in Figure 3. Reports and data can be collected as an individual student or single course.

CONCLUSIONS
Students are now more familiar with how coursework relates to program competency development and are also able to track their competency attainment as they progress through the program. In the future, this type of grading will continue on through the main assignments in each course. The competency “outcome” is set up as a decaying average; therefore, the later courses will count for more of the total average for the student. This should allow the student and faculty to see increase in progress through the program. This information provides them with their strengths and weaknesses and what competencies they need to continue to improve on.

In addition, the faculty and administration can obtain quantitative data for each competency. This can guide the faculty to evaluate the program’s ability to assess specific competencies in order to improve and update the courses in order to allow for meaningful impact for the students on each competency.

This competency reporting system has some limitations within Canvas LMS. For example, global competencies must be made by admin on the account for the program. These cannot be changed; therefore normalization of each competency was required. Initial setup will take time; however, once all assignments and rubrics are established, only minimal changes will need to occur.

As part of the accreditation process, this new system allows the program to document competency attainment on the individual student level and also across the program as a whole. Strengths and weaknesses of the student and the program’s curriculum can be documented. Using this information instructors can make course level improvements to aid in competency development.

Figure 1. The competency-based rubric above showcases the competencies (in red) along with rubric criteria, performance ratings and descriptions. This rubric is translated into a Canvas rubric attached to an assignment.

Within the Canvas LMS, program competencies can be showcased as universal “outcomes”. An alternate normalized “assignment” is created within Canvas with these outcomes standing for specific competencies within its own rubric (Figure 2). The tracking of program competencies will be analyzed using internal Canvas data analysis to evaluate both the program and individual students. Within Canvas LMS, a Learning Gradebook can be activated for students to see their feedback on these competencies over the length of their program.

Once assignments are graded in Canvas, program administration can take results for each student and input results into each student’s individual dashboard on a scale of 1-5 that matches up with the program’s competency attainment levels. As students progress through the program and students are assessed on the same competency in different courses, program leaders can see how each student’s competency development is progressing throughout the program. The end result would include an extensive dashboard which would include student self-assessment on competencies at the beginning of program and end of program, as well as competencies throughout the program courses (Figure 4).

In Fall 2019, the UNLV-Healthcare Administration and Policy faculty discussed and implemented competency-based rubrics within their courses (example, Figure 1).


Figure 2. Example of Outcomes and Competency Rubric in Canvas LMS.

Figure 3. Fall 2019 data was collected from the assignments. This is an example of attainment of each competency. Students are assessed at levels of competency (basic, intermediate, and advanced). The type of dashboard can be helpful in accreditation processes.

Figure 4. Example of a possible student dashboard for full program analysis of a sample student.