

Norming Session Protocol

1. Preparation: Bring "anchor" papers from your department so that you can score against the kind of student work you will be assessing. Bring a range of student work. If you are going to be using student work from different courses, bring student work from different courses to the norming session so that faculty can see how the rubric works against various types of student work.
2. Opening: An overview of what you are trying to do. Here you might think about what is "on the table." Have you decided that you will use the AAC&U rubric absolutely as is, meaning that it becomes the job of faculty to write prompts that will elicit student work responsive to that rubric? Or is the rubric itself on the table (for editing, for example)? Is this meeting about rubric editing or inter-rater reliability only? Letting people know what is up for grabs at this point might be helpful.
3. Reviewing the rubric: Give everyone some time to read through the rubric. Here, they should be looking for what changes between cells. What differs, for example, between a 4 and a 3? I would recommend underlining key terms in the cells. After everyone has read the rubric, you should take some time to talk about it. What are the questions? Where are the differences fuzzy for people? It can also be helpful to make sure that people are aware how the criteria differ from each other. In the Writing Rubric, for example, it might be useful to talk about the difference between Content Development and Sources and Evidence.
 - a. Decide if you are reading the rubric low to high or high to low. The literature is divided on this question. My main suggestion is to be clear on how you will do it and have everyone do it that way. Part of that discussion involves consensus around what "moves" a piece of work up the scale. One of the benefits of reading high to low is that if a piece of work does not fit all of the criteria for the higher number, you know to move it lower (if you read low to high, you are sometimes tempted to move a score because a paper exceeds the lower category even if it does not meet all the criteria for the higher category).
4. Norming Paper One: Have everyone norm the first paper. Instruct them to mark "evidence" for their ratings. In other words, mark where they see a student "demonstrating a thorough understanding of context" (from the AAC&U Writing Rubric) or whatever the specific criteria is.
 - a. After everyone has normed, ask everyone to share their numbers (it will probably be helpful to do this line by line). Here it might be useful to tell people that it is okay to be the outlier—don't, in other words, change your score to fit in. The point of the exercise is to figure out how people are reading and assessing.
 - b. Whether everyone is relatively close in scores, go through and ask for evidence for the scores people gave. Again, the point is more than getting within one number of each other. It is making sure that everyone reads the same way.
5. Norming More Papers: You need to continue norming until everyone scores within one number of each other. Even if that happens on the first paper, you should score one more to make certain it was not a fluke. Keep going until everyone is reading the same.
6. Anchor Papers: It might be helpful to keep the papers you used in the norming session, as well as the consensus scores and some sense of why they were scored as they were, on file in

the department. That way, when people are scoring independently later in the semester, they can easily return to those papers for a sense of how the department was reading.