

Learning-Centered Teaching practice rubric

A Learning-Centered Teaching voluntary, self-assessment tool ©¹
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Learning-centered teaching is a unified approach. To achieve learning-centered teaching all of the following practices as described by Weimer¹ in her book Learner-Centered Teaching should be an integral part of the education:

- *The functions of the content* in learning-centered teaching include building a strong knowledge foundation and to develop learning skills and learner self-awareness.
- *The role of the teacher* should focus on student learning. The roles are more facilitative rather than prescriptive teaching.
- *The responsibility for learning* shifts from the teacher to the students. Students take responsibility for their own learning. With students, the teacher creates learning environments that motivate students to accept responsibility for learning.
- *The processes and purposes of evaluation* shift from only assigning grades to also including constructive feedback and to assist with improvement. Learning-centered teaching uses assessment as a part of the learning process.
- *The balance of power* shifts so that the teacher shares some decisions about the course with the students such that the teacher and the students collaborate on course policies and procedures. Learning-centered teaching has an appropriate balance of power between the teacher and the students by giving students some control over the policies; the schedule including deadlines; methods of learning; and methods of assessment but not the content of the course.

The glossary contains a further description of these practices.

For many educators moving toward learning-centered teaching requires significant adjustments and takes awhile. While we may strive to achieve a total learning-centered approach, it may not be realistic or obtainable in every course. Determining if a total unified learning-centered approach is appropriate for a particular course depends on the content, context and level of the course. However, implementing some of these practices indicates progress toward achieving the goal of an integrated learning-centered approach.

This self-assessment tool, using a scoring rubric, helps teachers to see incremental steps toward learning-centered teaching. A rubric is a written summary of the criteria and standards for each criterion that should be applied to evaluate the work². The specific criteria or practices come from Weiner's¹ learning-centered practices. Standards within each criterion of practice were developed through a series of group discussions with over 70 faculty developers at the annual POD meetings in Montreal in November, 2004 and in Milwaukee in October in 2005 and fifty teachers at the University of Sciences in Philadelphia.

This rubric can be used for formative assessment by teachers to determine their progress and where they might make further changes. Because each criterion lists several different approaches or methods, this tool explains various ways to improve one's teaching. Courses can be at different levels within each criterion. The rubric can be used for self-assessment or placed in a teaching dossier to show progress over time toward learning-centered teaching.

1. The learning-centered practices may not suit every course

Teachers who have used this tool have commented that that many of the most learning-centered levels in this rubric may not be appropriate for courses intended for beginning students. However, they feel that these should be goals for an educational program. Therefore, this rubric can be used to measure how learning-centered an entire educational program strives to be with the understanding that it is a developmental progression.

Educational programs should attempt to reach the highest level for all criteria for all students prior to graduation. In addition, the rubric can be used to communicate progress toward achieving a culture of learning-centered teaching within colleges or across a university.

People who have used this rubric in workshops feel that this is an excellent vehicle for fostering a discussion on learning-centered about different facets of learning-centered teaching. For example, such discussion often follows a question or a need for clarification about a specific point in the rubric. Teachers feel that a discussion following their completing the rubric considering their own courses gives them a better understanding of how they can teach using different learning-centered approaches that they had not considered before. It can also be used to help other teachers see how learning-centered teaching can be implemented incrementally.

Directions for use: Use a separate form for each course or educational program to be assessed. Each of the five learning-centered practices is on a different rubric page. Each horizontal row of bullets is a separate or independent component of each practice area. Solid bullets are the major components; open bullets describe different aspects of the main category. Within each practice area among the various components, specific courses may be at different points in their transition to learning centered teaching. For each specific component, circle the appropriate level within the horizontal row. Do not assign an overall level within each practice area. A glossary defines some of the educational lingo. Specific implementation examples of some of the learning-centered practices are listed in the appendix. These examples should help teachers to determine if they can use the approach or if they are doing something similar.

All courses should not be expected to be at the highest standard in all categories with every criterion. However, it should be the goal for every course as much as possible. Teachers should consider the highest standard and then make a realistic and rational decision if that is not appropriate for a specific course. They may want to write a justification for why the highest level is not appropriate for that course. Also, in some cases, an entire sub-criterion may not be relevant for a particular course. Instead of rejecting a sub-criterion or the highest level outright, the teacher should consider the criterion and form a rationale for why it is not appropriate for this course. This decision making process might help the teacher to see this course differently or potential areas of transformation for this course. Moving from one entire standard level to another may take several years, whereas moving from one level to the next on a specific method or approach in a course may be a realistic short term goal.

Name of course or educational program_____

Date_____

Name of instructor_____

Criterion↓; level of standard→	Employs learning centered approaches	Transitioning to learning-centered approaches		Employs teacher centered approaches
		higher level of transitioning	lower level of transitioning	
The Function of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to building a knowledge base, the content facilitates students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> practice using inquiry or ways of thinking in the discipline, learn to solve real problems, understand the function of the content and why it is learned, build discipline-specific learning methodologies e.g., how to read primary source material in the discipline build an appreciation for the value of content in this course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to building a knowledge base, the content allows students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use inquiry or ways of thinking in the discipline with the teacher's assistance learn to apply content to solve real problems identify why the content is learned use discipline-specific learning methodologies with the assistance of the teacher or uses any 4 of the 5 sub-criterion for the uses of content in the left column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to building a knowledge base, the content allows students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn to apply content to solve real problems or uses any 2 of the 5 sub-criterion for the uses of content in the left column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content is used to build a knowledge base or solve problems
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content can help students develop a scaffold for learning in the course 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content is learned without an organizing scaffold
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content is framed so that students see how it can be applied in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students recognize there is more content to be learned 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content is learned in isolation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students engage in most of the content to make it their own (students transform and reflect on most of the content to make their own meaning out of it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students transform and reflect on some of the content to make their own meaning out of some of it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students actively learn the material as it was given to them without transforming it or reflecting upon it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content is learned in a superficial way without an emphasis on understanding and without personal meaning; facts are memorized

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	The teacher:	The teacher:	The teacher:	The teacher:
The Role of the Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates an environment that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fosters student learning, accommodates different learning styles motivates students to accept responsibility for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates an environment through the use of 2 out of 3 of the sub-criteria (for creating an environment) listed in the left column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not explicitly create a learning environment, but students do learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher is source of all information and does not pay attention to students' individual differences or their responsibility for learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explicitly aligns objectives, teaching/ learning methods and assessment consistently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mostly aligns objectives, teaching/ learning methods and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> partially aligns among objectives, teaching/ learning methods and assessment or 2 out of 3 are aligned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not align objectives, teaching/learning methods and assessment OR objectives, learning activities, assessments are defined in a way that encourages the students to employ rote memory exclusively without allowing for understanding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes multiple teaching/learning techniques appropriate for student learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes some teaching/learning techniques appropriate for student learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes a few teaching/learning techniques appropriate for student learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher tends to mostly lecture regardless of the learning goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designs activities in which students interact with material, teacher and each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designs activities in which students interact with material, teacher or each other (not both teacher and peers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designs activities in which students interact with material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher is active; students are passive
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulates and refers to regularly SMART objectives (SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time oriented) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulates SMART objectives (SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time oriented) in the syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulates course objectives in syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulates vague course objectives, or does not articulate objectives in syllabus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inspires and encourages student ownership of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows student ownership of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or meets any 2 of the specific larger sub-criterion listed in the left column (i.e., solid bullets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulates vague course objectives, or does not articulate objectives in syllabus teacher does not offer students the responsibility for learning

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The Responsibility for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsibility is shared between the teacher and the students with the teacher providing opportunities to learn, ongoing assessment and feedback so that the students take responsibility for achieving the stated learning objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher provides ongoing opportunities to learn, for assessment and feedback so that students can accomplish the stated objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher assumes most responsibility for the student learning by providing detailed notes of content to be learned and reviewing the content to be examined while assisting students to learn the material and meet objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher assumes all responsibility for the students learning by giving them the content in a memorizable way, not requiring them to make meaning of the content and telling students exactly what will be on the exams
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students develop learning skills for further learning (i.e., time management, self-monitoring, goal setting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students develop some learning skills for further learning (learning how to learn skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students develop few learning skills for further learning (learning how to learn skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher examine exactly what was covered in class, only requiring students to recall information without learning how to learn it
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become self-directed, lifelong learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become aware of their own learning, their abilities to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become self-directed learners in specific, prescribed areas i.e., learning to read assigned material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become somewhat aware of their own learning, their learning abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some students may become self-directed learners, although it was not encouraged by the teacher Some students become somewhat aware of their own learning, or their learning abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not become self-directed, lifelong learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not become aware of their own learning, nor their abilities to learn.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students can and do assess their own learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students sometimes assess their own learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students rarely assess their own learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not assess their own learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become proficient at self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students practice some self-assessment skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not perform self-assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not value self-assessments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students become proficient with all information literacy (www.acrl.org³) skills (e.g. framing questions, accessing and evaluating sources, evaluating content, using information legally) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students acquire most (4 of the 5) information literacy skills as defined by the ACRL (www.acrl.org³) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students acquire a few (2 of the 5) information literacy skills as defined by the ACRL (www.acrl.org³) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students do not acquire information literacy skills as defined by the ACRL (www.acrl.org³)

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The processes and purposes of evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment is mostly integrated within the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment is partially integrated within the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment is minimally integrated within the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment is seen as taking away time from learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrates formative assessment (formative assessment is used for the purposes of giving feedback and to foster improvement) with constructive feedback throughout the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formative assessment is used; students are given constructive feedback along with these assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some formative assessment is used; students get limited constructive feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only summative assessment (summative assessment is used for the purpose of making a decision such as assigning a grade), with no constructive feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses peer and self assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some peer assessment is used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> peer and self assessment is not used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> peer and self assessment is not used, nor is it valued
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students have ≥ 3 opportunities to learn from their mistakes during the course and then can demonstrate mastery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students can demonstrate mastery after making mistakes in > 2 situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular (>2) assessments but no opportunities for students to demonstrate that they have learned from mistakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimal (1-2 times) assessment of student learning; no opportunities for students to demonstrate that they have learned from mistakes, nor to show mastery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students are encouraged to justify their answers when they do not agree with the teacher's answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students can justify their answers when they do not agree with the teacher's answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students can ask teachers why they got an answer wrong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher determines accuracy of answers, students cannot question teacher's authority
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students and teacher agree on a timeframe for feedback which is always followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students and teacher agree on a timeframe for feedback which is usually followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher tells students a timeframe for feedback which is sometimes followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher and students do not discuss a timeframe for feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentic assessment is used throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentic assessment is used most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentic assessment is used some of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentic assessment is rarely used

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The Balance of Power (control issues)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> course content: largely determined by teacher; students are encouraged to explore additional content independently or in projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> course content: content is determined by teacher, students choose paper topics (with permission) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> course content: students offer insights/ feedback on the content of the course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> course content: content is entirely determined by teacher with no input from students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students are encouraged to express alternative perspectives whenever appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students can express alternative perspectives whenever it is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students infrequently can express alternative perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher controls perspectives expressed even when alternative perspectives are acceptable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grading: The quality and quantity of the students' work determine what grade they will earn through mastery or contract grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grading: allows students to drop some assessments <u>and</u> demonstrate mastery through another means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grading: allows students to drop one assessment but they cannot demonstrate mastery another way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grading: all performance, assignments count
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments can be open ended, allow alternative paths or allow for ≥ 1 right answer, if appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments can be some what open ended or allow for more than one right answer, when appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments are not open ended, but teachers will accept an alternative answer when justified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments are not open ended and only one answer is judged to be correct
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aspects of most classroom management policies, assessment methods, methods of learning and deadlines are negotiated with the class at the beginning and adhered to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students take advantage of opportunities to learn and understand consequences of not taking such opportunities, i.e., missing class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aspects of some policies, assessment methods, methods of learning and deadlines are negotiated with the class at the beginning and adhered to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attendance options are available for some classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aspects of a few policies, assessment methods, methods of learning and deadlines are negotiated with the class at the beginning and adhered to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students may miss a few classes without penalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> instructor does not adhere to policies OR all policies & deadlines mandated by instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attendance at classes is mandatory even students will not be active learners

References

1. Weimer, M. (2002) *Learner Centered Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
2. Walvoord BE. (2004) *Assessment Clear and Simple*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
3. Association of College and Research Libraries (2000). Information literacy competency standards for higher education. www.ala.org/acrl/nili/nilihlp.html.