How can Rubrics be used to assess program learning goals?

- Embedded course assignments – program assessments which are embedded into course assignments can be scored using a rubric
- Capstone experiences – theses, oral defenses, exhibitions, presentations, etc. – can be scored using a rubric to provide evidence of the overall effectiveness of a program
- Field experiences – internships, practicum, etc.—supervisor’s ratings of the student’s performance can be evidence of the overall success of a program
- Employer feedback – feedback from the employers of alumni can provide information on how well a program is achieving its learning goals
- Student self-assessments – indirect measures of student learning
- Peer evaluations – while having the potential for being inaccurate and biased – they can motivate students to participate fully
- Portfolios – rubrics can be a useful way to evaluate portfolios

(Assessing Student Learning: A common sense guide by Suskie 2004)

Rubric scores are subjective and thus prone to unintentional scoring errors and biases:

- Leniency errors – when faculty judge student work better than most of their colleagues would judge it
- Generosity errors – when faculty tend to use only the high end of the rating scale
- Severity errors – when faculty tend to use only the low end of the rating scale
- Central tendency errors – when faculty tend to use only the middle of the rating scale
- Halo effect bias – when faculty let their general impression of a student influence their scores
- Contamination effect bias – when faculty let irrelevant student characteristics (e.g., handwriting or ethnic background) influence their scores
- Similar-to-me effect bias – when faculty give higher scores to those students whom they see as similar to themselves
- First-impression effect bias – when faculty’s early opinions distort their overall judgment
- Contrast effect bias – when faculty compare a student against other students instead of established standards
- Rater drift – when faculty unintentionally redefine scoring criteria over time

(Assessing Student Learning: A common sense guide by Suskie 2004)