

Professional Fluency



Tools and Tips for Classroom Work

This packet was prepared by the Professionalism Rubric Task Force in support of the MAP goal Professional Fluency at Lake Superior College in Duluth, Minnesota, a part of the Minnesota State system.

A note from the professionalism task force:

Are you wondering how you might go about teaching professionalism? Each program (and even class!) has its own needs regarding professionalism, so no one way of teaching will work for everyone. Through our conversations about the rubric, however, some ideas came to light that we wanted to share. If you find you have a tip to share, please let Kelli know (k.hallsten@lsc.edu) so this document can grow (rhyme intended).

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Professionalism Rubric

	Proficient (exceptional)	Acceptable (baseline)	Needs Improvement
Communication (Written or Oral)	Effectively develops and expresses complex ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation are minor.	Develops and expresses ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation do not substantially detract from the message.	Does not adequately develop or express ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation substantially detract from the message.
Timeliness	Complies 100% with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.	Demonstrates substantial compliance with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.	Demonstrates lack of compliance with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.
Respect	Brings meaningful discussion, information, or resources to the learning environment, incorporating diverse perspectives while interacting positively with others.	Actively listens, validates diverse perspectives, and interacts appropriately.	Is present but does not participate in discussions; does not validate diverse perspectives, or interacts inappropriately.
Taking Personal Responsibility	Proactively manages his/her schedule and makes arrangements in case of absences. Proactively seeks resolutions to problems in a courteous manner. Accepts and learns from consequences of his or her decisions to apply positively to future situations.	Manages his/her schedule and makes arrangements in case of absences. Seeks resolutions to problems in a courteous manner when required. Accepts consequences of his or her decisions.	Poorly manages his/her schedule and is not proactive in making arrangements in case of absences. When required to seek assistance, is late to do so and/or is discourteous. Does not accept consequences of his or her decisions and may externalize blame.

Tips on Using the Rubric:

- This could be informational, for you and/or the students, to define behaviors.
- Points could be assigned to each level to be a separate grading item for the course.

Using the Rubric and Approaching Professionalism in the Classroom

Transparency and repetition are key.

- Consider including the College Wide Outcome language on professionalism in your syllabus. Though much broader than the aspects you're focusing on this semester, this can provide a backbone for why professionalism is important:

Professional and Personal Responsibilities, including

- Professional demeanor
- Initiative and accountability
- Adherence to organizational expectations
- Self-development and lifelong learning

Demonstrated through appropriate behaviors

For our purposes, Communication (in the professional sense) and Respect align with "Professional demeanor," Timeliness aligns with "Adherence to organizational expectations," and Taking personal responsibility aligns with "Initiative and accountability."

- Equate class with work. For example, students should avoid double-booking during class time, either appointments or their jobs (their "other workplace").
- Discuss the four aspects of professionalism (communication, timeliness, respect, and taking personal responsibility) in class early on; consider including them in the syllabus.
- Share the rubric: copy it out, define things, ask questions of the students and let them ask you questions.
- Explain how you're going to both teach and enforce these aspects.
- Follow through throughout the semester.
- Evaluate the students in some way on these aspects of professionalism. Options include, but are not limited to:
 - Student self-evaluations mid-semester and at the end of the semester.
 - Assigning points to the rubric to be evaluated by instructor at chosen time(s) in the semester.
 - Conferences with students on these aspects of professionalism (or as part of an already-scheduled conference).
 - Within particular assignments—either pointed out specifically in the assignment or as a separate grading criterion.
 - Example: In an assignment, after the due date, noting that "Adhering to this due date demonstrates a key component of professionalism, timeliness."
 - Example: As a part of the grading criteria: "The student avoids misspelled or misused words in the writing of this report to avoid confusion and to demonstrate professional writing skills."

Communication (Written or Oral)

What we'd like to see (from the "Proficient" category on the rubric): Effectively develops and expresses complex ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation are minor.

Layman's Terms Definition:

When you speak or write something, listeners or readers get what you're saying. In fact, they should be made smarter in some way after hearing or reading what you have to say. Your spoken or written errors don't get in the way of your message.

Teaching Tips:

- Define specifics in grammar, mechanics, usage, presentation for students (e.g. "avoid run-on sentences," and then explain what a run-on sentence is and how to either seek and fix them or avoid them altogether). Choose the aspects that are most important for your students moving forward in college and their careers.
- Define what the purpose is for writing/oral communication for:
 - This specific class
 - Further fields of study
 - Career fields
- Describe different audiences (groups of people/individuals) students might face and how messaging for those audiences will change based on audience expectation AND demographics.
- Create clear grading criteria for assignments based on their oral/written communication.
 - For example: "Your report has been carefully proofread to correct errors in spelling."
- Create clear expectations for communication in the class and how you will respond to that communication.
 - For example, in your syllabus, note: "I will respond to emails within 24 hours, Monday through Friday."
- Require students to send you a professional email or to visit you in your office.
- Give the option for an oral retake test.
- Ask for clarification in student writing. If they're unclear, even if you can guess what they mean, ask that they clarify. Don't always assume what they mean. Explain why you don't want to make any assumptions.
- Take students through the steps of a specific form of communication: who needs to know this, what do you want to communicate, how will you communicate it, who else might read or hear it, and how do you know they have understood your message?

Timeliness

What we'd like to see (from the "Proficient" category on the rubric): Complies 100% with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.

Layman's Terms Definition:

You're in class on time, and you turn things in on time.

Teaching Tips:

- Define the attendance policies and take attendance. Suggestions for taking attendance:
 - Use an attendance book: call names/learn names.
 - Use a sign-in sheet (don't allow check marks to avoid classmates "checking in" other classmates who aren't there).
 - Take attendance through participation—call on all students throughout the class period to discover who's there and who's not (easier in a smaller class).
- Define due dates in the syllabus. Be very specific: when, exactly, an assignment is due (e.g. by the end of the class period), what happens when an assignment is late, if there are exceptions. Stick with the due dates policies, however they are defined.
- Talk about coming to class late and how that's distracting. Note that everyone's time is valuable, and it might also help to give the reverse scenario: how would they feel if you came to class late every day?
- Explain how attendance is tied to the FN policy.
- Don't repeat information students might have missed if they came in late.
- Just as you should start on time, end on time. If you need to go over time, talk about that. Perhaps you could promise to end class early the next class period.
- Don't allow make-up quizzes.
- Late assignment policy: give them one opportunity for "life" to get in the way.
- Consider: what is your late policy trying to teach the student? How does it apply to future classes/career goals?

Respect

What we'd like to see (from the "Proficient" category on the rubric): Brings meaningful discussion, information, or resources to the learning environment, incorporating diverse perspectives while interacting positively with others.

Layman's Terms Definition:

You come to class ready to go; you've done the work and you're ready to engage with the instructor and your classmates. You listen to others with the intention of understanding them; when you speak, it's to make the conversation richer and better. You help make the classroom feel like a positive place to share ideas.

Teaching Tips:

- During class discussions, have students acknowledge the previous speaker's ideas before sharing his or her own.
- Point out when a student isn't being respectful in a respectful way. Assume best intentions. For example, start with "You might not be aware of this, but..."
- Give examples of disrespectful behavior (being on phones, interrupting, etc.).
- Learn students' names and encourage them to learn each other's names.
- Ask students to bring relevant outside experience to class and acknowledge that.
- Bring in an article about a social issue that relates to what you're doing to purposefully include diverse perspectives.
- Have them do outside research for diverse perspectives and acknowledge that.

Taking Personal Responsibility

What we'd like to see (from the "Proficient" category on the rubric): Proactively manages his or her schedule and makes arrangements in case of absences. Proactively seeks resolutions to problems in a courteous manner. Accepts and learns from consequences of his or her decisions to apply positively to future situations.

Layman's Terms Definition:

You have an organizational system for your schedule, and if you know you're going to be gone, you let the instructor know as soon as possible. You anticipate difficulties in assignments, try to come up with solutions to those problems yourself first, and then ask the instructor at an appropriate time (during a lull in the class, during instructor office hours, or via email). If you make a mistake, own up to it and try not to do it again.

Teaching Tips:

- Have students create a life plan for what they will do when things go wrong (everything from a flat tire to a sick kid).
- Office hours: keep them and explain what happens when they visit you there. Keep the conversation about that informal and encourage them. Be approachable.
- Hold your office hours elsewhere—the Commons, the Learning Center, etc.
- Make it okay to make mistakes: this is the time and place for them to learn.
- Find an app to use that will allow students to text you.
- Ask students to create a plan for how they'll do things differently on future assignments so they don't repeat the same mistakes (See Appendix 1: Grade Improvement Prompt).

Appendix 1: Grade Improvement Prompt

I remember one faculty member telling me that he had students respond to their first disappointing test grade with a goal-setting activity. He'd start with the prompt: "So what's a realistic amount of grade improvement for your next exam?" After that, each student created a list of what they needed to do and when they needed to do it in order to accomplish that goal. The instructor provided regular reminders and a review of the goal and accompanying activities before the next test. That exam debrief included discussion of who reached their goal and why they did or did not, followed by another round of goal setting.

1. What is a realistic goal for improving your test score on the next test?
From _____ (Your score on UT2) To _____ (your score on UT3)

2. How will you get there?
What three things did you do to prepare for Unit Test 2?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.What three changes will you make to prepare for Unit Test 3?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Provided by Steve Schneider, Paralegal Studies

Appendix 2: College Wide Outcomes

Lake Superior College

College Wide Outcomes

The following learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities our students should acquire as a result of their studies at Lake Superior College.

1. **Professional and Personal Responsibilities, including**

- Professional demeanor
- Initiative and accountability
- Adherence to organizational expectations
- Self-development and lifelong learning

Demonstrated through appropriate behaviors

2. **Foundational Knowledge of the Intellectual, Social, and Natural World, through study in**

- Career-focused programs
- Liberal arts
- Sciences

Focused by engagement with discipline-specific questions, both contemporary and enduring

3. **Intellectual and Practical Skills, including**

- Critical and creative thinking
- Information literacy
- Inquiry and analysis
- Quantitative literacy
- Synthesis and application
- Teamwork and problem solving
- Written and oral communication

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

4. **Social Responsibilities, including**

- Awareness and practice of sustainability
- Civic involvement
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Intercultural competence

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Adapted from AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes