

# Review Criteria for High Quality Academic Standards

The actual review process should include a review of the **individual** standards (PGCs, GLEs, and EOs) and their components (shaded in blue) and a review of the **document as a whole** (shaded in green). The criteria include:

Criteria	Description	Key Questions to Ask	Examples
<p><b>Rigor:</b> A standard should help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives.</p>	<p>Rigor is the measure of how closely a set of standards represents the content and cognitive demand necessary for students to succeed in credit-bearing college courses without remediation and in entry-level, quality high growth jobs. If a standard is rigorous it includes high-level cognitive demands and asks students to demonstrate deep conceptual understanding through the application of content knowledge and skills to new situations. High-level cognitive demand includes reasoning, justification, synthesis, analysis, and problem-solving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the intellectual demand of the standard?</li> <li>• Is the DOK level appropriate?*</li> <li>• Does the standard ask student to engage with the content at a deep conceptual level?</li> </ul> <p>* Note: DOK levels are <i>not</i> developmental. All students, including the youngest preschoolers, are capable of strategic and extended thinking tasks. What they look like will differ, and what is Level 3 to a kindergarten student may be a Level 1 task for a middle-schooler. All students, however, should have opportunities to do complex reasoning.</p>	<p>When writing or reviewing a standard, ask, “at what level should students be engaging with this content, concept or skill?” If it is introductory it may be beneficial to write the standards at a DOK level 1 or 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Describe the components of a persuasive argument</i></li> </ul> <p>If students should be engaging in the content, concepts or skills routinely the cognitive demand should be at a level 3 or 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Develop a persuasive argument applying information from one text to another text.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>FOCUS:</b> A standard should address what is most important for students to learn.</p>	<p>Focus is the establishment of priorities about the concepts and skills that should be acquired by graduation from high school. Choices should be based on the knowledge and skills essential for students to succeed in postsecondary education and the world of work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this important? Realistically, are they ever going to have to know this, do this or use this?</li> <li>• Have decisions been made about what is most important for students to learn?</li> <li>• Does the standard represent what is essential for students to learn?</li> </ul>	<p>When writing or reviewing a standard, identify what really matters, “what should students really come away with?”</p> <p>If this is the standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students will be able to identify themes across a variety of literature.</i></li> </ul> <p>Then, ask “is the skill of ‘identifying’ a theme really something students should learn? And why does any of that matter? Why should they learn that?”</p> <p><i>Note: Be sure to write standards more generically so that teachers can choose from a variety of literature and still develop the same knowledge and skills in their students.</i></p>
<p><b>Specificity:</b> A standard should be specific enough to convey the level of performance expected of students.</p>	<p>Specificity is when a standard is precise and provides sufficient detail to convey the level of performance expected without being overly prescriptive. Standards that maintain a relatively consistent level of precision (“grain size”) are easier to understand and use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the standard specific enough to convey what is expected of students?</li> <li>• Is the grain size appropriate - not too broad*/vague and not too specific?</li> </ul> <p>* Note: Specificity is closely linked to Depth and Breadth criteria below and standards written for</p>	<p>When writing or reviewing a standard, identify what is the overall, measurable expectation for students.</p> <p><i>Too Vague</i></p> <p>Generally a standard is written is too vague if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it cannot be reasonably assessed with just one or two assessment items</li> <li>• it is so broad that it covers at least half the subject matter in a course or semester.</li> </ul> <p>Consider the following standard:</p>

	<p>Those that are overly broad or vague leave too much open to interpretation, increasing the likelihood that students will be held to different levels of performance, while highly specific standards encourage a checklist approach to teaching and learning that undermines students' overall understanding of the discipline. Also, standards that contain multiple expectations may be hard to translate into specific performances.</p>	<p>larger entities such as states tend to be broader in nature than curriculum goals written by districts or individual teachers for their classrooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Understand political systems</i></li> </ul> <p>This standard is closer to the goal of an entire course rather than the knowledge and skill that can be captured in a standard statement. In contrast, the following standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Describe how political parties, the media, and public interest groups both influence and reflect social and political interests</i></li> </ul> <p>The standard would not typically be taught in just one or two lessons, so it is more encompassing than an objective yet more specific than a whole course expectation. Therefore, it best fits the category of a standard.</p> <p><i>Too Specific</i></p> <p>Generally a standard is too specific if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it can be assessed in only one way</li> <li>• how the student demonstrates understanding or application is included (the task is specifically given)</li> <li>• it includes specific content</li> </ul> <p>In a world languages classroom students might be asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify cultural differences and similarities between the student's own culture and the target culture using a Venn diagram.</i></li> </ul> <p>The standard should have left off the last phrase "using a Venn diagram." Completing a Venn diagram is the task the teacher will use to identify if students meet the standard. By including the task description in the standard, the educator is restricted to only using that task to measure the standard because that is what the standard requires yet, there are obviously other means of assessing the student's ability to compare and contrast cultural features.</p> <p>Another example might be:</p> <p>In a social studies classroom student might be asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain the causes of the American Revolution</i></li> </ul> <p>This standard is too specific because it identifies specifically the <i>American Revolution</i> as opposed to having students consider the bigger concept of <i>revolution</i>.</p>
Criteria	Description	Key Questions to Ask	Examples
<p><b>Clarity/Accessibility:</b> Standards should be clear, measurable, observable, or verifiable in some way and in language that students and parents can understand.</p>	<p>Clarity requires more than just plain and jargon-free prose, which is free of errors. First, the standard should focus on student attainment that is observable and verifiable. It can be used to develop broader assessment frameworks. Second, the standard also must be communicated in language that can gain widespread acceptance not only by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should this knowledge or skill be assessed?</li> <li>• Is the standard measurable and/or observable?</li> <li>• Is the standard clearly written and free of jargon?</li> <li>• Can the standard be easily understood by educators?</li> </ul>	<p>The standard below is observable and measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students will correctly add two-digit numbers.</i></li> </ul> <p>However, the standard below is not observable and measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students will understand how to add two-digit numbers</i></li> </ul> <p>You cannot observe understanding directly, but you can observe performance. Therefore, standards should include a verb phrase that captures the direct demonstration of what students know and are able to do.</p>

	postsecondary faculty but also by employers, teachers, parents, school boards, legislators and others who have a stake in schooling. A straightforward, functional format facilitates user access.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some weak examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will develop their persuasive writing skills.</li> <li>Students will gain an understanding of pinhole cameras.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Rewritten as strong examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will write an effective persuasive essay.</li> <li>Students will use a variety of tools such as pinhole cameras to create paper positives and negatives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>Disciplinary Literacy:</b> Standards as a whole should clearly articulate what is required of students to read, write and communicate within the specific discipline.	Disciplinary Literacy is defined as the convergence of content knowledge, experiences, and skills demonstrated through the ability to read, write, communicate, and think critically using processes unique to specific discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the standards ask students to show the ability to read, write and communicate critically using the concepts of the discipline?</li> <li>Do the standards articulate the ideas, concepts, theories, and principles of the discipline by using them to interpret and explain specific, concrete information or events?</li> </ul>	<p>Standards that illustrate disciplinary literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use domain-specific vocabulary relating to symbolism, genre, and performance technique in all arts areas (visual arts)</li> <li>Develop, communicate, and justify an evidence-based scientific explanation supporting the current models of chemical bonding (science)</li> <li>Describe ways to create more space between an offensive player and a defensive player (physical education)</li> </ul> <p>These examples clearly identify the necessity for students to acquire and apply technical language to communicate about and within a discipline. An overall review of standards documents should provide a consistent, sequential plan that ensures students become “literate” in their specific discipline.</p>
<b>Coherence:</b> Standards as a whole should be organized in a unified structure/framework devoid of gaps in learning expectations.	The standards are categorized and broken out into supporting strands and should reflect a coherent structure of the discipline and/or reveal significant relationships among the strands and how the study of one complements the study of another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is this knowledge or skill essential for post-secondary success?</li> <li>Is this knowledge or skill essential for becoming a productive citizen? How or why?</li> <li>Do the standards convey a <i>systematic, intentional progression of learning</i> offering students a <i>logical pathway</i> for learning and enabling them to master increasingly complex concepts?</li> <li>Do the standards exhibit <i>construction parallel</i> to that of referent standards and standards in other subject areas?</li> </ul>	<p>The content area specific benchmarking reports provide key feedback regarding the overall coherence, depth and breadth of the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS). Refer to the specific benchmarking report findings to determine where there are strong or weak examples of coherence, depth and breadth.</p> <p>To foster overall coherence, depth and breath, the CAS in all subjects utilize a common, organizing framework in all subjects. This framework illustrates the premise of the “end in mind” beginning with expectations for prepared graduates and conducting a backward design process from high school to preschool. The current framework includes:</p> <p>Prepared Graduate Competencies: The preschool through twelfth-grade concepts and skills that all students who complete the Colorado education system must master to ensure their success in a postsecondary and workforce setting.</p> <p>Standard: The topical organization of an academic content area.</p>
<b>Depth:</b> Standards as a whole should illustrate robust, well-integrated understandings of	Sufficient 'depth' includes developmentally appropriate levels of investigation that <i>reinforce and revisit core concepts</i> and that provide a firm foundation for students to learn and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the standards drive <i>deep learning</i> by addressing core concepts from <i>multiple perspectives</i>?</li> <li>Do the standards support a <i>deep investigation</i> of developmentally appropriate literacy and</li> </ul>	<p>High School Expectations: The articulation of the concepts and skills of a standard that indicates a student is making progress toward being a prepared graduate. <i>What do students need to know in high school?</i></p> <p>Grade Level Expectations: The articulation (at each grade level), concepts, and skills of a</p>

<p><b>fundamental concepts essential to the attainment of literacy and fluency in a discipline</b></p>	<p>understand more advanced concepts and transfer their knowledge in other contexts while increasing in complexity, across the standards document.</p>	<p>fluency in the content area explored?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To what extent do the standards <i>reinforce and revisit core concepts and demand transfer of prior knowledge</i> in order to understand more advanced concepts?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standards promote <i>inquiry-based learning</i>?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standard targets specific learning objectives, which can be observed and assessed for <i>levels of student mastery of content and learning goals</i>?</li> </ul>	<p>standard that indicate a student is making progress toward being ready for high school. <i>What do students need to know from preschool through eighth grade?</i></p> <p><b>Evidence Outcomes:</b> The indication that a student is meeting an expectation at the mastery level. <i>How do we know that a student can do it?</i></p> <p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and Readiness Competencies:</b> Includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><i>Inquiry Questions:</i></b> Sample questions are intended to promote deeper thinking, reflection and refined understandings precisely related to the grade level expectation.</li> <li>● <b><i>Relevance and Application:</i></b> Examples of how the grade level expectation is applied at home, on the job or in a real-world, relevant context.</li> <li>● <b><i>Nature of the Discipline:</i></b> The characteristics and viewpoint one keeps as a result of mastering the grade level expectation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Breadth:</b> Standards as a whole should illustrate a logical and consistent structure that addresses the key content, concepts and skills of the discipline.</p>	<p><i>Breadth</i> refers to a logically scaffolded and sequenced set of standards in which essential content is explored through a wide array of interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do the standards provide a logical sequence to build learner knowledge and skills through a <i>variety of related experiences over time</i>?</li> <li>● Do the standards provide <i>interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives</i>?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standards provide a <i>continuum of knowledge and skills necessary for progressively sophisticated levels of literacy and fluency</i>? Are there any gaps or redundancies?</li> </ul>	