

Criteria for High Quality Standards

Criteria	Description
Rigor: 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.	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.
Focus: A standard should address what is most important for students to learn.	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.
Specificity: A standard should be specific enough to convey the level of performance expected of students.	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. 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.
Clarity/Accessibility: Standards should be clear, measurable, observable, or verifiable in some way and in language that students and parents can understand.	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 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.
Disciplinary Literacy: 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.
Coherence: 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.
Depth: Standards as a whole should illustrate robust, well-integrated understandings of fundamental concepts essential to the attainment of literacy and fluency in a discipline	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 understand more advanced concepts and transfer their knowledge in other contexts while increasing in complexity, across the standards document.
Breadth: Standards as a whole should illustrate a logical and consistent structure that addresses the key content, concepts and skills of the discipline.	<i>Breadth</i> refers to a logically scaffolded and sequenced set of standards in which essential content is explored through a <i>wide array of interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives</i> .