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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: 54079 Date: September 28, 2025

Title: *Digital Rubrics and Automated Learning: "Measuring Skills in International Business Projects"*

Recommendation:

Accept as it is .....

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision .....

Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	/			
Techn. Quality			/	
Clarity		/		
Significance	/			

Reviewer Name: Dr.Maureen Prongo Eufan **Date:** September 28, 2025

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(*To be published with the manuscript in the journal*)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

This manuscript offers a coherent, practice-ready framework that pairs detailed digital rubrics with an AI "assistant" to enhance objectivity and formative feedback in business education. Conceptual validation by experts is strong, and the implementation roadmap is plausible. Clear reporting of data-governance and AI-ethics safeguards will further strengthen confidence in its forthcoming pilot.

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Detailed Reviewer's Report

Brief summary of the manuscript

The manuscript proposes and conceptually validates a methodological assessment model for an International Business program that integrates detailed digital rubrics with an "automated learning" (AI) component. The study is situated at UACyA-UAN, motivated by the need to improve objectivity, efficiency, and formative feedback in competency-based assessment; it highlights institutional heterogeneity (73 faculty, varied qualifications) as a driver for standardization. The current phase focuses on design and expert-judgment validation with quantitative (Likert) ratings across Relevance, Clarity, Coherence, and Viability, and qualitative open-ended analysis. Reported means: Relevance 4.79, Clarity 4.71, Coherence 4.89, Viability 4.54 (on 5-point scales).

Assessment of research quality and methodological rigor

Rigor Dimension	Evaluation	Evidence & Comments
Significance & Originality	Strong; problem is timely and the contribution is practice-oriented.	Addresses objectivity, efficiency, and formative feedback; integrates detailed digital rubrics with an AI assistant; clearly motivated by heterogeneous faculty context. Note: keep alignment with current AI/learning-analytics ethics.
Theoretical Grounding / Literature	Adequate, but needs tighter linkage to AI fairness/explainability for the planned model.	Covers authentic assessment, rubrics, and AI's potential/risks. Improve by mapping specific modeling choices to theory (e.g., explainability, bias, transparency) and citing frameworks that justify them.
Research Design & Alignment	Solid; mixed-methods with expert-judgment validation aligns with aims.	Objectives include practice diagnosis, model architecture design, and expert validation; internal alignment supported by high Coherence rating (mean ≈4.89). Clarify phase progression toward pilot trials.
Sampling & Participants (current phase)	Partially adequate; selection details are insufficient to rule out bias.	Expert judges consulted, but specify eligibility criteria, recruitment, disciplinary spread, independence from authors, sample size (n), and conflict-of-interest screening to support credibility and generalizability beyond UACyA-UAN.
Instruments & Procedures	Appropriate overall; qualitative rigor details are incomplete.	Four validation dimensions (Relevance, Clarity, Coherence, Viability) with Likert ratings are suitable. Qualitative coding described (open → themes) but lacks coder training, codebook stabilization, and inter-coder reliability (e.g., κ/α). Include a sample rubric (criteria, descriptors, weights) as an appendix.
Data Analysis & Reporting	Quantitative summaries are clear; AI component requires specification.	Dimension means/variability reported. For AI, outline data inputs, baseline/model family, validation metrics, bias-mitigation, explainability, and human-in-the-loop workflow to ensure transparency and accountability.

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Limitations & Generalizability	Acknowledged in part; broaden and specify external validity constraints.	Notes implementation viability/training challenges. Add limits of expert-only validation (no student outcomes yet), institutional idiosyncrasies, risk of over-standardization, and an external replication plan.

Ethics & Participant Protection

Scope note: This phase involves expert judges (faculty/experts). Later phases may include students/faculty data once piloted.

1) Are the scientific questions reasonable? [☑ Yes] Rationale: The questions map to clear objectives and a coherent intervention model.

2) Does research need human participants? [☑ Yes] Expert judgment is necessary for validation; later pilots will involve students/faculty classroom data.

3) Does the study involve vulnerable groups? [☐ No (current phase)] / [Flag for future pilot] Current phase (expert judges): generally not vulnerable. Potentially vulnerable in future: students under 18, students taught/graded by participating faculty (power dynamics), persons with disabilities, or those whose educational records become identifiable via learning analytics. Ensure safeguards before pilot.

4) Mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups? [☑ Conceptually adequate; require specifics before pilot] Explicit consent procedures, data minimization, de-identification, access controls, and grievance/appeals for automated suggestions are required.

5) Probable risks to participants? [☑ Minimal (current phase)] Experts: minimal risk (opinion sharing). Pilot (students/faculty): privacy risk from performance analytics; possible perceived coercion if assessment is tied to grades.

6) Risk/benefit balance adequately addressed? [☑ Conceptually yes; operational detail needed] Benefits (objectivity, feedback, efficiency) are articulated; provide concrete data governance plan (storage, retention, role-based access), bias audit plan, and opt-out/appeals where applicable.

7) Background/prior evidence adequate? [☑ Yes] Educational/assessment context and need are established.

8) Informed consent procedure/cultural appropriateness? [☑ Yes (current phase), detail needed for pilot] For experts: written consent is straightforward. For students in pilot: clarify voluntariness, academic power dynamics (no grade penalties), parental consent when minors are included, and transparency of AI assistance.

9) Investigators adequately trained? [☑ Likely; request training plan] Provide named roles and training on data protection, AI ethics, and rubric calibration.

10) Research facilities adequate? [☑ Conceptually; specify IT resources] Explain LMS/analytics stack, secure servers, and admin oversight for audit trails.

Recommendation (ethics): Minor revisions required before any pilot with students/faculty:

• Add a Data Protection & Governance Appendix (collection, storage, retention, de-identification, access logs).

• Add an AI Fairness & Explainability Plan (intended model class, bias checks, human-in-the-loop overrides, appeals).

• Add Participant Consent Materials: expert consent (current), student/faculty consent (pilot), and parental consent template for minors.

• Add Mitigation of Power Imbalance: alternative assessment route for students who do not consent; clear separation of pedagogy vs. research data use.

Minor revisions (method + reporting)

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1) **Expert-judge methodology:** define eligibility, sampling frame, recruitment, independence, and n=; include a characteristics table.
2) Qualitative rigor: report inter-coder reliability (κ/α), codebook development, and discrepant-case analysis.
3) AI component: outline planned data features, model family/baseline, validation metrics, bias tests, and explainability surfaces; clarify AI as assistant (non-replacement of human judgment).
4) Artifacts: provide an appendix excerpt of at least one analytic rubric (criteria, level descriptors, weightings).
5) Limitations: expand on generalizability beyond UACyA-UAN and on expert-only validation at this stage.
6) Implementation plan: strengthen with timelines and measurable pilot endpoints (objectivity, feedback latency, rater consistency).

Rating

Evaluation criterion	Rating	Comments
Originality	Excel.	Integrates digital rubrics with an AI assistant in a practice-ready framework addressing a clear gap in competency assessment.
Technical quality (rigour)	Fair	Core methods are sound, but key details are missing (expert sampling/Conflict of Interest screening, inter-coder reliability, AI specs and governance).
Clarity of presentation	Good	Objectives, context, and results are coherent; add methodological specifics and appendices for fuller transparency.
Significance	Excel.	Strong potential to improve objectivity and formative feedback in business education through AI-enabled assessment.