

CREATING AND USING RUBRICS

What is a Rubric

A rubric is an assessment tool often shaped like a matrix, which describes levels of achievement in a specific area of performance, understanding, or behavior

There are two main types of rubrics:

Analytic Rubric: An analytic rubric specifies at least two characteristics to be assessed at each performance level and provides a separate score for each characteristic

- Advantages: provides more detailed feedback on student performance; promotes consistent scoring across students and between raters
- Disadvantage: more time consuming than applying a holistic rubric
- Use when:
 - You want to see strengths and weaknesses.
 - You want detailed feedback about student performance.

Holistic Rubric: A holistic rubric provides a single score based on an overall impression of a student's performance on a task.

- Advantages: quick scoring; provides an overview of student achievement; efficient for large group scoring
- Disadvantages; does not provide detailed information; not diagnostic; may be difficult for scorers to decide on one overall score
 - You want a quick snapshot of achievement.
 - A single dimension is adequate to define quality.

Why use a Rubric

- A rubric creates a common framework and language for assessment.
- Complex products or behaviors can be examined efficiently.
- Well-trained reviewers apply the same criteria and standards
- Rubrics are criterion-referenced, rather than norm-referenced. Rater ask, "Did the student meet the criteria for level 5 of the rubric?" rather than "How well did this student do compared to other students?"
- Using rubrics can lead to substantive conversation among faculty.
- When faculty members collaborate to develop a rubric, it promotes shared expectations and grading practices.

What are parts of a Rubric

Rubrics are composed of four basic parts.

1. **A task description.** The outcome being assessed or instructions students receive for an assignment.
2. **The characteristics/criterion to be rated (rows).** The skills, knowledge, and/or behavior to be demonstrated.
3. **Levels of mastery/scale (columns).** Labels used to describe the levels of mastery should be tactful and clear. Common labels:
 - Exceeding, meeting, approaching, not meeting.
 - Exemplary, Proficient, Marginal, Unacceptable.
 - Advanced, Intermediate high, Intermediate, Novice
4. **A description of each characteristic at each level of mastery/scale (cells).**

Developing a Rubric

Step 1. *Identify what you want to assess*

Step 2. *Identify the characteristics/criterion to be rated (rows). These are also called “dimensions.”*

- Specify the skill, knowledge and/or behaviors that you will be looking for.
- Limit the characteristics to those that are most important to the assessment.

Step 3. *Identify the levels of mastery/scale (columns).*

- Aim for an even number (4 or 6) because when an odd number is used, the middle tends to become the “catch-all” category.

Step 4. *Describe each level of mastery for each characteristics/dimension (cells).*

- Describe the best work you could expect using these characteristics. This describes the top category.
- Describe an unacceptable product. This describes the lowest category.
- Develop descriptions of intermediate-level products for intermediate categories.

**** Each description and each characteristic should be mutually exclusive.*

Step 5. *Test Rubric.*

- Apply the rubric to an assignment
- Share with colleagues.

**** Faculty members often find it useful to establish the minimum score needed for student work to be deemed passable. They may set their criteria for success as 90% of the students must score 3 or higher. If assessment study results fall short, action will be taken.*

Step 6. *Discuss with colleagues. Review feedback and revise.*

- Rubrics promote shared expectations and consistent grading practices which benefit faculty members and students in the program.

Tips for Developing a Rubric

- Find and adapt an existing rubric! It is rare to find a rubric that is exactly right for your situation, but you can adapt an already existing rubric that has worked well for others and save a great deal of time. A faculty member in your program may already have a good one.
- Evaluate the rubric:
 - a) Does the rubric relate to the outcome(s) being assessed? (If yes, success)
 - b) Does it address anything extraneous? (if yes, delete.)
 - c) Is the rubric useful, feasible, manageable, and practices?
 - d) Collect samples of student work that exemplify each point on the scale or level
 - e) Expect to revise
 - f) When you have a good rubric, Share It.

Using Rubrics for Program-Level Assessment

Rubrics can be used for program-level assessment as well as for assessment in individual courses. In fact, using rubrics at the program level can increase reliability and validity of measures. In addition, information from rubrics is often more actionable than scores or percentages.

Once a signature assignment and the applicable course have been identified for use in program-level assessment, there are two possible ways to employ rubrics:

- Option 1: Common rubric. A common rubric is used in all sections of the applicable course and by all faculty who teach. It is used first for grading of individual students. Then, each instructor reports scores from program-level aggregation.
- Option 2: Program rubric. A program rubric is used for program assessment but not for grading. In this option, individual instructors grade the signature assignment in whatever manner they choose. Then, each faculty member collects an anonymous random sample (e.g., 10%) of student products from his/her section of the course. Products are combined and scored (usually by a designated departmental committee) using the program rubric. These results are used as program-level assessment results.

Sources Consulted:

Assessment Website, NJCU

Creating rubrics, Teaching Methods and Management, TeacherVision

Rubric Library, Institutional Research, Assessment & Planning, California State University-Fresno

The Basics of Rubrics, [PDF], Schreyer Institute, Penn State