Rubrics: An Introduction

Welcome to this brief introduction to rubrics.

Objectives
In this presentation, we'll
- Define what a rubric is
- Review some reasons to use a rubric
- And, examine the parts of a rubric

There is much more to rubrics than is presented here, though this should provide you with the foundation for expanding your knowledge and exploring options for yourself. A resources page is available at the end of this presentation.

What is a Rubric?
According to Reddy and Andrade (2010) in their article "A Review of Rubric Use in Higher Education," a rubric is "A document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria of what counts, and describing the levels of quality from excellent to poor."

Rubrics can be simple or complex--they can be created for institutional outcomes or for individual course assignments. So, despite their application, their purpose--generally speaking--remains the same.

Click any of the following links to review samples of rubrics.

Simple
- [Discussion Forum Rubric](#)
- [Writing Assignment Rubric](#)

Complex
- [Discussion Forum Rubric](#)
- [Institutional: Value Rubric](#)

Why You Need a Rubric?
The following points summarize reasons why rubrics can benefit both instructors and students.

When you are done, watch the video "Using Rubrics to Advance Student Learning" by Ashley Finley, Senior Director of Assessment and Research at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

Provide Timely and Meaningful Feedback
For instructors, using a rubric can be beneficial because it reduces the time it takes to provide feedback. Instructors at USF who have used rubrics claim that it decreases time spent on grading assignments which is a benefit for both instructors and students. Stevens and Levi (2005) cite Rucker and Thompson's (2003) research concluding that "time was actually a factor in making feedback meaningful and useful to students. Feedback was most effective when given as soon as possible after task completion in helping students make positive changes in their subsequent work."

Prepare Students to Use Feedback
Rubrics also prepare students to use feedback. For students, having meaningful feedback measured against well-articulated criteria is essential to the learning process. Citing Brinko's (1993) article "The Science of Giving Feedback," Stevens and Levi (2005) state that students find feedback most effective when it contains as much information as possible and includes a description of the highest level of achievement.

Encourage Critical Thinking
When students are continually challenged to review their own work against detailed criteria, they are practicing "self-assessment and self-improvement." Students who practice self-assessment, or reflection, of their own work are practicing metacognition. This requires students to think critically about their own learning so that they recognize where to make adjustments, and subsequently, improve their work or study.

Facilitate Communication
Rubrics can be used to facilitate communication, not only between the instructor and their students, but between the instructor and other faculty as well. Teaching assistants, for example, may be called upon to facilitate a course will rely on rubrics to help grade student assignments. A mutual understanding of expectations will mitigate discrepancies in grading across course sections.

Help Refine Teaching Skills

Rubrics allow students to choose how they want to do on an assignment. However, if there is a discrepancy that emerged between how a student performs and how that student thinks they perform, one possible opportunity is that you--as the instructor—can reflect on how you teach that particular topic. Consequently, it allows you to think more about how you approach the topic. Are you teaching it in the most logical, understandable, and relatable way?

Ashley Finely, AAC&U, on Using Rubrics to Advance Student Learning
Click the following link to open the YouTube video in a new browser window: [Ashley Finley on Using Rubrics to Advance Student](#).

What are the Parts of a Rubric?
A rubric is composed of three essential parts: the evaluation criteria, quality definitions, and scoring strategy.

When you are done, proceed to the resources page and explore how rubrics are defined by researchers, educators, and other universities.

Rubric Template

Evaluation Criteria	Scoring Strategy				Student Score
	1	2	3	4	
Criterion 1	Quality Definition	Quality Definition	Quality Definition	Quality Definition	
Criterion 2					
Criterion 3					
Criterion 4					

Part 1: Evaluation Criteria

"Evaluation criteria are the factors that an assessor considers when determining the quality of a student's work. Also described as a set of indicators or a list of guidelines, the criteria reflect the processes and content judged to be important." Reddy & Andrade (2010)

"The (evaluation criteria) of a rubric lay out the parts of the task simply and completely...clarifies for students how their task can be broken down into components and which of those components are most important, for example, grammar, analysis, factual content, research techniques." Stevens & Levi (2005)

Part 2: Quality Definitions

"Quality definitions provide a detailed explanation of what a student must do to demonstrate a skill, proficiency or criterion in order to attain a particular level of achievement, for example poor, fair, good or excellent." Reddy & Andrade (2010)

"... a rubric should also contain at the very least, a description of the highest level of performance in that criterion." Stevens & Levi (2005)

Part 3: Scoring Strategy

"Scoring strategies for rubrics involve the use of a scale for interpreting judgments of a product or process." Reddy & Andrade (2010)

"A scoring strategy may be either holistic or analytic. Using a holistic strategy, the scorer takes all of the evaluative criteria into consideration but aggregates them to make a single, overall quality judgment. An analytic strategy requires the scorer to render criterion-by-criterion scores that may or may not ultimately be aggregated into an overall score." Popham (1997)

Resources and References

Resources

[Association of American Colleges & Universities: Value Rubrics](#)

[Rubrics: Berkeley Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

[Rubrics and Effective Grading: San Francisco State University](#)

[The Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University: YouTube Channel](#)

References

Brinko., K. T. (1993). The practice of giving feedback to improve teaching: What is effective? *The Journal of Higher Education, 64*, 574-593. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2959994

Popham, W. J. (1997). What's wrong - and what's right - with rubrics. *Educational Leadership, 55*, 72.

[Reddy, Y. M., & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*, 435-448. doi:10.1080/02602930902862859](#)

Rucker, M. L., & Thomson, S. (2003). Assessing student learning outcomes: An investigation of the relationship among feedback measures. *College Student Journal, 37,* 400-404.

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