

Introduction to Rubrics

“Learning increases, even in its serendipitous aspects, when learners have a sense of what they are setting out to learn, a statement of explicit standards they must meet, and a way of seeing what they have learned.”

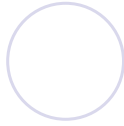
Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien in Huba and Freed, p. 151.

Presented by the CHFA SOA Committee, Spring 2007
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Based on workshop bibliography listed at end of presentation.

Workshop Goals

- Obtain a working vocabulary for rubrics
- Determine ways in which rubrics contribute to participants' courses and assessment efforts.
- Identify parts of a rubric and steps for making a rubric.
- Make a rubric!
- Review and consolidate learning in order to make rubrics on your own.



Do you need a rubric?



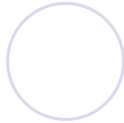
- **Course Issues:**

- you are four weeks behind on your grading.
- you have graded all your essays but you are afraid that you graded the last ones more rigorously than the ones you graded two weeks ago.
- you have carefully described in class your expectations for an assignment but you now have twenty e-mails from students who say, "I don't know what you want on this assignment."

- **Student Outcomes Assessment Concerns:**

- You want to engage in meaningful assessment of student learning without making this your life's work.
- You wish that your conversations about student learning in your majors were more focused and stayed on track from semester to semester.
- You lack confidence that your assessment efforts are yielding information that your department can actually use to enhance your majors' learning experiences.

- Stevens & Levi, pp. 4-6.



How rubrics help:



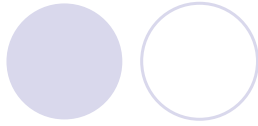
- **For Courses:**

- Rubrics enable faculty to *clearly communicate expectations* for student performance to students. They *support more consistent and objective assessment* of student work. They also *facilitate detailed feedback* to students. When areas of strength and weakness in performance are marked on an essay rubric, students more easily comprehend the reasoning behind their professor's assessment of their work.

- **For Student Outcomes Assessment:**

- Rubrics facilitate quality conversations among faculty about student learning, shorten the time it takes to do SOA, and contribute to the validity and reliability of the assessment process.

- Stevens and Levi, Ch. 2



A Rubrics Glossary



- Rubrics
- Goals
- Outcomes
- Criteria
- Validity
- Reliability
- Analytic Rubrics
- Holistic Rubrics

Developing a Rubric in Four Parts

● **Task Description**

What is the student supposed to do?

- Examples: write an essay, perform a concerto, make an oral presentation.
- At the top of a sheet of paper, place the full description of the assignment.
- Begin a grid that is headed by a descriptive title and blocks out dimensions of the assignment.

- Next four slides: Stevens & Levi, Ch. 1



Developing a Rubric cont.

● Scale

How well or poorly has the student done on the task?

- Sophisticated, competent, partly competent, not yet competent.
- Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable.
- Advanced, Intermediate, Novice.
- Distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice.
- Accomplished, developing, beginning. (Huba and Freed, 2000)

Note: Consider whether a scale needs more than three levels. Some research indicates that information about student learning obtained from a three-level scale is comparable to that obtained from a five-level scale. More levels typically means more time spent on assessment.



Developing a Rubric cont.

● Dimensions

- Dimensions break down a task into components and identify the importance of these components.
- Dimensions are descriptive, not evaluative (e.g., “organization” not “good organization”).
- Dimensions help students see that the work they are doing is multidimensional and draws on multiple abilities.



Developing a Rubric cont.

● Description of the Dimensions

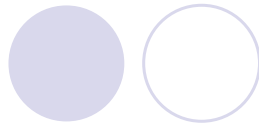
- Rubrics should contain at least a description of the highest level of performance.
- With experience and in response to the complexity of the performance, descriptions of all levels can be written.
- Students need not fit cleanly into a single category. On oral presentation skills, a student might speak in a clear voice but lack eye contact.
- Descriptions for each level help students see that the work they are doing does have varying levels of achievement. There *is* a difference between poor and excellent work.



Reflections on making a rubric:

- What are my reactions to making this rubric?
- How will my teaching change if I use rubrics with my students?
- How could I use rubrics to give students feedback?

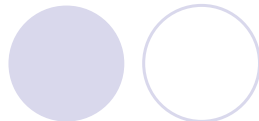
- Huba and Freed, p. 166



Creating Your First Rubric: Is it worth the time?


- Experienced rubric makers can generate complex rubrics in less than an hour. They can update rubrics in minutes.
- Beginning rubric making does take time.
- Even beginning rubric makers save actual grading time. We often write the same comments on multiple pieces of student work. Transposing our advice to a rubric and circling it on the rubric saves time.
- Most important, rubrics enhance the quality of our teaching. We become more aware of our methods of teaching and of our expectations for students. We also provide feedback to students that enables them to actually improve over time, reducing repetitive teaching in the classroom.
- Rubrics enable students to do better work if they are distributed to students at the beginning of an assignment. Better work often takes less time to grade than poor work. Rubrics enable students to see that their success in course work is developmental and incremental (many students do not know this).

- Stevens & Levi, pp. 14-27; Huba and Freed, 169-174.



To Remember:

- Rubrics are written on paper, not stone.
 - Start with a basic rubric and improve it with each use.
 - Discover new dimensions for the rubric while grading current student work.
- Ex. Students were repeatedly missing a particular assignment goal. When their teacher went to the rubric to circle the missing goal, she discovered that this goal was not on the rubric. For the following semester, she added it to the rubric and incorporated a description of this goal explicitly into the assignment.



The Usefulness of Rubrics for Assessment

- “Strong presentation skills” = an outcome for your major.
- If all Seniors in your major were assessed on presentation skills using the rubric you just created, and 45 out of 60 scored in the lowest level on Dimension 2, what questions could you discuss at a faculty meeting on assessing your major? What might you do about these findings?



What does 75/100 mean to us and to our students?

- **A grade** is one way to evaluate learning.
 - Some persons want grades--students, potential employers, graduate admissions committees—and see meaningful information in grades.
 - Grades are useful for marking summative, individual achievement in relation to other summative, individual achievements on specific tasks.
- **Assessment** is *diagnostic* way to evaluate learning.
 - NOT diagnostic: Students earned an average grade of C+ in this course.
 - Diagnostic: “On their capstone projects, students were strong in identification of the problem but weak in considering alternative solutions.”
 - Data are aggregated to yield information about strengths/weaknesses in a group of students. Aggregate data are anonymous (student and faculty names are removed).
 - Data are used to suggest courses of action to improve learning.

- Sources: Barbara Walwood, presentation at the Higher Learning Commission 2005 Meeting, April 2, 2005, Chicago, IL; http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf.



How do students know whether they are learning?

- What does 75/100 mean for students? For which students? In respect to what? An easy or difficult text? A class of strong or weak students?
- Rubrics answer student questions about learning by:
 - Making criteria for improvement visible.
 - Revealing a process of learning (e.g. detailing skills and knowledge [current, new, past]).
 - Showing standards for a professional field or discipline, the qualities of an educated person, and expectations of future employers.

- Huba and Freed, pp. 154-55; pp. 169-73.



Constructing a Rubric: Building our skill-set in four stages

- Stage 1: Reflecting
 - What do we want from our students? Why did we create this assignment? What happened the last time we did this?
- Stage 2: Listing
 - What are the learning outcomes we hope to see in the completed assignment?
- Stage 3: Grouping and Labeling
 - Place similar outcomes together to comprise dimensions of the rubric.
- Stage 4: Application
 - Form the actual rubric by deploying dimensions and levels along each side of the rubric.

- Stevens and Levi, Chapter 3.



Analytic and Holistic Rubrics

- An analytic rubric articulates levels of performance for each criterion so the teacher can assess student performance on each criterion.
- In contrast to an analytic rubric, a holistic rubric does not list separate levels of performance for each criterion. Instead, a holistic rubric assigns a level of performance by assessing performance across multiple criteria as a whole.



How do I know when I have a good rubric?

- **Ready to roll:**

- The content has a “ring of truth:” You review the rubric and note that the content states what you truly do look for when evaluating student work.
- Emphases seem right: things that are more important are stressed more in the rubric than things that are less important.
- Levels of the scale make sense.
- Features of importance have been covered without overload.
- You are left with only a few questions about what is/is not on the rubric.
- The rubric is insightful. It helps you organize your thinking about what counts as quality.

- Next two slides: Arter and McTighe, pp. 46-47.



How do I know continued:

- **On the way:**

- You still notice that some important things are not on the rubric or not on it sufficiently.
- Balance is in question. Students might miscue on important vs. less important features.
- The rubric sprawls – organization remains in question.

- **Not ready:**

- You can think of many things not on the rubric that should be.
- You find yourself asking, “Why assess this?” Why is this important?
- The rubric seems mixed up and random in its focus.
- The rubric seems out of balance.
- There are many features on which a student could miscue about the importance of a dimension of the rubric.



How can Rubrics be Used to Assess Program Learning Goals?

- Embedded course assignments
- Capstone experiences.
- Field experiences.
- Employer feedback.
- Peer evaluations or self-evaluations.
- Portfolios.

— Suskie, p. 137.



Workshop bibliography

- *Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom*. By Judith Arter and Jay McTighe. Corwin Press, 2001.
- *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses* by Mary E. Huba and Jann E. Freed. Allyn and Bacon, 2000. *
- *Introduction to Rubrics*, by Dannelle D. Stevens and Antonia J. Levi. Stylus Publications, 2005. *
- *Assessing for Learning*, by Peggy L. Maki. Stylus Publications, 2004.
- *Assessing Student Learning* by Linda Suskie. Anker, 2004.
- <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/glossary.htm>

* = most helpful sources.