

“Rubrics and the Assessment of Student Achievement”

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Objectives

- To review the basics of rubric use and construction
- To discuss challenges and opportunities associated with rubric use
- To introduce the use of rubrics within the Tk20 assessment system
- To acknowledge that this topic is *way too big* to address in 90 minutes and consider future needs and interests of FSC faculty

Who is here and what is your experience with rubrics?

- Used rubrics in your classes?
- Constructed your own rubrics?
- Came with questions about rubrics?
- Have a particular topic you want to discuss?

What is a rubric?

- a scaled set of criteria that clearly defines for the student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like (Pate, Homestead, & McGinnis, 1993)
- criteria provide descriptions of each level of performance in terms of what students are able to do and values are assigned to these levels (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992)

What is a rubric?

In simple terms. . .

Rubrics are sets of criteria that may be used to design assessments, and then are used to assess assignments.

What does a rubric look like?

- Although format may differ, there are two common features:
 - **List of criteria** – what counts in the evaluation
 - **Gradations of quality** – descriptions of strong, mid-level, and exemplary work

| Criteria | Qualities | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|---|--|
| | 5- Excellent | 4-Good | 3-Fair | 1-Unsatisfactory |
| Tone | The tone is polite and constructive, suggesting the problem can be solved. | The tone is polite but makes no explicit effort to suggest that the author expects the problem to be resolved. | The tone is neutral, and open to interpretation by the reader as either positive nor negative. | The tone is brusque, maybe even rude or angry. |
| Information | The note tells the reader 1) what the problem is, 2) who is involved in thinking about the problem, 3) the number to call, 4) when to call, and 5) the deadline for calling. All the needed information is given in as concise a manner as possible. | The note gives all the needed information but may be longer than necessary or include unnecessary information. | The note gives most of the needed information but may be missing key information such as a definition of the problem. | The note is either too brief or rambles on without ever giving all the necessary information. |
| Style/mechanics | The note uses common email style features such as greeting and closing lines. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. meet professional standards. | Formal features are present, some problems with mechanics should be fixed. | Either spelling, punctuation and grammar are correct or the author uses formal features but not both. | Problems with spelling, punctuation, grammar and/or formal features make the note look unprofessional. |

Why should we use rubrics?

- **Overall shift in educational priorities**
 - Broad based liberal education vs. Outcomes based assessment
 - Could use of rubrics allow us to do both?
 - e.g., Bissell, A., & Lemons, P. (2006, January). A New Method for Assessing Critical Thinking in the Classroom. *Bioscience*, 56(1), 66-72.
- Rubrics serve to **clarify teachers' expectations.**
- Rubrics provide students **more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement** than traditional assessments do.

Why should we use rubrics? (cont.)

- **Help to create sense of fairness in assessment – more objectivity.**
 - Across students
 - Across instructors
- **Rubrics support student thinking and responsibility.**
 - Use of rubrics for *instructional* as well as for *assessment* purposes.
- Rubrics can be useful in **documenting student progress.**
 - Contain specific performance characteristics arranged *in levels* indicating the **degree** to which a standard has been met.
- **Required by accrediting agency.**

Basics of Rubric Construction

1. Generate a number of potential dimensions to use
2. Select a reasonable number of the most important dimensions
3. Identify benchmarks for each level of each dimension

(1) Generate a number of potential dimensions to use

- Are there **standards** that your students need to meet?
- May want to consider looking at sample rubrics available on internet

| If the Task has these elements... | then consider these as possible dimensions: |
|---|--|
| Oral Presentation | -Voice projection -Body language -Grammar and pronunciation -Organization |
| Written Products | - Grammar and spelling - Organization - Formatting |
| Creative Products | -Surprising ness,- - novelty - Technical quality - Adherence to conventions of the genre |

(2) Select a reasonable number of the most important dimensions

- Avoid trying to include everything!
- Particular problem with many people involved
- Ask yourself what the most important aspects of this task are and rank your dimensions from most important to least.
- Many authors recommend aiming for a one page rubric.
- Group related factors. Can some be combined?
- Dimensions go down left side of rubric.

(3) Identify benchmarks for each level of each dimension

- This is what makes it a RUBRIC rather than a checklist.
- You need at least three columns – strong, adequate and weak performance.
- Exemplary → Accomplished → Developing → Beginning
- Professional → Experienced → Developing → Novice
- Frequently → Sometimes → Rarely → Never
- Whenever possible, use quantitative or clearly observable terms to differentiate different levels (e.g., There are **no more than three errors** in spelling/grammar vs. There are **few errors**. . .)

And then. . .

1. Revise
2. Revise
3. Revise

- Get input from colleagues
- Have students review and implement in peer assessment

“*Instructional* rubrics” vs. Assessment Rubrics

- Many authors advocate involving students in the creation of rubrics.
- Even when this is not possible, students will learn much more from the rubrics when they have an opportunity to use them (e.g., samples, peers).
- Students need to be *taught* to use rubrics.

Opportunities when using Rubrics

- Move from “black box” model of assessment to the use of explicit expectations.
- Clarify for ourselves what we are looking for. . . **What is most important?**
- Facilitate consistency across sections, instructors. (Education Unit rubrics)

Challenges when using Rubrics

- Quantitative scoring vs. Overall Assessment
- Equating Rubric Scores with Assignment Grades
- False Precision
- “iatrogenic consequences” of overemphasis on measurable outcomes, de-emphasis on individualization, over-emphasis on a fixed curriculum (Baines & Stanley, 2006)
- Challenge to academic freedom

•Quantitative scoring vs. Overall assessment (Analytic versus Holistic Rubrics)

| Criteria | Not acceptable 1 | Acceptable at basic level - 2 | Exemplary 3 | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 👉 Mechanics (punctuation, capitalization,& spelling) | More than 3 errors; some serious. | Two or three errors. | No more than one error. | |
| (2) Content: Writer relates content to ideas, themes, etc. discussed in class, and/or to content of previously read material (e.g., narrator reliability and perspective, stigma, stereotypes). | Paper contains no references, or only minimal, vague references to class content or previous readings. | Paper reflects some consideration of class content with at least one reference to previous readings or class discussion. | Paper reflects careful consideration of class content, with specific references to previous readings, web content, class discussions, or on-line activities. | |
| (3) Direct quotes used to support statements made in reflective paper. Quotes referenced using MLA or APA format. | Paper does not contain direct quotes, or incorrect referencing of quotes. | Paper contains at least two direct quotes. Quotes may not fully support statements in paper, or punctuation may be incorrect. | More than two direct quotes used to support statements. All quotes referenced correctly with page number and correct punctuation. | |

•Equating Rubric Scores with Assignment Grades

- Use of four point scale creates automatic assumption that scoring=grades (*Sample from Andrade*)
- Minimum expectations (Must meet all criteria in order to pass ?)
- High standards – acceptable vs. exemplary

Where do we go from here?

- Tk20 – Campus Tools Higher Ed
- Overall thoughts on rubric use on campus

Tools and Resources

- <http://www.thinkinggear.com/tools/>
- **RubiStar** is a free tool to help teachers create quality rubrics.
<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>
- Reference Sheet