

Syracuse University

Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment

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Rubric Roadmap: A Guide for Creating Rubrics

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Rubric Roadmap Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this guide you should be able to:

- explain what a rubric is and the benefits of using rubrics,
- create your own rubrics,
- evaluate the quality of your rubrics, and
- use rubrics for assessment at the course level.

What is a Rubric?

Rubrics are valuable tools used to assess student learning at the course and program level.

When used at the course level, a rubric:

- is an instrument that demonstrates assignment expectations;
- divides the assignment into various dimensions;
- provides a detailed description for each dimension's varying performance levels; and
- can be used to grade and assess a variety of assignments such as book critiques, lab reports, group work, research papers, class participation and discussion, portfolios, oral presentations, and other assignments.

What are the Benefits of Rubrics?

Rubrics are beneficial for students and faculty since their use adds transparency to the grading process.

For students, rubrics:

- clarify the instructor's expectations regarding the assignment,
- provide criteria for achieving learning objective, and
- can be used as a guide when developing their assignment.

For faculty, rubrics:

- can be used to assess any criteria or behavior;
- help to make the grading process quicker, fairer, and more transparent;
- allow for consistent grading, from the first assignment through the very last; and
- serve as a reliable grading scale.

For discussions after the student work is graded, rubrics:

- serve as documentation of the grading process should student questions arise,
- reduce ambiguity about how an assignment was graded,
- show students the level at which they performed, and
- help target areas for student improvement.

Types of Rubrics

Analytic Rubrics

An analytic rubric breaks down the assignment into specific component parts. Every section is scored independently using a rating scale. The final score is comprised by adding each component part.

Advantages:

- Provides thorough feedback on a number of areas of development as each criterion is assessed individually (i.e., the student knows what to improve on)

Disadvantages:

- Takes more time to create and use than a holistic rubric

Developmental Rubrics

Developmental rubrics are closely related to analytic rubrics to the extent that they also measure skill based on a weighted system. However, developmental rubrics are not evaluating a finished product or end result like analytic rubrics. They are used to assess student weakness, connecting to the idea of, “what are my students not taking away from my lessons?”

Advantages:

- The instructor may use this rubric to see the student’s progress/development without having students stress over the grade

Disadvantages:

- This rubric can be challenging to design, since it depends heavily on the developmental theories behind the content and skills being learned, such as cognitive learning, behaviors, etc.

Holistic Rubrics

A holistic rubric is made up of a single scale with all criteria to be considered together. The instructor scores the assignment as a whole, without judging components separately (e.g., on a scale of 1 to 4). As such, a single score is assigned to the entire piece of student work.

Advantages:

- Highlight what the learner is competent to do rather than what they cannot do

Disadvantages:

- When student work is at varying levels extending beyond the criteria points it can be hard to select the single best description

Parts of a Rubric

1. Task Description

What is the assignment?

Sample Oral Presentation Rubric

In our final class, you will deliver a 15-minute oral presentation about the research topic that you selected and have been studying this semester. By teaching the rest of the class about your topic, you will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge on your chosen subject in a clear and understandable way. You may prepare presentation materials to support your talk, but the focus will be on how well you present your work and answer questions about your research.

2. Scale

What are the levels of achievement?

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Content	Shows a full understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.
Comprehension	Student is able to accurately answer almost all questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer most questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer a few questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is unable to accurately answer questions posed by classmates about the topic.
Speaks Clearly	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or cannot be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Volume	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
Vocabulary	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Extends audience vocabulary by defining words that might be new to most of the audience.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Includes 1-2 words that might be new to most of the audience, but does not define them.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Does not include any vocabulary that might be new to the audience.	Uses several (5 or more) words or phrases that are not understood by the audience.
Posture and Eye Contact	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
Time Limit	Presentation is 15 minutes long.	Presentation is 2 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is 5 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is well over or under the planned 15-minute time.

3. Dimensions of the Assignment

What is the breakdown of the skills/knowledge involved?

4. Performance Level Descriptions

What specific feedback can be given for each level of each dimension?

How Do I Create a Rubric?

There are four main stages involved in constructing a rubric:

Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reflect on what you want from students, what are your expectations, why you created the assignment, and what students learned from the assignment in the past.
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus on the assignment dimensions as well as the details of the assignment. These dimensions vary according to the course learning objectives, students' year of study, the assignment itself, and your experience giving and grading the assignment.● Once you have identified the assignment dimensions, create a description for the highest performance level you expect from students for each dimension.
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reflect on Stages 1 and 2 to group similar expectations and results together in what will become the rubric dimensions (e.g., organization, context, analysis, presentation, etc...).● Remember this is an iterative process. Some performance expectations do not fit neatly into one group. Feedback from your fellow faculty members or TAs are encouraged.
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Apply the dimensions and descriptions from Stages 2 and 3 to the final form of the rubric, using a grid format.● Determine the appropriate scale you want to use and label each accordingly.● Complete the descriptions for the other performance levels in the rubric grid. Since the highest level is already complete, start with the lowest performance level and then create descriptions for middle levels.

How Do I Adapt a Rubric?

You may choose to adapt an existing rubric provided by your department, fellow colleagues, field experts, or reference guides. Keep in mind that the adapted rubric must communicate the assignment expectations for students; therefore, using the above stages is suggested to structure the rubric. Two factors are important to consider when adapting a rubric:

1. Time - does using the existing rubric save time?
2. Suitability - does the existing rubric meet the assignment objectives?

If the existing rubric meets these criteria, then it is worth examining for possible application.

Rubric Template

Task Description: [Include a clear task description of the assignment. Elements of an excellent task description include (a) a descriptive title for the assignment; (b) the purpose of the assignment (why do you want students to do it and how does it fit with the course objectives?); (c) definitions of any key terms, if needed; (d) support (e.g., will you allow drafts and/or provide examples in class?); and (e) scope (e.g., the details of what a final version of the assignment should look like, due dates, format, how it should be submitted).

To create the rubric:

- Identify the assignment's dimensions (the skills/knowledge involved)
- Determine the scale you will use (three, four, or five-point)
- Describe the performance levels for each dimension (starting with the highest)

Dimensions	Scale 1	Scale 2	Scale 3	Scale 4	Scale 5

Rubric Scale Wording Options

The terms below can be used to describe different scale levels for three-, four-, and five-level rubrics. Stevens and Levi (2013) advocate for the use of clear and tactful scale labels that are positive and active.

Three-Level Rubric Scale Examples

3	2	1
Advanced	Intermediate	Beginner
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Working toward Expectations
Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing
Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Exemplary	Competent	Needs Work
Exemplary	Intermediate	Novice
High	Intermediate	Beginning
High Mastery	Average Mastery	Low Mastery
Proficient	Intermediate	Beginning
Proficient	Intermediate	Novice

Four-Level Rubric Scale Examples

4	3	2	1
Accomplished	Average	Developing	Beginning
Accomplished	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Beginning
Exceeding	Meeting	Developing	Beginning
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Near Expectations	Starting toward Expectations
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair
Excellent Work	Standard Work	Work in Progress	Getting Started
Exceptional	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Exemplary	Acceptable	Developing	Emerging

Four-Level Rubric Scale Examples (continued)

4	3	2	1
Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing	Beginning
Expert	Master	Apprentice	Novice
Mastery	Partial Mastery	Progressing	Emerging
Mastery	Proficient	Developing	Novice
Sophisticated	Competent	Partly Competent	Not Yet Competent
Sophisticated	Highly Competent	Fairly Competent	Not Yet Competent
Standard of Excellence	Approaching Standard of Excellence	Meets Acceptable Standard	Does Not Yet Meet Acceptable Standard
Superior	Accomplished	Adequate	Needs Work
Superior	Good	Fair	Needs Work

Five-Level Rubric Scale Examples

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Above Average	Sufficient	Minimal	Beginning
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Needs Work
Exemplary	Accomplished	Acceptable	Minimally Acceptable	Emerging
Exemplary	Very Good	Competent	Marginal	Not Proficient
Innovating	Applying	Developing	Beginning	Not Using
Master	Distinguished	Proficient	Intermediate	Novice

Evaluating the Quality of Your Rubric

Rubric Part	Evaluation Criteria	Yes	No
The dimensions	<p>Does each dimension cover important parts of the final student performance?</p> <p>Does the dimension capture some key themes in your teaching?</p> <p>Are the dimensions clear?</p> <p>Are the dimensions distinctly different from each other?</p> <p>Do the dimensions represent skills that the student knows something about already (e.g., organization, analysis, using conventions)?</p>		
The descriptions	<p>Do the descriptions match the dimensions?</p> <p>Are the descriptions clear and different from each other?</p> <p>If you used points, is there a clear basis for assigning points for each dimension?</p> <p>If using a three- to five-level rubric, are the descriptions appropriately and equally weighted across levels?</p>		
The scale	<p>Do the descriptors under each level truly represent that level of performance?</p> <p>Are the scale labels (e.g., exemplary, competent, beginning) encouraging and still quite informative without being negative and discouraging?</p> <p>Does the rubric have a reasonable number of levels for the age of the student and the complexity of the assignment?</p>		
The overall rubric	<p>Does the rubric clearly connect to the outcomes that it is designed to measure?</p> <p>Can the rubric be understood by external audiences (avoids jargon and technical language)?</p> <p>Does it reflect teachable skills?</p> <p>Does the rubric reward or penalize students based on skills unrelated to the outcome being measured that you have not taught?</p> <p>Have all students had an equal opportunity to learn the content and skills necessary to be successful on the assignment?</p> <p>Is the rubric appropriate for the conditions under which the assignment was completed?</p> <p>Does the rubric address the student's performance as a developmental task?</p> <p>Does the rubric inform the student about the evaluation procedures when his or her work is scored?</p> <p>Does the rubric emphasize the appraisal of individual or group performance and indicate ways to improve?</p>		
Fairness and sensibility	<p>Does it look like the rubric will be fair to all students and free of bias?</p> <p>Does it look like it will be useful to students as performance feedback?</p> <p>Is the rubric practical given the kind of assignment?</p> <p>Does the rubric make sense to the reader?</p>		

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