Using Rubrics

Simple tips for interpreting and marking using rubrics.

Why Use Rubrics?

A rubric is an assessment tool that clearly outlines marking criteria used for evaluating a course assignment.

The main purpose of a rubric is to:

- Clearly communicates to students how instructors will evaluate the assessment.
- Describe criteria being assessed and levels of achievement in each skill area.
- Allows students to monitor and assess their progress towards indicated goals.
- Improve consistency and grading fairness.

Benefits to Students

- Awareness of instructor’s expectations
- Incorporate feedback to improve
- Encourage critical thinking and self-evaluation

Benefits for Marking

- Encourage fair and consistent marking
- Provide timely and descriptive feedback for students
- Communicate expectations to students

Types of Rubrics:

Holistic:
- Single criteria rubrics (one-dimensional)
- Performance descriptions are written in paragraphs and usually in full sentences
- Assess overall achievement

Analytic Rubric
- Two-dimensional rubrics with levels of achievement as columns and assessment criteria as rows.
- Allows you to assess participants’ achievements based on multiple criteria using a single rubric.
- Using a table, you can assign different weights (value) to different criteria and include an overall achievement by totaling the criteria.

Articulating Thoughts Through Written Communication—Final Paper/Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of forms, conventions,</td>
<td>Demonstrates limited knowledge of forms,</td>
<td>Demonstrates considerable knowledge of</td>
<td>Demonstrates thorough and insightful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terminology, and strategies relative to the importance of sources to subject</td>
<td>conventions, terminology, and strategies relative to importance of sources to subject</td>
<td>forms, conventions, terminology, and</td>
<td>knowledge of forms, conventions, terminology, and strategies relative to importance of sources to subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical and creative thinking skills</td>
<td>Uses critical and creative thinking skills with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Uses critical and creative thinking skills with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Uses critical and creative thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of information and idea</td>
<td>Communicates information and idea with limited clarity</td>
<td>Communicates information and ideas with considerable clarity</td>
<td>Communicates information and ideas with a high degree of clarity and with confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of argument and writing</td>
<td>Argument is simple and unoriginal, and the writing is weak and inconsistent</td>
<td>Argument bridges on the complex and original, and the writing is clear and coherent</td>
<td>Argument is complex and original, and the writing is strong, fluid, and creatively coherent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/feedback-grading/rubrics/Pages/types-of-rubrics.aspx#holistic

Adapted from Centre for Teaching Excellence, Appendix B: Sample Analytic Rubric ("Rubrics: Useful Assessment Tools")
Steps to Ensure Consistent Marking:

All TAs and/or markers should participate in inter-rater reliability training to ensure fair and consistent marking.

1. Thorough reading of the rubric
2. Discussion of the terms
3. Practice scoring a work sample one row at a time
4. Opportunity for TA markers/instructor to explain their reasoning and offer evidence to support their scores.
5. Discussion of the level awarded; consensus of decision
6. Repetition of practice marking until a common understanding of the standard is determined

Providing Effective Feedback when Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback Should Be:</th>
<th>Which Means:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal-referenced</td>
<td>Remind the student about the initial goal (‘the goal of this assessment was...’) and then give goal-related information about his or her actions (when re-reading your assignment, this could be achieved by considering...doing...evaluating...’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible and Transparent</td>
<td>Feedback must be clear and understood by the student. Avoid jargon and be specific so that the student will understand what they can learn from the feedback. Consider responding like a ‘reader’ and not just a ‘marker’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actionable</td>
<td>Let the student know what they have to do, what they could consider reviewing, what areas of research they should look at next time etc. Students need to understand how they could do a better job the next time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>The sooner that students receive feedback, the better. Students need to know what they can do to improve prior to the next assignment, test, discussion etc. Giving feedback too late can take away from the relevance of it (and restrict their ability to improve).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Students can only adjust their performance if the information fed back to them is stable, accurate and trustworthy. As a part of the teaching team, it is your responsibility to agree the standards of what high quality work ‘looks’ like, how you will give feedback and what that feedback ‘looks’ like.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Wiggins G (2012)

Resources for Rubric Development:

University of Colorado Denver; The Center for Faculty Development:
http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/index.htm

Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Modules:
http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/home.html

For additional support on rubrics development, contact the Centre for Teaching and Learning (ctl@queensu.ca, 613-533-6428)