

# 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.

“Advice, evaluation, grades—none of these provide the descriptive information that students need to reach their goals. What is true feedback—and how can it improve learning?”  
**-Wiggins (2012)**



### 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

## 2 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	
4	<b>Above Average:</b> The audience is able to easily identify the focus of the work and is engaged by its clear focus and relevant details. Information is presented logically and naturally. There are no more than two mechanical errors or misspelled words to distract the reader.
3	<b>Sufficient:</b> The audience is easily able to identify the focus of the student work which is supported by relevant ideas and supporting details. Information is presented in a logical manner that is easily followed. There is minimal interruption to the work due to misspellings and/or mechanical errors.
2	<b>Developing:</b> The audience can identify the central purpose of the student work without little difficulty and supporting ideas are present and clear. The information is presented in an orderly fashion that can be followed with little difficulty. There are some misspellings and/or mechanical errors, but they do not seriously distract from the work.
1	<b>Needs Improvement:</b> The audience cannot clearly or easily identify the central ideas or purpose of the student work. Information is presented in a disorganized fashion causing the audience to have difficulty following the author's ideas. There are many misspellings and/or mechanical errors that negatively affect the audience's ability to read the work.

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

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

Adapted from Centre for Teaching Excellence, Appendix B: Sample Analytic Rubric (“Rubrics: Useful Assessment Tools”)

# 6 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:

Feedback Should Be:	Which Means:
Goal-referenced	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...')
Tangible and Transparent	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'.
Actionable	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.
Timely	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).
Consistent	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.

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](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](mailto:ctl@queensu.ca), 613-533-6428)

