IOWA

Division of Student Life

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING RUBRICS

Rubrics are valuable assessment tools that provide criteria for evaluating student work. They improve consistency in grading, set transparent expectations, and offer structured feedback to students. This document outlines best practices for developing and using rubrics effectively in various assessment contexts.

1) IDENTIFY THE OUTCOME YOU ARE ASSESSING

Before creating a rubric, ensure that the learning outcome being assessed is clearly defined and measurable. Consider the specific skills, knowledge, or behaviors that you expect students to demonstrate. It may be helpful to cross-reference the outcome with course or program objectives to ensure consistency.

2) ARTICULATE WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO MEET THAT OUTCOME

Successful performance should be clearly defined using language that students can easily understand. This can be achieved by providing examples or outlines of the specific task or project. Doing so helps minimize ambiguity and supports enhanced student performance. Use clear, concise language in your descriptors, ensuring they accurately reflect the complexity and expected level of achievement at each performance level.

3) IDENTIFY HOW YOU WILL GATHER THE INFORMATION

Determine the most appropriate method for assessing student performance. This includes various forms such as one-minute papers, journals, presentations, projects, or observed behaviors. The chosen method should align with both the learning outcome and the type of rubric being used. Consider using existing rubrics where applicable, or develop new rubrics tailored specifically to the assignment or project.

4) CHOOSE THE TYPE OF RUBRIC

There are different types of rubrics that can be applied based on your assessment goals:

- **Analytic Rubrics:** These rubrics break down the assessment into separate parts and give feedback on each one.
    - i.e. If you're providing feedback on an oral presentation, you might assess "content" "organization," and "use of visual aids" separately. This allows you to give specific feedback for each area.

- **Holistic Rubrics:** These rubrics give one overall score based on the general quality of the work.
  - i.e. If you are assessing a presentation, you might give it an overall score based on how well the student communicated their ideas, without focusing on individual elements like organization or use of visual aids.
- **Checklist Rubrics:** These rubrics simply check whether certain elements are included.
  - i.e. If you are reviewing a student's definition of leadership, you might have a checklist that includes "clear thesis statement," "appropriate sources," and "correct citations." The student earns points for each item they include.

5) LIST THE CRITERIA (ROWS)

The criteria represent the various elements of the student's performance that will be assessed. These should be closely aligned with the learning outcomes and assessment type. It's essential to ensure that each criterion is distinct, measurable, and observable.

Examples of criteria for assessing a presentation may include: structure, timing, clarity, and quality of visual aid.

6) LIST LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT (COLUMNS)

The levels of achievement define the progression of student performance for each criterion. Typically, these are framed as a continuum from poor to excellent or novice to expert, using appropriate descriptors to exemplify the progression. Ensure that each level of achievement has clear, differentiated descriptions that are easy to interpret. The number of levels can vary, but most rubrics include three to five levels of performance.

Example: Student Government Presentation Skills Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Structure	Presentation is logically organized with clear sections.	Presentation is organized but some sections are unclear.	Presentation has a basic structure but lacks clarity.	Presentation is poorly organized with unclear sections.
Timing	Presentation is perfectly timed within the allotted period.	Presentation is slightly over or under the allotted time.	Presentation is significantly over or under the allotted time.	Presentation is poorly timed, far exceeding or falling short of the allotted time.
Clarity	Speaker's voice is clear and easily audible.	Speaker's voice is mostly clear with minor issues.	Speaker's voice is somewhat unclear or hard to hear.	Speaker's voice is very unclear or inaudible.

Quality of Visual Aid	Visual aids are clear, professional, and enhance the presentation.	Visual aids are mostly clear and professional.	Visual aids are somewhat clear but lack professionalism.	Visual aids are unclear or unprofessional.

Example: Student Wellness CPR Checklist Rubric

CPR Technique Criteria	Present (✓)	Not Present (✗)
Checks for pulse and breathing prior to initiating CPR		
Performs chest compressions correctly and at the appropriate depth and rate (about 2 inches deep and 100-120 compressions per minute)		
Clears the airway and gives breaths at the correct interval (head tilt, chin left method, 2 breaths per 30 compressions)		
Maintains a steady rhythm throughout the CPR process		

7) PILOT AND REVISE AS NEEDED

- **Test the Rubric:** Apply it to sample assessments to ensure clarity and applicability.
- **Gather Feedback:** Consult with colleagues or students to identify any confusing or unclear descriptors.
- **Make Adjustments:** Revise descriptors and criteria based on feedback and observed flaws from the pilot.
- **Ensure Reliability and Validity**
  - Reliability: Rubrics should provide consistent scores across different evaluators and contexts. To ensure reliability, you may conduct training for evaluators to ensure everyone is aligned in their understanding of the criteria and levels of performance.
  - Validity: Rubrics are valid when they accurately assess what they intend to measure. This means that the criteria must be directly related to the learning objectives, and the descriptors should reflect the expected quality of work at each level.

8) IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY

- **Introduce Rubrics Early:** Share rubrics with students before they begin working on tasks or projects. This ensures transparency and helps students understand what is expected of them.
- **Use Rubrics for Self and Peer Assessment:** Encourage students to use rubrics to evaluate their own work and the work of their peers. This process not only helps reinforce the criteria but also promotes reflection and critical thinking.
- **Provide Constructive, Individualized Feedback:** Rubrics should guide one-on-one feedback discussions. Use the rubric-based comments to offer personalized feedback that highlights specific strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Aggregate Across Students:** Rubrics can be utilized to understand achievement across students. Use rubric scores to outline what percentage of students achieve certain levels (i.e. 90% of students met all four criteria)
- **Refine Over Time:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of rubrics. Based on the results of their application, make adjustments to improve the accuracy and relevance of the rubric for future assessments.