



DESIGNING GRADING & FEEDBACK RUBRICS

What Are Rubrics?

A rubric is a tool, that includes descriptions of levels of performance, to enable the grading and/or feedback of students' work. Two common definitions from the literature are:

- 'A rubric is a coherent set of criteria for students' work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria' (Brookhart, 2013.p4)
- 'a document that articulates the expectation for an assignment by listing the criteria or what counts, and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor' (Reddy & Andrade, 2010, p436.).

The 'difference between checklists and rating scales on the one hand and rubrics on the other is that checklists and rating scales lack descriptions of performance quality'. (Brookhart, 2013, p4)

Why Use Rubrics?

Similar to the overall purposes of assessment (National Forum, 2017, see Figure 1) assessment rubrics have three key purposes.

- To assist staff in their grading and for accountability (focus on summative assessment, Assessment OF Learning):
 - Supports more reliability in grading. Takes the 'guess-work' out of grading
 - Defines characteristics of a high-quality assignment
- To give feedback on learning and teaching (focus on formative assessment. Assessment FOR Learning):
 - A way to provide efficient feedback
 - If given at start of module it helps students understand expectations
 - When faculty members collaborate to develop a rubric, it promotes shared expectations on learning and on grading practices
- To support students to self-regulate and critically evaluate (focus on formative assessment, Assessment AS Learning):
 - Provides students with a way to critically evaluate their own and their peers' performance
 - Assists in planning for change in their learning (self-regulate)

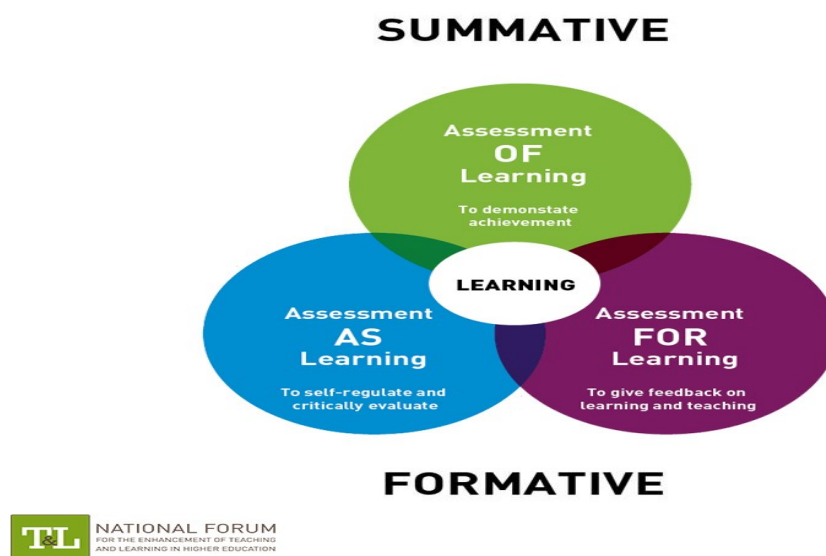


Figure 1: The Purposes of Assessment (National Forum, 2017)

Benefits of Rubrics

FOR STAFF

- Rubrics assist Faculty to mark or grade more consistently, reliably and efficiently (Campbell , 2005)
- Development of a generic scoring rubric for use across courses has implications for the programme assessment as it enables comparability across courses and semesters (Reddy & Andrade, 2010)

FOR STUDENTS

- Supports the identification of critical issues in an assignment, thereby, reducing uncertainty and supporting more meaningful work,
- Assists with immediate feedback and evaluation of their own performances
- Helps to estimate their grades prior to the submission of assignments and
- Focuses their efforts so as to improve performance on subsequent assignments (Bolton, 2006)

CHALLENGES WITH RUBRICS

- Whereas students are very positive, Faculty have mixed views on them if they feel they are only for grading purposes, as don't always measure what they are trying to achieve (Reddy & Andrade, 2010) . Faculty are more positive when they also see their potential to assist students in their learning

- The language in the rubrics may not always be understood by students (Reddy & Andrade, 2010)
- Staff/Faculty training is important for use with large cohort of grading with same rubric (Reddy & Andrade, 2010, Boulet at al, 2004)
- Rubrics need collaboration between staff to construct in order to ensure its validity (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). They can take some time to construct.

What are the Components of a Rubric?

There are usually three elements to a rubric, 1) criteria, 2) standards and 3) the descriptors. In addition, for some rubrics their needs to be a scoring strategy to calculate the grade. *'Effective rubrics have appropriate criteria and well-written descriptions of performance'* (Broohart, 2013, p4).

STANDARDS (some called it 'Levels/Scale')

	A (or text such as 'Excellent')	B	C	D	E (or text such as 'Fail')
Criteria 1					
Criteria 2					
Criteria 3					
Criteria 4					

↑ **CRITERIA**
↑ **DESCRIPTORS (text in the cells)**

TYPES OF RUBRICS

There are two type of rubrics, i.e. analytic and holistic. *Holistic* rubrics gives focus to the whole picture, whereas *Analytic* give more detail in the foreground, or part of the picture in detail (it may lose some of the picture) (See Figure 2).

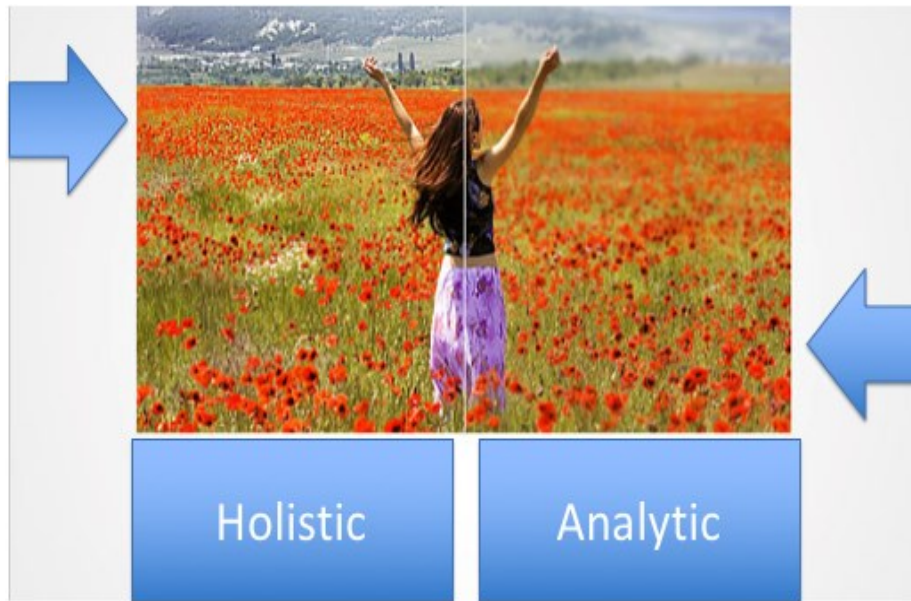


Figure 2: The Difference between Holistic and Analytic Rubrics.

ANALYTIC RUBRICS

An analytic rubric breaks the learning activity/task into components to:

- help students understand the detailed expectation for the task:
- It provides students more structured and targeted feedback on the task
- It provides staff reliable grading criteria

Analytic rubrics are more commonly used when students are unfamiliar with the subject/task.

- Analytic rubrics describe work on each criterion separately. They look like a matrix. They were developed over the last 50 years to address the issue of transparency and accountability to students. They are often used with a scoring weighting to provide the grade (can also be used just for feedback, no scoring)

Advantages

Increase interrater reliability

Transparency (detailed feedback to students)

Objectivity

Disadvantages

Validity: No single correct answer in complex topics

Sum of the parts is not always the whole

Time consuming

Example

Professional Ethics

	Benchmark	Milestone	Milestone	Capstone	Score
Ethical Issue Recognition	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships.	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and grasp complexities of interrelationships among the issues.	Student can recognize ethical issues when issues are presented in a complex, multilayered (and) context. OR can grasp cross-relationships among the issues.	Student can recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (and) context AND can recognize cross-relationships among the issues.	
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question with support using examples, in a class, in a group, or a fixed-choice setting but is unable to apply ethical perspectives/concepts independently (to a new example).	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question independently (to a new example) and the application is inaccurate.	Student can independently (to a new example) apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, but does not consider the specific implications of the application.	Student can independently apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider full implications of the application.	
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student states a position but cannot state the objections to and assumptions and limitations of the different perspectives/concepts.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts but does not respond to them (and) addresses objections, assumptions, and implications in a compartmentalized by student and do not reflect student's position.)	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of, and respond to the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, but the student's response is inadequate.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions, and implications of and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of relevant ethical perspectives/concepts, and the student's defense is adequate and effective.	

Figure 3: Advantages and Disadvantages of an Analytic Rubric

HOLISTIC RUBRICS

A holistic rubric provides an overall description of the learning activity/task. It:

- Provides students with broader expectations for the task, to allow for a range of interpretations
- Provides students with overarching feedback
- Provides staff with criteria to allow for more complex student responses (validity)

Holistic rubrics are more commonly used for more advanced student learning.

There is a challenge with analytic rubrics as staff often assess work holistically (I know an A when I see one) and as Sadler (2009) describes ‘ A work which the teacher would rate as ‘brilliant’ overall may not be outstanding on all the preset criteria. The whole actually amounts to more than the sum of its parts’.

Holistic rubrics can address this to some extent. ‘Holistic rubrics describe the work by applying all the criteria at the same time and enabling an overall judgment about the quality of the work ‘ (Brookhart, 2013, p6) (e.g. characteristics of an ‘excellent’ research paper)

<p>Advantages Encourages intuitive expert judgment Validity is enhanced When used with support, student can develop the skill of self-judgment (become expert judge)</p>	<p>Example: In Columns</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="762 1059 1222 1317"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">HOLISTIC RUBRIC FOR RUBRICS (in columns)</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Highly Effective 3</th> <th>Useful 2</th> <th>Rudimentary 1</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Focuses on knowledge and skills that confer life-long value through application to novel or complex situations, clearly addressing key criteria that 1) comprise the desired learning outcome, and 2) can be demonstrated through a variety of tasks. Differentiates benchmark levels inherent to development of the competency, thereby facilitating valid assessment of both formative and summative progress. Clearly and concisely communicates the nuances between differing levels of proficiency, and does so in terms of positive evidence.</td> <td>Clearly addresses key criteria that comprise the desired learning outcome. Organizes performance characteristics within progressive categories that accurately reflect observable stages of development. And, clearly describes observable characteristics that demonstrate each level of performance on each criterion.</td> <td>States learning outcomes in terms of broad instructional goals and/or specific learning tasks; presents performance characteristics in terms of correctness, quantity, or other grading criteria; constitutes a Likert scale.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Or in Rows (as in Brightspace)</p>	HOLISTIC RUBRIC FOR RUBRICS (in columns)			Highly Effective 3	Useful 2	Rudimentary 1	Focuses on knowledge and skills that confer life-long value through application to novel or complex situations, clearly addressing key criteria that 1) comprise the desired learning outcome, and 2) can be demonstrated through a variety of tasks. Differentiates benchmark levels inherent to development of the competency, thereby facilitating valid assessment of both formative and summative progress. Clearly and concisely communicates the nuances between differing levels of proficiency, and does so in terms of positive evidence.	Clearly addresses key criteria that comprise the desired learning outcome. Organizes performance characteristics within progressive categories that accurately reflect observable stages of development. And, clearly describes observable characteristics that demonstrate each level of performance on each criterion.	States learning outcomes in terms of broad instructional goals and/or specific learning tasks; presents performance characteristics in terms of correctness, quantity, or other grading criteria; constitutes a Likert scale.
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<p>Disadvantages Reliability can be weaker Needs more expert judgement Transparency can be harder to achieve.</p>										

Figure 4: Advantages and Disadvantages of a Holistic Rubric

PROGRAMME/MAJOR APPROACH TO INTRODUCING RUBRICS

It is important to consider which rubric are most appropriate at different points in the programme/major. Consider how you could use these approaches both horizontally (in the same stage/level) and vertically throughout your programme.

As complex assessments, such as dissertations, are often toward the end of a programme, it might be worth considering more holistic rubrics at this point. However, early work on complex learning can also benefit from this approach.

Topics that require more creativity benefit from holistic rubrics. Students who are new to particular tasks, often earlier in a programme, may benefit from the structure provided by analytic rubrics, but may benefit from the freedom associated with holistic rubrics at a later stage.

Use rubrics throughout the programme/major, to build students skills to self-assess and peer review, their own or other assignment/tasks/exemplars. This helps them to internalise the expectations for their learning.

More general rubrics that can be used across different modules can be useful to give some coherence to student learning. They can enable comparability across modules and semesters (Reddy & Andrade, 2010; Crotwell Timmerman et al 2011)).

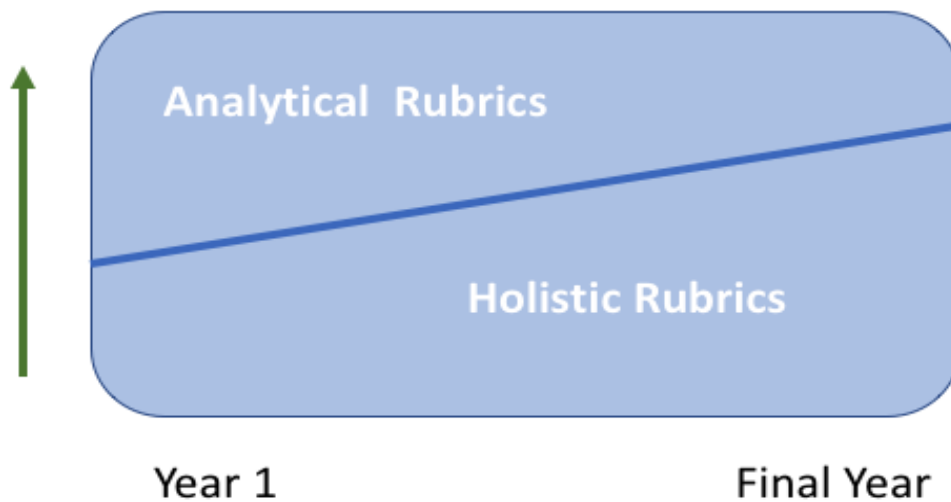


Figure 5: Use of Rubrics across a Programme/Major

Steps to Develop a Rubric

See also [how to set this up in the Brightspace VLE](#)

STEP 1: WHAT KIND OF RUBRIC DO YOU WANT TO CREATE: AN ANALYTIC OR HOLISTIC?

Consider question such as:

- Do your students need more support and direction (early years or early stage in the subject)? In this case the analytic rubrics could be useful for them
- Are you supporting students to think 'outside the box', be more creative and or supporting more complex learning? In this context you could consider a holistic rubric that allows give some direction but allows different good answers

STEP 2: IDENTIFY CRITERIA YOU WANT TO ASSESS

Criteria are the properties or characteristics by which to judge the quality of the assessment task. The criteria do not offer anything, or make any assumptions about, actual quality. (James Cook University, 2018). Explore existing rubrics that may also use these criteria. See resource list for some examples.

Criteria are intended to help make it clear to students what factors will be considered when marking assessments. Criteria should be:

- Linked to learning objectives/outcomes
- Observable: Describes a quality that can be perceived (seen or heard usually)
- Describing qualities: (critical appraisal, structure and organisation, use of writing conventions) not assessment components (introduction, body, conclusion).
- Complete: If “creativity” or “spelling and punctuation” are considered important they should be included in the criteria.
- Distinct: Each criterion identifies a separate aspect of the learning objectives being assessed.

To be effective, criteria should be manageable in number. Criteria should include significant elements of the task but remain feasible for both students and markers.

Extract from Practical Guideline for Designing Rubrics, University of Queensland Australia, 2018.
<https://elearning.uq.edu.au/guides/turnitin/practical-guidelines-designing-rubrics>

STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE NAME AND NUMBER OF STANDARDS (DESCRIBED AS ‘LEVELS’ IN BRIGHTSPACE)

These can be:

- Numerical (i.e. 1-5 or actual points value) or
- Qualitative i.e.
- Exemplary, acceptable, unacceptable
- Distinguished, proficient, basic, unacceptable
- Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
- Novice, apprentice, expert
- Analytic Rubrics
 - Decide on the name and number of standards (levels). Aim for an even number (4 or 6) of standards (levels) because when an odd number is used, the middle tends to become the "catch-all" category.
- Holistic Rubrics:
 - Decide on the names and number of standards (levels).

STEP 4: DEVELOP THE DESCRIPTORS

Use language that the student will understand. If you have the opportunity it is useful to do this with your current and/or previous student cohorts, so they can understand.

- Start by considering what is an 'excellent' example (standard) you could expect for this criteria.
- Next describe an unacceptable/fail (standard) for this criteria
- Then work out the descriptions of middle (standard(s)) for this criteria

Analytic Rubrics

- For each of the criterion describe knowledge, skills, competencies that represent each cell in the standards.

Holistic Rubrics

- Under each standard (i.e. Excellent-Poor) consider all criteria for this standard simultaneously. Try to give rich descriptions of this standard to allow for students to demonstrate different learning.

STEP 5: APPLY A SCORING STRATEGY, IF APPROPRIATE

Rubrics can be text only and/or have a numerical scoring. Consider the weighting required, where relevant

STEP 6: REVIEW AND REVISE.

Share the rubric with colleagues, students, test and review it.

References, Resources and Bibliography

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RESOURCES

Online Rubric Design Tools

Rubistar – free <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>

Various Online Rubric Tools: http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/

EXEMPLAR RUBRICS:

<http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm>

<http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/resources/rubricbank.htm>

GUIDES TO DESIGNING RUBRICS

James Cook University, (2018) Developing assessment rubrics, James Cook University, Australia.

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