



Creating Rubrics

Purpose:

To assist you in the final step in the three-step process: creating a rubric for your multi-domain assessment task.

Process for Creating Multi-Domain Assessment Tasks

This activity is the final in the process of creating multi-domain assessment tasks to assess students' achievement against the Standards.

The first activity in this process (Activity 2-3) helped you use the Standards to develop the driving learning goals for the assessment task.

The second activity (Activity 2-4A) helped you design the task itself, with a draft of your criteria.

This third activity in the series assists you in creating rubrics for judging the quality of the students' performance on the tasks you design.

(Activity 2-4B helps you improve the quality of conventional written tests and quizzes.)

What you need:

- teaching teams who are planning a unit of work together (3-6 people)
- your learning goals, criteria and task for this multi-domain assessment task as developed in Activity 2-3 and Activity 2-4A
- a copy of pages 1 to 4 (back-to-back & stapled) for each teacher
- a copy of page 5 (enlarged 140% to A3 size) for each planning group
- several sheets of blank A3 paper for each planning group.

Step 1:

- READ pages 2 to 4 about quality criteria and rubrics.

Step 2:

- LOOK AGAIN at your criteria from Activity 2-4A (left column of planning sheet).
- In teaching teams RE-WORK your criteria according to what you now know about writing clear criteria. Carefully construct the wording for your criteria - perhaps negotiate these with your students - so they know exactly what you are looking for in their work. Criteria must be explicitly about the learning goals (and hence Standards) - the point is to NOT have to "guess what's in the teacher's head".

We are creating an ANALYTIC rubric here - with a row for each separate criterion.

Step 3:

- BUILD your rubric. Write your criteria down the left column.
- Select labels for your columns (quality levels).
- Develop your descriptors across for each criterion row as described on pages 2-4
- Clarify and simplify your language. Get feedback from your peers - and from students.

Step 4:

- Trial the rubric with a class as this is the only way to test it!
- Do they understand it? Can they use it to judge their own or their peers' work?
- Refine the rubric and try it again.

Quality Criteria and Rubrics

“Criteria are guidelines, rules, or principles by which student responses, products, or performances are judged. They describe what to look for in student performances or products to judge quality The goal ... is to *make an essentially subjective process as clear, consistent, and defensible as possible*” (p. 4, original emphasis).

“Good quality performance criteria help teachers answer questions like these:

- What is expected?
- What are our standards?
- What does good performance look like?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- What kind of feedback do I give to improve student work next time?” (pp. 10-11)

Ensure that your criteria are focussed on the important intellectual aspects of the work, not the peripheral features such as neatness or presentation. In writing criteria try and be as clear and unambiguous as you can. The more open-ended the task, the more clear the criteria should be.

“The vocabulary for describing quality work, and the practice of systematically applying quality criteria to lots of student work, has the potential of turning subjective, informal teacher classroom observation into objective, trusted observations on student progress and status. Although it might require a lot of work at the outset, good quality, internalized performance criteria are, in the long run, a great time-saver” (p. 12).

Extracts from Judith Arter and Jay McTighe (2001) *Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom: Using Performance Criteria for Assessing and Improving Student Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

How many criteria should I have?

There is no particular right number. It will depend on the complexity of the task and its degree of openness. However, too much detail, rather than being helpful, can overwhelm both the teacher and the student. So try to keep the rubric to one A4 page with six to twelve criteria, each measuring important Standards in the assessment task.

What is a rubric?

“ A **rubric** is a particular format for criteria – it is a written-down version of the criteria, with all the score points described and defined. The best rubrics are worded in a way that covers the essence of what we, as teachers, look for when we’re judging quality, and they reflect the best thinking in the field as to what constitutes good performance ... [they allow] us to describe and define the most important components that comprise *complex* performances and products ” (Arter and McTighe 2001, p. 8, original emphasis).

A rubric is:

- your promise to students about how you will judge the quality of their achievements
- about the work, not about labelling the students
- about the important criteria and substance of the task (not every minute detail)
- a practical and worthwhile feedback tool for students
- a tool that can be used for other purposes (such as self assessment in assessment AS learning – see Module 4)
- a way of improving consistency of judgements across teachers (see Module 5) as you talk through and trial rubrics to reach common understandings
- never perfect the first time you use it!

How many columns/categories of performance levels do we need?

Anywhere between 2 and 12 could be appropriate. The simplest is two: satisfactory or not. Sometimes three are used, but they have two problems. Firstly, people using them have a tendency to gravitate to the centre, and secondly they often don't provide sufficient detail on what different levels of quality look like. Four levels are recommended for beginner rubric-writers. This is enough levels to show clear differences in performance quality, but not too many to create descriptors for. The important thing is that the descriptors for each level of performance are easily understood and distinct from each other. As Arter and McTighe (2001) suggest "ask yourself, 'how many points are needed to adequately describe the range of performance I am seeing in student work?' " (p. 31)

Four columns or quality levels allows for incremental progression between levels of equal value.

Read about progression points along the Standards continuum at:

http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/fs1/guidelines/progression_points/about_PP.asp

Once you are experienced at designing and using rubrics, you may find, at times, that three or five columns works well. By then you will be able to clearly delineate increasing levels of performance that are easily distinguished when looking at samples of student work.

Where do I start in writing a rubric?

After filling in the criteria, generate the descriptors of quality in the criteria that show increasing complexity and quality in performance. Ask yourself: "what *exactly* constitutes high quality work" and write the observable features in clear, unambiguous language for your highest quality level descriptor box. Avoid using vague terms in your descriptors such as good, fair, excellent, a reasonable number. Think: "what is it that makes a product or performance "high quality"?" then specify this as precisely as you can. Then at the lowest level, ask: "what do I expect a novice to be able to do for this criterion?" Once these two descriptors are complete, try writing two intermediary steps that indicate increasing levels of performance or understanding. Test the criteria with your colleagues to see if they interpret them as you intended. Then test them against samples of student work – your own students or samples from the assessment maps on the VCAA website.

What labels should I use for the levels of quality?

When defining the categories across levels of performance some teachers have used the following labels. You may find it useful to consult with your students and colleagues to determine which particular terms are meaningful labels in your context. Note that A, B, C, D and E should not be used in rubrics as they are now reserved for reporting purposes.

☺	☺ ☺	☺ ☺ ☺	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
Novice	Apprentice	Proficient	Distinguished
*	**	***	****
Below the standard	Approaching the standard	Meets the standard	Exceeds the standard
Beginning	Adequate	Proficient	Sophisticated
Further Work Needed	Done OK	Cool	Awesome!
Beginning	Progressing	Capable	Advanced
Not Yet	Achieved the standard	Competent	Highly Capable
☺	☺ ☺	☺ ☺ ☺	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
Naïve	Proficient	Capable	Expert
Needs further experiences	Showing progress	Demonstrating competence	Exceptionally capable
Not yet at a pass standard	A limited understanding shown	A considered understanding shown	A profound understanding shown
Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
1	2	3	4
Not Shown	At expected level	Competent	High achievement
Uncritical	Aware	Considered	Insightful

Should the “best” quality descriptor be on the left or the right?

Some people prefer to have the best performance descriptor closest to the criteria (i.e. to the left), but when reading from left to right a sense of progression is gained if the best quality is on the right hand side. It comes down to your personal choice. Perhaps ask your students what they prefer.

Can students be involved in developing criteria and rubrics?

Yes! If you can, involve the students in the creation of the rubric - perhaps start with one and then re-work it with feedback from students. Students need to be able to understand what the level (quality) descriptors mean - including for self and peer assessment as they prepare their work - and they are good verifiers of the quality of your rubric (or, more colloquially, they're good rubbish detectors).

How generic or task-specific should the criteria and rubrics be?

On the one hand, it is helpful not to make rubrics too task-specific, so that they can be used for several different oral presentations, research reports, etc. Students then become familiar with the features of quality that you are encouraging. You may choose to have one or two rows of a rubric e.g. for working collaboratively, that appear in the same format across assessment tasks and across learning areas. On the other hand, being too general in your rubrics defeats the purpose of specifying exactly what you are looking for in students' performances and understandings, and task-specific criteria tell students what you want in *this* task. A balance is needed.

Can I use marks in rubrics?

There are sound arguments for not using marks in rubrics (see Module 3), but sometimes you may wish to show that some criteria are “worth” more than others by weighting them to indicate their importance e.g. criterion 3 might be double weighted (double the number of marks if you choose to allocate marks) because it is more important than the other criteria in this particular assessment task. If allocating marks for different levels of performance in rubrics then care must be taken in developing a “Raw Score ⇒ Indicative Result” conversion scale. Raw Score bands must be set so that the Indicative Result is at the appropriate quality level. In other words it would be unusual to merely add the raw scores and give a total score (or convert them to percentage scores). Sometimes, if the conversion scale isn't given, a student could get all their marks in the second highest quality level column, but if they add and convert that total to a percentage, they may think that they have achieved a top level result. This trap is to be avoided if at all possible.

Marking schemes can act like a rubric in the sense that they set out how student work will be judged. To be useful for our purposes, marking schemes must provide clear guidance to the teacher and the student about how quality work is judged. Two marks for this and three marks for that, in itself does not indicate what quality work looks like. But if this is specified then a marking scheme can also be equivalent to a rubric - but in a different form. There are excellent model rubrics for assessment of learning, such as problem solving in mathematics, available on the web for people to use and/or adapt.

Sample rubric on designing rubrics

Criteria	Novice	Apprentice	Capable	Expert
Writes transparent criteria that clearly describe goals.	Criteria are vague or intuitive and not explicitly stated.	Criteria can be interpreted several ways.	Criteria are specific and link to the standards.	Criteria are clear & targeted precisely at the standards.
Writes clear descriptors for each criterion.	Uses vague words like 'some' and 'few' in each row.	Avoids vague words but some ambiguity present.	Descriptors are clear and link to the standards.	Explicit descriptors of observable standards.
Criteria and rubric clearly measure the desired standards.	Criteria are broad and are only marginally about the key standards.	Criteria cover the key aspects of the standards, but are not always clear.	Criteria or descriptors indicate what standards are desired.	Criteria and descriptors both explicitly specify the key standards.

Assessment Rubric

Student: Task: Class/Level:

Criteria:	Novice, Beginning, Naïve, Uncritical, Nearly there	Progressing, Developing, Apprentice, OK	Capable, Competent, Accomplished, Cool	Expert, Advanced, Exemplary, Sophisticated Awesome

Comments: