

Developing Rubrics

First, you need to ask, “Do I need a rubric?”

Stevens & Levi (2013) suggest that if you check off more than 3 items below, then a rubric would be needed:

- € You are getting carpal tunnel syndrome from writing the same comments on almost every student paper.
- € It's 3 a.m. The stack of papers on your desk is fast approaching the ceiling. You're already 4 weeks behind in your grading, and it's clear that you won't be finishing it tonight either.
- € Students often complain that they cannot read the notes you labored so long to produce.
- € You have graded all your papers and worry that the last ones were graded slightly differently from the first ones.
- € You want students to complete a complex assignment that integrates all the work over the term and are not sure how to communicate all the varied expectations easily and clearly.
- € You want students to develop the ability to reflect on ill-structured problems but you aren't sure how to clearly communicate that to them.
- € You give a carefully planned assignment that you never used before and to your surprise, it takes the whole class period to explain it to students.
- € You give a long narrative description of the assignment in the syllabus, and then the students continually ask two to three questions per class about your expectations.
- € You are spending long periods of time with the Writing Center or other tutorial services because the students you sent there are unable to explain the assignments or expectations clearly.
- € You work with your colleagues and collaborate on designing the same assignments for program courses, yet you wonder if your grading scales are different.
- € You've sometimes been disappointed by whole assignments because all or most of your class turned out to be unaware of academic expectations so basic that you neglected to mention them (e.g., the need for citations or page numbers).
- € You have worked very hard to explain the complex end-of-term paper, yet students are starting to regard you as an enemy out to trick them with incomprehensible assignments.
- € You're starting to wonder if they're right.

(pp. 4-5).

What is a rubric?

A rubric is an assessment tool to establish criteria for an assignment. In using this tool and sharing it with your students ahead of time, your grading decisions will be more equitable and efficient, students will be clearer on what the expectations are, and subsequently, it has been

found that student challenges to a grade will lessen since they will be clearer on why a certain grade was achieved.

Basic format

A descriptive title and quick overview

Criterion levels run from high to low and should contain descriptions of what each category would look like if the assignment was a level 1 or level 2 or all the way to the lowest level. There can be anywhere from 3 to 5 levels, but try not to go beyond 5. Levels can be words—Excellent, Competent, Needs Work; letter grades—A, B, C, D, F; or points or a range of points that can be achieved such as 10-8, 7-5, 5-3, 2-0.

Assignment Title and short description

	Criterion level 1	Criterion level 2	Criterion level 3	Criterion level 4
Category				
Category				
Category				

Category labels are the parts of an assignment that you would be grading. Identify first what aspects of the assignment need to be present and those aspects become the categories, such as “introduction,” “organization,” “level of analysis,” “citations,” mechanics.” Also different weights could be assigned to different categories, so for example, “analysis” could be weighted twice as much as “mechanics.” However, if you do this, it should be reflected in the rubric.

Developing your rubric: Need not reinvent the wheel!

Lots of rubrics are available on-line. Check out the following resources:

American Association of Colleges and Universities

<http://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>

This website showcases rubrics on Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Inquiry and Analysis, Oral Communication, Problem Solving, Reading, Teamwork, Written Communication.

Concordia College

<https://www.cord.edu/Offices/Assessment/assets/Samplerubricsfromhigheredinstitutions.pdf>

This website contains sample rubrics from a variety of Higher Education Institutions. Categories include Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Ethics, Leadership, Oral presentations, Problem-solving, Research, Writing, Other (e.g. Case analysis, Class participation).

Also please feel free to contact the Center if you want help to develop a rubric for one of your assignments.

Finally, check out these books on developing rubrics available from the Center's lending library, including the one referenced in the first section above:

Blumberg, P. (2014). *Assessing and improving your teaching: Strategies and rubrics for faculty growth and student learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinlan, A. M. (2012). *A complete guide to rubrics: Assessment made easy for teachers of K-College*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.