



A spotlight on...

What are Rubrics?

Centre for Innovation in Education

Overview

A rubric is a highly effective measurement tool that positions your assessment criteria against a performance level, behaviour, or product. Rubrics can be used for a wide range of assignments such as oral presentations, essays, group projects, etc.

Rubrics usually consist of three elements in the form of a matrix (Eberly Center - Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.):

Criteria

The aspect of performance which will be assessed, such as grammar, clarity of argument, use of theories, etc.

Descriptors

Each dimension should be clearly described; for example the argument is clear and follows a clear logic.

Performance level

A rating scale which demonstrates students' level of skill/knowledge in each criterion.



Rubrics can serve two main purposes (Jonsson & Panadero, 2017)

1. Help educators to achieve a higher level of marking consistency and save time.
2. Help to promote learning and increase feedback literacy by making the assessment criteria and feedback more explicit to students.

There are four types of rubrics (Brophy, n.d.; CARLA, n.d.):

Generic rubrics include criteria which are generic across tasks. They can be reused for different tasks and feedback is not specific.

Task-specific rubrics are used for particular tasks. Their criteria and descriptors are specifically designed for the task and reflect the distinctive aspect of the task.

Analytical rubrics are more commonly used in HE; they provide specific feedback across several dimensions. An analytical rubric includes multiple separated scales as such help educators and students to identify students' strengths and learning needs.



Holistic rubrics present a single score based on students' overall performance/achievement on a task or activity. Holistic rubrics are suitable for large group scoring; however they do not provide detailed information and should be only used when a single dimension rubric is sufficient to describe quality.

Benefits

Rubrics can offer a variety of benefits to students and educators when they designed and used effectively. (Brophy, n.d.; Carless & Boud, 2018; Dawson, 2017; Eberly Center - Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.; O'Neill, 2018)

For educators and assessors, rubrics:

- Achieve consistent scoring/grading, especially with multiple markers. Also supports clarity and reliability in marking and ensures the process is more systematic.
- Save time as educators do not need to write substantive descriptions.
- Allow instructors to assess their own teaching practice by identifying strengths and weaknesses across their class and adjusting their L&T strategies.
- Permit assessment according to marking criteria rather than comparison between students as rubrics are criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced.

For students, rubrics:

- Promote a clear understanding of assessment requirements.
- Clarify educators' expectations.
- Help them to monitor their own progress, identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Support them to be independent learners and help them to self-regulate.
- Help them to estimate their grade before submission.
- Enable them to interpret and use feedback through explicit criteria, consequently improving feedback literacy.

Putting it into practice

To maximise the benefit of the rubrics, provide learners with the rubric from the start of the module. Implement formative assessments and ask students to use the rubric to self-assess or peer-assess. You can also ask students to provide you with feedback on the rubric or even co-design rubrics with them.

This help students to appreciate the criteria and your expectations. In addition, learners gain the opportunity to receive feedback which can be used for their summative assessment (feedback for learning) and help to improve their feedback literacy.

Challenges

- Students may find the language of rubrics challenging, so they need to be supported to develop their ability to interpret rubrics.
- Staff training might be needed to design effective rubrics.
- Designing rubrics can be time-consuming as most effective rubrics are designed collaboratively between the programme team.
- If not used properly, rubrics might make feedback less personalised. As such it should always be accompanied it with written personalized feedback to enable students understand their mark and use the feedback in their future assessment.

Additional resources & references

Can you help us improve this resource or suggest a future one? Do you need this resource in an alternative format? Please contact us at cie@liverpool.ac.uk



www.liverpool.ac.uk/centre-for-innovation-in-education/resources/all-resources/what-are-rubrics.html