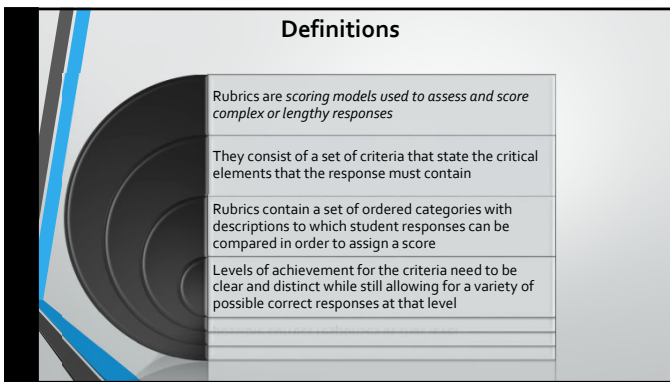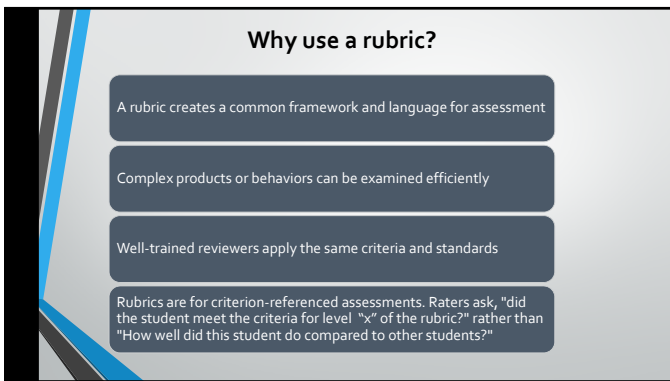# Module 2d: Rubric Design

Passport to Great Teaching
Timothy S. Brophy

Definitions

Rubrics are *scoring models used to assess and score complex or lengthy responses*

They consist of a set of criteria that state the critical elements that the response must contain

Rubrics contain a set of ordered categories with descriptions to which student responses can be compared in order to assign a score

Levels of achievement for the criteria need to be clear and distinct while still allowing for a variety of possible correct responses at that level

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Why use a rubric?

A rubric creates a common framework and language for assessment

Complex products or behaviors can be examined efficiently

Well-trained reviewers apply the same criteria and standards

Rubrics are for criterion-referenced assessments. Raters ask, "did the student meet the criteria for level "x" of the rubric?" rather than "How well did this student do compared to other students?"

Rubric Types

Holistic - this type of rubric has only one general descriptor and provides a single score based on your overall impression of the student's response.

Analytic - An analytic rubric has multiple rating scales, each corresponding to a particular independent criterion, that when added together can provide an overall score.

Holistic Rubrics

Holistic Rubric: A holistic rubric presents a description of each level of achievement and provides a single score based on an overall impression of a student's performance on a task.

Advantages: quick scoring, provides an overview of student achievement, efficient for large group scoring; holistic rubrics are easier to write.

Disadvantages: does not provided detailed information; not diagnostic; may be difficult for scorers to decide on one overall score

Analytic Rubrics

Analytic Rubric: An analytic rubric presents a description of each level of achievement for each criterion, and provides a separate score for each criterion.

Advantages: provides more detailed feedback on student performance; scoring more consistent across students and raters

Disadvantages: more time consuming than applying a holistic rubric

Use when:
- You want to see strengths and weaknesses.
- You want detailed feedback about student performance.

Rubric Development Guidelines

Step 1: *Determine the type of rubric you wish to use – holistic or analytic.*

Step 2: *Identify what you want to assess.* These form the criteria for the assessment. These are usually part of the description of the assignment or task.

Rubric Development Guidelines

Step 3: *Identify the characteristics to be rated (rows) .*

Specify the skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that you will be looking for.
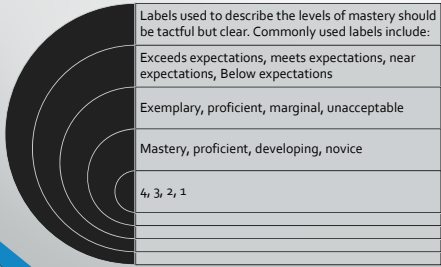
Limit the characteristics to those that are most important to the assessment.

Rubric Development Guidelines

Step 4. Determine how many scoring levels you need to fit your purposes. Four are usually adequate. You can use whatever works best for the item, as long as you ensure that the levels make sense in terms of being in continuum. I recommend no more than 4.

Step 5. Write proficiency descriptors for each level of the rubric, starting with the highest level and working down to the lowest level. It is a good idea to start at the highest level because that is what you expect a successful student will be able to do in response to your outcomes.

Some common rubric levels

Labels used to describe the levels of mastery should be tactful but clear. Commonly used labels include:

Exceeds expectations, meets expectations, near expectations, Below expectations

Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable

Mastery, proficient, developing, novice

4, 3, 2, 1

Rubric Development Guidelines

Focus your descriptions on the presence of the quantity and quality that you expect, rather than on the absence of them. However, at the lowest level, it would be appropriate to state that an element is "lacking" or "absent."

Keep the elements of the description parallel from performance level to performance level. In other words, if your descriptors include quantity, clarity, and details, make sure that each of these outcome expectations is included in each performance level descriptor.

Rubric Development Guidelines

Avoid the use of words that are vague, such as *interesting, well done, creative, imaginative, sufficient, several, numerous, great, okay,* and other words like these.

Be careful not to make the descriptor so detailed and overly specific that it goes beyond the intent of the outcome.

Rubric Development Guidelines

Step 6: *Test the rubric.* Apply the rubric to an assignment; share it with colleagues

Step 7: *Discuss with colleagues. Review feedback and revise.* Important: When developing a rubric, enlist the help of colleagues. Rubrics promote shared expectations and grading practices which benefit faculty members and students in the program.

Rubric Variations

Point system rubrics provide a range of points for each level of achievement; points are given at the scorer's discretion. Each level receives the same number of points.

Weighted point system rubrics are a variation of the point system rubric, where different criteria are "weighted" by assigning different point ranges

Pause to Think

- Have you used a rubric for the assessment of student learning before?
  - If yes, review the rubric. What task do you assess with this rubric? Is it analytic or holistic? How did it meet the guidelines presented in this module?
  - If no, explain why, and describe an example of an assessment that you administer for which you might develop a rubric. What type would you develop? Why do you feel this would be beneficial?