WHAT IS A RUBRIC?

Rubrics are a method of evaluation that provide specific examples to help an evaluator identify and assess learning, based on a number of criteria of interest. They involve direct assessment of learning based on observations made by an evaluator, in alignment with clearly articulated criteria/measurement areas.

WHEN SHOULD I USE A RUBRIC?

IN ORDER TO:
- Effectively communicate task expectations
- Provide meaningful feedback for reflection and improvement
- Generate a fair measure of performance

WHEN YOU:
- Find that you are repeating similar comments on many different assessments
- Are being questioned about expectations even after task completion
- Want to effectively outline standards for both students and assessors prior to and following the task
- Are working directly with participants or have direct access to their work in a program or service, and have the opportunity (time, interaction) to observe and assess their learning or performance.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC PROGRAM / SERVICE ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE AMENABLE TO ASSESSMENT USING RUBRICS INCLUDE:
- Skill practice and development activities (eg. public speaking practice with a group)
- Individual skill developing (eg. mock interview, role play)
- Teamwork / small group processes (peer evaluated rubrics and instructor/facilitator evaluated rubrics could be used)

ORGANIZATION OF A RUBRIC

BELOW IS THE STRUCTURE OF A TYPICAL ANALYTIC RUBRIC
- The criteria are listed along the vertical axis on the left hand side of the matrix
- The rating scale is found along the horizontal axis at the top of the matrix
- Descriptors would be found in the empty boxes between the criteria and each rating level
- Effectively provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses
- Can weigh each criterion based on importance to overall task goal
- Clearly define what success/learning outcomes look like behaviourally, and in a measurable way
### STEPS TO CREATING A RUBRIC

#### 1. Look to the Learning Outcomes You Have Created for the Subject of Evaluation and Crystallize the Goals You Are Trying to Achieve Through This Program/Activity.

The learning outcomes you set for a program or service will inform the criteria you measure / include in your rubric.

- Have you already generated learning outcomes?
- How will these outcomes be measured?
- Why are you evaluating this activity? Are you assigning a grade or measuring the success of a program?
- Do you want to gain meaningful feedback for future improvements and developments?
- What type of feedback would be helpful to participants’ learning and development?
- What would an optimal performance/outcome look like?
- Project purpose(s):

#### 2. Generate the Criteria for Assessment

- Guiding questions to develop criteria:
  - Which skills do you think are utilized during this task?
  - What learning do you want to come from this task?
  - Can you outline the components of the final goal of this task?
  - How will learning from this task be demonstrated?
- Generate a list of criteria – group similar criteria into a more overarching criterion
- Prioritize them and eliminate those of low utility
- Rough guideline for number of criteria: 3-9 (may vary depending on scope of project)
- Characteristics of good criteria:
  - Written with clear and concise language
  - Distinct from each other
  - Able to be measured effectively
  - Central to the goal(s) of the task
  - Aligned with learning outcomes

#### 3. Create the Rating Scale

- The rating scale does not have to be fixed for every criterion – you may vary the number of scale points in a criterion-dependent manner
- Given the task at hand, what are the possible levels of achievement?
Will you assign numerical values for different levels or qualitative descriptions of different levels of achievement, or both?

Is the criterion in question a present-or-absent/all-or-nothing measure? Was the item/behavior in question simply adequate or inadequate for the given task expectations? If so, a two-point rating system will suffice in which expectations were either met or not met.

In order to provide more detailed feedback, a 3 to 5 point system may be employed.

For example: did not meet expectations (below average - bottom 50%), met minimum expectations (average - 50-69%), exceeded expectations (above average - 70-89%), far exceeds expectations (exceptional - 90-100%)

- Rankings are typically relative based on expectations of the groups levels of performance, and how participants perform relative to the overall group (see percentage points above)

- Exercise caution in using 6 or greater scoring levels – be sure that this many levels provide useful feedback especially in terms of each level being distinct from each other when applied to the criteria

- The difference between each level should be consistent in order to avoid confusion

- List the scoring levels from least to greatest

**MAKE DESCRIPTORS FOR EACH RATING LEVEL WITHIN EACH OF THE CRITERIA**

- Does your descriptor provide a description of something measurable and observable?

- Do your descriptors use continuous language for the varying point levels (work with the same shell of a descriptor for each scale point to ensure that you are keeping expectations consistent and just varying the language to reflect the varying degree to which the standards are met)

- Do your descriptors adequately distinguish between the varying degrees to which the expectations are met?

- The three ways degree can vary: amount, frequency, intensity

**EVALUATE THE EFFICACY OF YOUR RUBRIC**

- You can adapt scoring levels and descriptors as you use the rubric and identify varying performance among your participants

- You need to evaluate the efficacy of your rubric after its construction in order to assess its reliability and validity

- Reliability – consistency of your rubric under the same conditions

  - Does your rubric produce consistent scoring across assessors and time points?

  - Two types of reliability: inter- and intra-rater reliability

  - Inter-rater reliability: two different assessors of the same task using the rubric will generate similar scorings

  - Intra-rater reliability: two different assessments at different time points of the same task by the same assessor will generate similar scorings

  - Have two colleagues utilize the rubric you constructed for the same task performance and compare their assessments for similarities and differences

  - Have each of these colleagues re-examine the same task performance over a week later and compare the temporal similarities and differences of each of their assessments
Ask subjects to self-evaluate and peer evaluate performances using the rubric

- **Validity** – how well your rubric measures the aspects it was intended to measure
  - Does your rubric measure what you are trying to assess?
  - Ensure you have good criteria that accurately reflect project goals
  - Content validity – does your rubric cover the essential components of the overall task goal? Ask an expert on the subject if he/she agrees with your criteria selection!
  - Construct validity – do the descriptors and criteria in your rubric accurately reflect the underlying skills and abilities you are trying to measure?
  - Criterion validity – do the scoring outcomes of this rubric transfer to similar skill-requiring situations in the real world/general professional context?
  - Face validity – does the rubric seem valid and appropriate to the people subject to evaluation? Ask for feedback on your feedback tool!

**HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF RUBRICS?**

- Develop unique rubrics for each assessment
- Make rubric copies available to participants when the task is assigned
- In utilizing the rubric, indicate the achieved level of each criterion
- Hand back the rubric and include additional comments not encompassed by the rubric descriptors
- Recognize that rubrics are resource heavy in terms of facilitator / assessor time and level of interaction with participants - not all programs and services are structured in a manner that makes use of rubrics feasible. In these scenarios, consider peer-evaluated rubrics, self-evaluated rubrics, or self-evaluated performance through a pre-post survey (see survey resources).

**USEFUL LINKS**

- **Link: rubric for your rubric** - [http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/4_quality/5_rubric_rubric.htm](http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/4_quality/5_rubric_rubric.htm)

**SOURCES**

- [http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/index.htm](http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/index.htm)
- [https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/assessing-student-learning/designing-rubrics](https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/assessing-student-learning/designing-rubrics)