



RUBRICS

Dr Zita Lysaght

School of Policy and Practice, IoE, DCU

What are rubrics? A parsed definition -

- They are scoring guides
- Typically designed and used to assess the quality of students' work (though they can serve developmental, diagnostic, self- and co-regulatory functions too if integrated with teaching and learning)
- Consisting of:
 - (a) assessment/performance criteria or indicators
 - (b) descriptions of the different standards (which may be detailed or sparse depending on the type of rubric developed), levels of quality or degrees of mastery, linked with, and reflective of, learning objectives
 - (c) an underlying scoring system (with or without weighted elements depending on whether different elements of the assessment are to be awarded more marks than others)

‘Typical’ format

- Tabular(Created in Word or Excel, e.g., [Rubistar](#), [iRubric](#))
- Column 1: Lists criteria (reflecting LOs/objectives)
- Row 1: Describes levels of achievement/performance (using words and/or numbers/percentages)
- Linked with/underpinned by a scoring strategy or guide which, ideally, is shared

Performance Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Criterion A				
Criterion B				
Criterion C				
Criterion D				
Criterion E				

Examples of some different types of rubrics

1. Analytic rubrics
2. Developmental rubrics
3. Holistic rubrics

* More details of each of these types of rubrics follow on separate slides

1. **Analytic Rubrics:** Detailed, criterion-referenced assessment; with/without weighted dimensions; sections marked independently, then totalled (e.g., a performance assessment such as *Giving a Speech*: criteria employed might include *content, presentation, articulation* etc.)
2. **Developmental Rubrics:** Assessment of evolving/developing or incremental knowledge, competence, skill, attitudes (e.g., evidence of increasing confidence in classroom management over the period of a 4-year degree); does not necessarily include a formal assessment, grade or score - may be used for formative (ongoing feedback) purposes only
3. **Holistic Rubrics:** Assessment is of the assignment or piece of work as a whole/holistically (e.g., a piece of art, a research proposal...); focus is on the overall standard of the work

1. Analytic rubrics

- Fine-grained, typically comprising multiple rating scales (e.g., *an essay: presentation, organisation, content...*) yielding sub-scores contributing to a composite grade/award (e.g., Pass/Fail; A, B, C, D, E; 1(1),2(2) etc.)
- Criteria can be easily weighted to reflect relative importance of different elements of the assessment (e.g., *content = 25% vs. grammar = 10% etc.*)
- Provide clarity re. expectations and gradations in levels of achievement (important to focus on achievements rather than deficits in phrasing these)
- Support interrater reliability where multiple markers are involved (assuming subjective language is avoided such as *Excellent, Very Good...*)
- May be used formatively/diagnostically (e.g., if students self-assess using relevant elements of the rubric when submitting draft) and/or summatively
- May support self- and/or peer-assessment/review, self - and/or co-regulation
- May support differentiated and/or ‘chunked’ learning

2. Developmental rubrics

- Similar to analytic rubrics though tighter, more delineated, focus
- Assume intimate knowledge of typical/indicative developmental pathway(s) and/or learning progression(s)
- Particularly useful for formative and diagnostic purposes - typically not used for summative purposes
- Support self- and/or peer-assessment/review and self - and/or co-regulation

** These rubrics are used far less frequently than either holistic or analytic rubrics

3. Holistic rubrics

- Fairly general/broad-brush, typically comprising one overarching rating scale
- Signpost the key elements/criteria on which assessment will be based and, infrequently, signal the relative importance of different elements of the assessment (i.e., the weights attached)
- Fairly easy/quick to create and use (fewer assessment decisions to be made)
- Allow a degree of subjectivity and flexibility in interpretation and marking (high interrater reliability - assuming norming/moderation is undertaken)
- May support some self- and/or peer-discussion/review
- Relatively easy to craft, communicate and adjust/revise (if required)

Form follows function

Some guiding questions to consider when deciding whether to use a rubric and, if so, what type...

1. What knowledge, skills, concepts and/or attitudes are you trying to assess? How explicit can (or do) you want to be?
2. What is the nature of the assessment you are using (formative, summative, performance, authentic, paper and pencil...)?
3. Does the proposed mode of assessment lend itself to the use of a rubric? If so, how/why?
4. How will the rubric be created? Who will be involved (you - with/without colleagues and/or students)? Why? Practicalities, e.g., timing?
5. How will the rubric be 'road-tested' /normed? What if the rubric doesn't capture/assess what you need/want to assess (transparency re. language..., fairness, reliability and validity)? Practicalities, e.g., revisions/amendments?
6. What use(s) will the rubric serve: diagnostic, formative, summative, self- and/or peer-assessment and regulation? Will its use align with the module objectives and pedagogy? If so, how? Implications for teaching and learning....

Typical steps in developing a rubric

1. Consult your module descriptor and learning outcomes
2. Decide on the type of rubric you will use/create (typically, analytic or holistic)
3. List the demonstrable knowledge, skills, concepts and/or attitudes you expect your students to have mastered by engaging in the module (the evaluation criteria - left column in an analytic rubric)
4. Select your performance/quality levels (e.g., 1st, 2(1), 2(2)... or *Mastered*, *Advanced*, *In process* etc. - top row in an analytic rubric)
5. Write detailed or holistic descriptors for each level with/without numerical scores; identify weights to be added, if appropriate (body of the table)
6. Road-test, norm, moderate, apply and review.

And finally

- There is no shortage of rubrics: the web is dotted with them
(A Google search using the term “rubrics” on 20/3/2020 indicated that there were about 124,000,000 sites!)
- Some are *very good*; some are *not so good*; the good ones can be a very useful starting point when you need to develop a new rubric.