**Rubrics**

This resource will help you understand what rubrics are and how they are used to help assess performance. It describes the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics and includes a step-by-step process to help you create your own rubric.   
  
If you would like to take a deeper dive into rubrics, at the end of this document is a link to additional information.

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a framework – usually a matrix or grid, made up of a set of criteria and standards that describe an expected level of performance. They can be used for written or practical work to help guide your assessment judgements. They are most useful when you have a task or assessment where you want to reduce subjectivity.

Rubrics have three components:

1. A set of criteria that describe the overall objective, behaviour, or quality.
2. A range of different performance levels that could be numerical, descriptive or both.
3. A range of different descriptors that differentiate between the different levels of achievement for each criteria.

The performance levels are determined by the rubric designer. For some, a simple ‘competent’ versus ‘not yet competent’ may be all that is required. Other rubrics may show performance using a numerical scale (1-5), or a range of terms such as beginner, intermediate, advanced. Some rubrics will contain both, such as those shown below for a history research paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Excellent (3 points)** | **Good (2 points)** | **Poor (1 point)** |
| Number of sources | Ten to twelve | Five to nine | One to four |
| Historical accuracy | No apparent inaccuracies | Few inaccuracies | Many historical inaccuracies |
| Organisation | Can easily tell from which sources information was drawn | Can tell with difficulty from where information came | Cannot tell from which source information came |
| Bibliography | All relevant bibliographic information is included | Bibliography contains most relevant information | Bibliography contains very little information |

The purpose of a rubric and why are they important

Rubrics are used to help assess performance. Rather than being used to ‘evaluate’ performance, the idea behind them is that you match the performance to the description. This takes away the subjective nature of assessment, making it easier for the assessor to mark. It also makes expectations for the learner fairer and more transparent.

Rubrics are handed out to learners during an assessment task so they are clear on the expectations and assessment criteria *before* they are assessed.

They can be used to help trainers apply consistency across their marking. They can also help trainers differentiate between several learner’s performances and justify their assessment.

Rubrics are useful for learners to use as self-assessment tools and for peer-assessments. In this way, learners are more aware of the assessment process and can improve their ability to assess their own work.

Advantages

* Learners are clear on what is expected so can take more responsibility for where to focus their own learning and assessment.
* They allow for consistent assessment and provide specific feedback to the learner about their performance.
* If working with a team of trainers (more than one), rubrics support the use of having a shared language of assessment and aid consistency across several assessors.
* Rubrics can highlight a gap or area that needs more support and enable trainers to target this.

Disadvantages

* Some knowledge and skills are easier to create a rubric for than others. Higher levels of understanding (for example evaluating or creating) can be difficult to specify exact criteria and standards.
* Breaking down an assessment into its individual units can be complicated and time-consuming. This can increase the marking workload for trainers.
* If learners only rely on the rubric to assess their own work, it can limit their creativity and contribution.

Creating your own rubrics

Use describing words (adjectives) or numbers to create your level of performance. Be aware that some adjectives may influence a learners’ interpretation of their performance level (such as superior, poor, or below average).

Think about what the performance levels mean. For example, will learners need to re-submit or repeat if they achieve at the lower end of performance, or will they fail? This is where descriptors such as ‘not yet competent’ are useful. Consider how achievement levels will translate to overall grades in your course.

Your descriptors need to be as clear and explicit as possible, so learners are clear on what they need to do to achieve each level of performance. Good descriptors will make marking the learner’s work much easier.

The following steps show how to design your own rubric.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step 1.**  **Identify the performance to be assessed** | * Is there a task or assignment where you want to reduce subjectivity? * Is the task authentic and related to real learning goals or objectives? * Is it meaningful or real-world? * Is the type of assessment right to demonstrate the performance criteria? |
| **Step 2.**  **List your criteria** | * Brainstorm all the behaviours, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that make up the task. These must be observable. * Chunk similar criteria together and eliminate others until you have a range of criteria that describe the task required. * Make sure the list is manageable and reasonable. |
| **Step 3.**  **Write descriptions for your criteria** | * Focus on the learning skills that make up the task, not on task-completion. * Keep the learning skills brief, easy to understand and in a logical order for your learner to follow. |
| **Step 4.**  **Determine your performance levels** | * Performance levels must explain what the performance looks like at each distinct level. * Make sure your words are measurable, objective and reflect the performance. |
| **Step 5.**  **Develop scores (if applicable)** | * Use a numerical scale with fewer levels to start with. This can help distinguish more clearly between achievement levels. |
| **Step 6.**  **Write your descriptors** | * It is assumed a learner has achieved previous levels of performance for each descriptor they achieve. * Only write descriptors for each subsequent description of performance. |
| **Step 7.**  **Evaluate your rubric** | * Make sure it fits the goals and objectives of your task each time you use it. * Re-write or clarify those sections learners have struggled with in the past. * Ask for student feedback. |

How to use rubrics

The following are tips for using rubrics.

* It is important learners receive the rubric before the assessment begins. This way they know what is expected of them and where to focus their efforts.
* Where possible, have learners contribute to creating the rubric – what do they think forms a valid part of the assessment?
* Encourage learners to use the rubric to assess themselves and their peers.
* Provide feedback in a way that reflects the rubric so it is more meaningful.
* Some online platforms allow the use of rubrics to be included in assignments.

Additional information on rubrics

Below is a link to additional information on rubrics. It includes videos introducing you to assessment rubrics and tips to design them. It also includes examples of draft and completed assessment rubrics, as well as additional resources to help you when designing your rubrics.  
  
<https://course.oeru.org/ctvsd2/learning-projects/develop-assessment-rubrics/understand-rubrics/>