

How to Develop a Rubric

As faculty members, we are frequently faced with student questions about why they received a certain grade on written assignments, oral presentations, and projects. We usually know what we are looking for when we grade these assignments but all too often students challenge the grades they receive. One way to lessen these complaints is to use a rubric (grading guide) that lists the criteria and the areas of focus for grading. A rubric is an appropriate method to use to assess students if your learning outcomes involve the synthesizing information, learning of new techniques or methods, analyzing problems, writing papers, or giving oral presentations. The steps that follow are provided as a guide for you to use to develop rubrics. If you would like to meet with a consultant to further discuss rubric development, please contact the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence.

Step One:

Revisit the Assignment Learning Outcomes

- What should students know or be able to do based on the outcomes?

Determine the Areas You Want to Assess

- What are the key areas that you want to “grade” as part of the assignment?

Step Two:

Establish Standards for Each Performance Area

- What do the different levels of performance look like within each category of assessment?
 - o To get started, think of the highest and lowest levels of performance in each category.
 - o Once the highs and lows are completed, add the middle-range(s)
- Try to avoid relying on comparative language when distinguishing among performance levels.
 - o For example, do not define the highest level of performance as *thorough and accurate* and the middle level of performance as *less thorough and less accurate*.
 - o Find qualities and descriptors that are unique to each performance standard.

Step Three:

Develop a Scoring Scale

- How many score levels do you want to use?
 - o Score levels should be based on the performance standards that you set up in step two and your grading philosophy for the assignment.
 - o Clearly define the difference between the score levels.

- The scoring scale should be consistent across all key components when using an analytic rubric.
 - o For example, a score of 4 for one area should be comparable to a score of 4 in another area. If this is not the case then, you should use a weighted rubric.

Step Four:

Adjust the Rubric as Needed

- After each use of the rubric, evaluate whether it needs adjustment in the key components, standards for performance, or the scoring scale.
- Your students can be involved in all stages of the rubric development process to promote further involvement in assessment.