Designing Rubrics for Assessment Tasks

What is a Rubric?

Rubrics, also known as marking criteria, identify the standards of performance that are expected in relation to a particular assessment task. They are central to a criteria-referenced marking approach in which each student's work is judged in relation to pre-established criteria.

Why use a Rubric?

1. A carefully designed rubric (often presented as a matrix) communicates **to students** the elements expected in their work in relation to a particular grade or mark range. It helps to show students what achievement looks like in relation to a specific grade.

   Rubrics or criteria improve transparency and fairness in the assessment process because students can see what they need to produce to attain a specific grade.

   Rubrics also provide a tool for students to check and review their assessments before submission so they can be used to encourage the development of self-assessment competencies.

2. A rubric provides standards for **academics** to **reference** when they are allocating marks. If there is more than one marker for a particular assessment task, a rubric helps to establish shared understanding of standards of performance and thereby assists consistency. For individual markers, the use of a rubric provides some protection against personal bias and also helps to achieve **consistency** when marking a task at different times.

3. A rubric with well-defined categories and standards of performance provides a shared precise language for academics t**o give feedback to students** on the quality of their performance in relation to different components of an assessment task. The rubrics can provide a systematic tool for providing feedback that is also depersonalized. For example:

   Your writing was grammatically correct and the ideas were well structured. Your writing meets all the requirements for an A grade. You were required to present three key ideas with supporting evidence in your discussion. For your third idea, the challenge of achieving both sustainability and profit was explained clearly, but you did not provide supporting evidence. This is why this part of your work did not meet the requirements for an A Grade. This would be easy to rectify and I suggest that you look up this evidence in preparing for the examination.

   The rubric can also be used to give generalized feedback to a whole class in relation to particular categories and standards of performance.

4. A rubric with well-designed set of performance standards also provides an **objective tool for dialogue** with students about their marks and possible reassessment especially when they may be contesting their marks. If the assessment needs to be sent to another marker then the standards for marking are consistent.

How to Design a Rubric?

There are two broad types of rubrics or models for criteria. These are Analytical and Holistic rubrics.

Analytical Rubric

In this type of rubric, the task requirements are broken up into a number of categories (dimensions) and standards of performance are established for each category.

Example of an analytical rubric for an oral presentation:

Dimensions/ Categories	Standards of Performance			
	Excellent	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Unacceptable**
Content	Refers to all key points on topic. Each point supported by a relevant example.	Refers to all key points on topic. Examples are provided, but some of the examples need to be explained in more detail.	Most key points are covered but one or two important aspects are omitted. Examples are used but need to be presented in more detail.	Does not cover relevant key points. Key ideas are not supported by examples.
Organisation and structure	The logic of the discussion is clear and well-chosen cues are provided to the listeners to help them follow the logic.	The logic of the discussion is clear and cues are generally provided to assist the listeners to follow the steps in the argument. Cues are occasionally missing.	The overall structure is clear, but some of the sequence of ideas needs rethinking. Needs to provide additional explicit cues for the listeners.	The structure of the discussion is not evident and ideas are presented in a confusing order. There are no explicit cues to help the listener to follow the ideas.
Delivery	Voice is varied and shows enthusiasm Appropriate gestures are used and eye contact is maintained throughout.	Voice is varied and shows interest. Uses some appropriate gestures and generally maintains eye contact.	Voice shows interest in the subject, but there could be more variation in tone and emphasis. More gestures could be used for emphasis. Generally, maintains eye contact.	Little variation in voice. Minimal use of appropriate gesture. Presentation is mostly read and there is minimal eye contact.
Appropriate-ness for audience	Language and examples are well chosen for the specified audience.	Most language is suitable for the specified audience. Occasional use of textbook language.	Some of the language and vocabulary has been adapted to suit the audience, but much is not well chosen.	Language and vocabulary is not suitable for audience.

Holistic Rubric

This type of rubric focuses on the overall quality of a piece of work and does not break the task expectations down into different categories (dimensions).

For example, for an oral presentation, a holistic rubric would look something like this:

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unacceptable
The presentation covers all the required points, is well-structured and delivered in a persuasive manner.	The presentation deals with most of the required points, is clearly organized and delivered well.	The presentation deals with some of the required points, can usually be followed and is delivered in an acceptable manner but without particular enthusiasm.	The required points are not covered, the order is confusing and delivery is not clear.

Advantage of Analytical Rubrics

Analytical rubrics help marking precision and consistency and provide detailed specifics for giving feedback to students on their assessments. They can be time-consuming to construct and use.

Advantage of Holistic Rubrics

These can provide a quick an easy guide for marking when there is a need for prompt feedback on a simple task. With this type of rubric, it can be hard to mark accurately, give precise feedback or justify the decision to award a particular mark.

Designing an Analytical Rubric

1. Based on the assessment task instructions, **decide on the key dimensions** that you will want to use in your rubric.

   Example: Tourism and Hospitality Assessment Task

   Design a brochure for a hotel or resort to illustrate the main components of this tourist destination, the "destination mix" (Attractions, Amenities, Activities, Access and Accommodation). These five components should be easily identifiable through the type of visuals and language used. The brochure needs to be visually appealing, use catchy language that is appropriate for identified markets, and clearly highlight the resort's offerings in relation to the destination mix. The brochure must be accompanied by a short set of explanatory notes that indicate the following:
   - *Type of resort selected*
   - *Identified market (age bracket/domestic/international/socio-economic group)*
   - *References and resources used*

   These instructions determine the dimensions of the rubric such as: Content; Visuals; Language; and Accompanying Notes. These dimensions form the **rows** of your rubric

2. Decide on the levels of achievement/standards of performance and what you will call them. Most rubrics use four levels of achievement which can be labelled in different ways such as: Excellent; Good; Satisfactory; and Unsatisfactory. These levels of achievement form the **columns** of your rubric.

The rubric for this task would look like this:

Dimensions/ Categories	Standards of Performance			
	Excellent	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Unsatisfactory**
Content	Components of destination mix very clearly illustrated.	Most of the components of the destination mix are clearly illustrated.	Some of the components of the destination mix are illustrated while others are not apparent.	The brochure does not show the components of the destination mix
Visuals	The visuals are eye-catching and precisely chosen to illustrate the components. The layout helps to highlight the main ideas.	The visuals are well-chosen to illustrate the key components. The layout helps to highlight the main ideas.	Some of the visuals illustrate the components well. In some instances, the visuals do not support the ideas clearly. The layout does not undermine the ideas	The visuals do not reflect the key ideas. Layout is muddled and makes ideas difficult to see.
Language	The language is clear, free from grammatical flaws and well suited for the intended market.	The language is clear and there are only a few minor errors. Generally, the language is well-chosen for the target market. There are a few examples of words that do not suit the intended audience.	The language is generally clear, but there are some errors that affect the meaning. Some of the language is chosen to suit the audience, but this aspect needs more work.	The language is difficult to follow, has many errors and is not chosen to suit the audience
Accompanying Notes	Notes establish clearly all the relevant information about the chosen resort and identify the demographics of the target market. Resources and references are identified and the ways in which they have informed the brochure design are explained.	The information about the chosen resort is established and most of the information about the target market is provided. References and resources are provided and heir use explained. There are just a few gaps in the explanations.	The basics about the chosen resort and target market are provided. There are some gaps in the information and the writing is not always clear. Some resources and references are given but how they are used is not always demonstrated	The information about the chosen resort and target market is not clear and difficult to follow. There is very little information given about references and resources and how they were used to inform the brochure.

Rubric Design: Some Tips

It is helpful to begin with the levels of achievement/standards of performance for the best work for each dimension, followed by the minimum levels of achievement. Then the other levels of achievement can be worked out in relation to these.

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