Rubrics

Purpose

The purpose of a rubric is to clearly identify the criteria for assessing students work and provide qualitative and descriptive ratings. It is one process for the evaluation of student work and assists in building accountability. For the instructor it clarifies and simplifies the grading process after the initial rubric has been developed and shared with the students. Often students feel the assignment of a grade is arbitrary or subjective, but through this process the grade becomes explicit and objective. A rubric can also be used for students to complete a self assessment of their work or to have students participate in a peer review process.

Process

First the assignment/performance must be clearly stated with details for the expectation of student work. Then the criteria/dimensions need to be listed (this varies by project). For an essay, criteria might include organization and coherence, style, and mechanics. For a class presentation it might include communication skills, engagement of the audience and visuals, including PowerPoint. This is usually listed along the left hand column. Some instructors assign a weighting to each criteria. For example, student engagement with the audience could be 40% while use of visuals could be 20%.

Next the rating scale is determined with usually a three to four point scale. Ratings vary from exceptional to weak, numerical from 4 (highest) to 1, or grades A to F. These ratings are listed at the top along the horizontal axis. The descriptors for each level are included in each cell (see example). Using the UC Davis Grading Rubric for a Term Paper, for example, in the category of Mechanics it states “almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors for an A paper to “usually contains so many mechanical errors that it is impossible for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence for an F paper.” Descriptors are provided for each level.

In the reference below (Stevens and Levi, 2005) five models for development of a rubric are discussed. In the first, the rubric is solely developed by the instructor and then shared with the student. The second method asks for student feedback and allows changes to the rubric. In the Pass-the-Hat model, the student writes on a slip of paper the characteristic of an A paper, etc. Then the instructor assembles these into a grid. The Post it Model requires students to work in groups to create the criteria/dimensions. In the 4 x 4 model, students are given the grid and complete the components and the rating scale, usually in groups of four. Then a spokesperson from each group presents the work and the group votes on the best grid.

References


Resources

- www.winona.edu/air/rubrics.htm
- www.howard.edu/library/ASSIST/GUIDES/rubrics/default.htm
- www.ce.udel.edu/ABET

- An exhaustive resource for rubrics compiled from multiple universities across the US on multiple topics from case students to health care rubrics. This is a great starting place.

- A compendium of links to rubrics from universities throughout the US on a myriad of topics. Excellent examples for the initial creation of rubrics.

- This web site provides twelve generic outcomes which are then link to rubrics with five levels of performance. Outcomes include knowledge of professional practice to ability to function in a multidisciplinary team.