

# Creating Rubrics

*Office of Institutional  
Effectiveness and Assessment*



**OLD DOMINION**  
UNIVERSITY

# Creating Rubrics and Prompts

- This type of assessment requires
  - describing performance levels expected to progress toward and reach learning goals and
  - writing clear, well-defined assignments to prompt good performances.
- First, let's look at rubrics, the term derived from the Latin for red earth – easy to relate to marking assignments with red ink



# Creating Rubrics

---

- What exactly is a rubric?
  - A standardized scoring guide
  - Identifies important criteria and levels of success for each criterion
  - Describes qualitative as well as quantitative differences
  - Generally used to assess assignments, projects, portfolios, term papers, internships, essay tests, performances, etc. – “performance” assessment



# Creating Rubrics

---

- Why use a rubric?
  - To improve grading:
    - More unbiased, accurate and consistent
    - Easier and faster
  - To improve student learning:
    - Better understanding of the assignment and what is expected
    - Encouragement for improved performance and better grades



# Creating Rubrics

---

- What are the different types of rubrics?
  - **Checklists** (check-off of accomplishments as completed/present – the simplest type of rubric)
  - **Rating Scales** (add scoring scale along a continuum)
  - **Descriptive Rubrics** (add brief descriptions of levels of performance for each component/criterion)
  - **Holistic Scoring Guides** (use short narratives to focus on the entire performance rather than the components)



# Sample Checklist

---

## A Checklist Rubric for a Web Site (excerpt)

- The purpose of the site is obvious.
  - The site's structure is clear and intuitive.
  - Each page loads quickly.
  - The design is clean, uncluttered, and engaging.
- 



# Sample Rating Scale

## A Rating Scale for an Oral Presentation

The presenter...	SA	A	D	SD
Clearly stated the purpose of the presentation.				
Had main points that were appropriate to central topic.				
Answered questions authoritatively.				



# Sample Descriptive Rubric

## Rubric for Research Report (content component)

**Exemplary:** Information is presented clearly, completely, and accurately across all sections.

**Good:** Information is unclear and difficult to understand in one section.

**Barely Adequate:** Information is unclear and difficult to understand in two to three sections.

**Inadequate:** The paper is unclear and difficult to understand across four or more sections.





# Sample Holistic Scoring Guide

## Holistic Scoring Guide for Students in Ballet (top)

- A. Active learner
- B. Enthusiastic
- C. Very energetic
- D. Fully engaged in every class
- E. Able to accept corrections
- F. Able to make and synthesize corrections
- G. Able to maintain corrections
- H. Able to self-assess
- I. Shows continuous improvement in major problem areas
- J. Connects movement sequences well
- K. Demonstrates strong dynamic phrasing
- L. Continuously demonstrates correct ...



# Creating Rubrics

---

- What are the steps in creating a rubric?
  - Define the focus / topic / task / learning goal
  - List the criteria for assessing the performance
    - 3 - 8 characteristics
    - Clearly written with action verbs
  - Write descriptions for the levels of performance
    - Usually 3 - 5 levels
    - Define top level first, then bottom level, and finally middle level(s)
  - Test rubric



# Creating Rubrics

---

- What language might appear in scales?
  - Exemplary / Proficient / Developing / Emerging
  - Expert / Professional / Amateur / Novice
  - Exceeds Standards / Meets Standards / Approaching Standards / Beneath Standards
  - Superior / Excellent / Satisfactory / Needs Work
  - Advanced / Accomplished / Adequate / Needs Work
  - Exceptional / Excellent / Acceptable / Needs Improvement



# Creating Rubrics

---

- How might you start to formulate a rubric?
  - Search literature and Internet for existing rubrics – we'll see some of these later on
  - Use examples of students' work to identify defining criteria and levels of competence
  - Work with a committee or consult with colleagues
  - See if your professional association has either a rubric bank or performance standards/criteria



# Using Rubrics

---

- In what context might a rubric be used?
  - Designed by one faculty member for assignment(s) in a single course
  - Designed by faculty committee for grading common assignments across course sections (e.g., speeches in Public Speaking)
  - Designed by committee for use by multiple raters for assessment of more global skills / higher order skills (e.g., critical thinking)



# Using Rubrics

Performance assessment, giving direct evidence of student learning – most common use

- Embedded course assignments
- Capstone experiences
- Field experiences
- Portfolios

Useful in other ways:

- Collaboration and coaching
- Self-assessment
- Peer evaluations
- Analysis of electronic discussion threads
- Employer ratings of recent graduates

# Using Rubrics

---

- How do you fine tune your use of rubrics?
  - Initial practice (especially if multiple raters)
  - Establishment of inter-rater reliability
  - Detection of scoring errors and biases
  - Development of exemplars and anchors
  - Assignment of weights for levels



# Creating Rubrics

- **Practice** – Small groups
  - Create rubric for assessing critical thinking from final papers in a capstone course
    - Define critical thinking
    - 1-3 criteria that define critical thinking
    - 3-5 levels of performance
  - Share





# Creating Rubrics & Prompts

---

- Having created a rubric to effectively measure students' performances, what do you need to tell students in the assignment to “prompt” their best performance?
- Next, writing clear and well-defined prompts...



# Creating Prompts

- A prompt is an assignment that is:
  - Clearly stated, well defined
  - Much more detailed than “write a 20 page term paper on a topic of your choice”
- Example – “**Assignment:** Are people motivated to achieve by personal satisfaction rather than by money or fame? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.”  
(College Board)



# Creating Prompts

- Why are prompts important?
  - Enhance student learning
  - Increase chances for success in completing the assignment
  - Make assignments worth reading or viewing or grading from a faculty perspective
  - Evoke a common basis for response so that different embedded assignments can be scored using the same rubric



# Creating Prompts

---

- How do you go about creating a prompt?
  - Identify specific learning goals – creating the rubric first will help
  - Create a meaningful / real task or problem
  - Write clear, detailed directions for completing the assignment
  - Identify expectations for successfully completing the assignment – share the rubric!



# Creating Prompts

---

- **Practice** – Small groups
  - Create a prompt for assessing critical thinking from final papers in a capstone course
    - Creative / real task or problem
    - Specific directions
    - Expectations
  - Share



# Sample Prompt

---

- Task Description: Each student will make a 5-minute presentation on the changes in one Portland community over the past thirty years.
- The student may focus the presentation in any way he or she wishes, but there needs to be a thesis of some sort, not just a chronological exposition.
- The presentation should include appropriate photographs, maps, graphs, and other visual aids for the audience.



# Sample Scoring Scheme

	Excellent	Competent	Needs Work
Knowledge 20%			
Thinking/inquiry 30%		Each cell in the table would have a clear, detailed description of what performance that would exemplify that scoring level	
Communication 20%			
Visual aids use 20%			
Presentation skills 10%			



# References

This presentation was given by Worth, P. & Yerian, J. (2005, March) *Creating rubrics and prompts: Re-opening the assessment toolbox*. Presentation at Virginia Assessment Group: Spring Drive-in.

- Suskie, L. (2004). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc. (Chapters 7 & 8)
- Rogers, S., & Graham, S. (1998). *The high performance toolbox: Succeeding with performance tasks, projects, and assessments*. Evergreen, CO: Peak Learning Systems, Inc. (Chapter 7)
- Stevens, D., & Levi, A. (2005) *Introduction to rubrics*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC

