

Module 2: Curriculum & Assessment

Unit 3: Developing Rubrics



Objectives:

Pre-service teachers should be able to develop and apply knowledge- and performance-based rubrics that allow teachers to assess students' understanding of key subject matter concepts, skills and processes (UNESCO ICT CFT, KD.2.b).



Duration:

Total of 3 notional hours – 1 hour lecture & 2 hours self study



A] Lecture (Total 1 hour)

Notes to Lecturer

You will need to prepare a one-hour lecture that provides students with an overview of 'rubrics' (see content below for ideas). Students should develop an understanding of the role rubrics play as an assessment tool as well as when and how they should be used. On completion of the lecture, students should not only be able to recognise the difference between low and high quality rubrics but also feel adequately prepared to begin creating rubrics in the next unit.

When we assess a learning process or a student product, we look for evidence of learning. We need ways in which we can compare the evidence with the intended outcomes of learning. There are different ways to do this, e.g. lists of criteria, a memorandum and a rubric.¹ [CC: BY-ND]

Rubrics are now one of the most widely used assessment tools. Their strength is based on the fact that they are able to provide a clear description of the desired skills and/or knowledge. Therefore they are often considered good tools for providing formative feedback to the learner.² [CC: BY-ND]

¹ SchoolNet SA, South African Department of Education, & South African Institute for Distance Education. (2010). *Commonwealth Educators' Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolnet.org.za>.

² SchoolNet SA, South African Department of Education, & South African Institute for Distance Education. (2010). *Commonwealth Educators' Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolnet.org.za>.

What is a Rubric?³ [CC: BY SA]

A rubric is an assessment tool for communicating expectations of quality. Rubrics support student self-reflection and self-assessment as well as communication between assessor and assessee. A rubric is a set of criteria and standards typically linked to learning objectives and that is used to assess or communicate about product, performance or process tasks.

A rubric is an attempt to communicate expectations of quality around a task. In many cases, rubrics are used to delineate consistent criteria for grading. Because the criteria are public, a rubric allows teachers and students alike to evaluate criteria, which can be complex and subjective. A rubric can also provide a basis for self-evaluation, reflection and peer review. It is aimed at accurate and fair assessment, fostering understanding and indicating the way to proceed with subsequent learning/teaching. This integration of performance and feedback is called ongoing assessment or formative assessment.

A rubric can best support the teaching and learning process when it is shared with the learner at the beginning of the task creation or development process. When students are apprised of grading criteria from the start, they can be more involved in the process of working toward success. Additionally, a rubric developed with learners can increase their understanding of the task and the expectations around quality.

Rubrics are generally thought to promote more consistent grading or marking and to develop self-evaluation skills in students as they monitor their performance relative to the rubric. However, rubrics are not without their critics who are concerned that rubrics can never truly capture the complexity of written work. If rubrics are to be useful, they must capture all the actual objectives of an assignment.

The following common features of rubrics can be distinguished:

- Focus on measuring a stated objective (performance, behaviour or quality);
- Use a range to rate performance;
- Contain specific performance characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which a standard has been met.

How to Design a Rubric⁴

Rubrics help students become thoughtful evaluators of their own and others' work and reduce the amount of time teachers spend evaluating students' work. Here is a seven-step method to creating and using a rubric for writing assignments.

1. The first step is to have students look at models of good versus '*not-so-good*' work. A teacher could provide sample assignments of variable quality for students to review.
2. The second step is to list the criteria to be used in the rubric and allow for discussion of what counts as quality work. Asking for student feedback during the creation of the list also allows the teacher to globally assess the students' writing experiences.
3. The third step in creating a rubric is to articulate gradations of quality. These hierarchical categories should concisely describe the levels of quality (ranging from bad to good). They can be based on the discussion of the good versus not-so-good work samples. Using a conservative number of gradations keeps the rubric user friendly while allowing for fluctuations that exist within the average range

³ Wikipedia. (2011) Rubric (academic). Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_\(academic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_(academic))

⁴ Wikipedia. (2011) Rubric (academic). Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_\(academic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_(academic))

(‘Creating Rubrics’).

4. The fourth step in creating a rubric is to practice on models. Students can test the rubrics on sample assignments provided by the instructor. This practice can build a student’s confidence by teaching them how the instructor would use the rubric on their papers. It can also facilitate student/teacher agreement on the reliability of the rubric.
5. The fifth step is to ask for peer and self-assessment.
6. The sixth step is to revise the work based on that feedback. As students are working on their assignment, they can be stopped occasionally to do a self-assessment and then give and receive evaluations from their peers. Revisions should be based on the feedback they receive.
7. The seventh and final step is to use teacher assessment, which means using the same rubric the students used to assess their work.

Now let us look at two different rubric designs:

Compare the two rubrics below, which both assess oral communication⁵ [CC: BY-ND]

Class Activity Part 1: Spend some time reviewing the oral presentation rubric.

<i>Oral Presentation Rubric</i>			
Oral Presentation Rubric	Possible Points	Self-Assessment	Self-Assessment
Provided in-depth coverage of topic.	10		
Presentation was well planned and coherent.	10		
Presenters show evidence of critical thinking.	10		
Communication aids were clear and useful.	10		
Bibliography	10		
Total Possible Points	50		

- Notice the relative lack of description in the criteria.
- There is some indication of how to assign the 10 marks in each case, but this is very generic.
- Allowance is made for self-assessment as well as teacher assessment.

Class Activity Part 2: Review the rubric for assessing oral communication skills.

<i>Assessing Oral Communication Skills</i>			
Awareness of Audience			
Novice (1)	Apprentice (2)	Proficient (3)	Distinguished (4)
Information fails to increase audience	Information raises audience understanding	Information raises audience understanding	Information significantly increases

⁵ SchoolNet SA, South African Department of Education, & South African Institute for Distance Education. (2010). Commonwealth Educators' Network. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolnet.org.za>

understanding. Fails to effectively convince the audience.	and knowledge of some points. Point of view may be clear but lacks development.	and knowledge of most points. Point of view is clear, but inconclusive.	audience understanding and knowledge of topic. Effectively convinces audience of point of view.
Strength of Material			
Novice (1)	Apprentice (2)	Proficient (3)	Distinguished (4)
Content is not clearly defined. Very weak support of subject through examples and supporting information.	Attempts to define purpose and subject. Weak examples and supporting information does not adequately support the subject.	Information logical and has some success in defining the purpose. Some examples support the subject.	Clearly defined purpose. Consistently good logic. Pertinent examples support the subject.
Organisation			
Novice (1)	Apprentice (2)	Proficient (3)	Distinguished (4)
No introductory statement. Topic generally vague and disorganised. No conclusion.	Introduction fails to make audience aware of purpose. Topic is too broad and insufficiently researched. Audience left with vague idea after summary.	Introductory statement informs the audience of general purpose of presentation. Topic and conclusion good, but could be refined.	Introduction has strong purpose statement which captivates the audience. Topic is well-researched and organised. Audience left with a clear closing statement and full understanding of presenter's position.
Delivery			
Novice (1)	Apprentice (2)	Proficient (3)	Distinguished (4)
Nervous, no body movement, no eye contact, low voice volume, no presentation aids.	Some tension, insufficient body movement and gestures, occasional eye contact, uneven voice volume, inappropriate or over-used aids.	Quick recovery from minor mistakes, movements and gestures generally enhance delivery, satisfactory variation in voice, some aids add clarity.	Relaxed and self-confident, body movement and gestures are descriptive and help visualisation, holds attention with direct eye contact, good fluctuation of voice, clear and appropriate aids beneficial to speech.

Purely in terms of the depth of description, this second rubric is far superior. It is possible that some learners find this kind of rubric intimidating because it contains too much text. It would probably be good enough to write just a detailed description of the required behaviour or skill as shown in the fourth column.

Both of the above examples assign equal scores to each criteria. This assumes that they are all equally important. Ideally one would want to combine the features of both rubrics. Good assessment tools should ideally, but not exclusively, include:

- Clearly described criteria
- Clear description of allocation of scores
- Weighted scores for more important criteria
- Opportunity for self-assessment and teacher assessment
- A comment field.



D] Self-Study (Total 120 minutes)

Notes to Students

Spend an hour reviewing the following rubric design guides. We will be spending some time in the next unit creating our own rubrics but it is essential you are clear on good and poor design. You will need Internet access some of the resources for this activity.

Rubric Design Activity: Additional Readings/Useful Resources

- School of Educators: [How to Design a Rubric?](#)
- CARLA: [Process: Creating Rubrics](#)
- Teacher Planet: [Rubrics for Teachers](#)
- Bowling Green State University: [Designing Scoring Rubrics for Your Classroom](#)

Offline Readings/Resources

- School of Educators: [Tips For Effective Rubric Design](#) (PPT)
- The Teaching, Learning and Technology Group: [Rubrics](#) (PDF)



Resources Used in this Lesson Unit

Mertler, CA. (2001). *Designing Scoring Rubrics for Your Classroom. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*. 7(25). Retrieved from http://www.learner.org/workshops/tfl/resources/s7_rubrics.pdf.

School of Educators. (2011). *How To Design a Rubric?* Retrieved from <http://schoolofeducators.com/2008/07/how-to-design-a-rubric/>.

SchoolNet SA, South African Department of Education, & South African Institute for Distance Education. (2010). *Commonwealth Educators' Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolnet.org.za>.

Teacher Planet. (n.d.). *Rubrics for Teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.rubrics4teachers.com/>.

University of Minnesota (CARLA). N.d.). *Process: Creating rubrics*. Retrieved from http://www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/vac/Evaluation/p_7.html.

Wikipedia. (2011) *Rubric (academic)*. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_\(academic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubric_(academic)).