

Designing an Effective Grading Rubric

▪ Why would you as an instructor want to develop a rubric?

- A clear grading rubric helps to set student expectations so that students can plan their work to meet the assignment according to your stated expectations.
- The rubric, then, gives you the space to clarify what exactly you are looking for when grading student work.
- The rubric serves as a touchstone when grading to ensure that you do actually grade based on what you said you would, which can lessen any feeling of *surprise* a student experiences when seeing graded work and your instructor comments.
- When a rubric is in place that has been well-developed, you may no longer feel the need to *justify* the student's grade in comments, but can link points in the student's work to the already developed criteria of the rubric.

▪ When should you create a rubric?

- There should be a direct correlation between the criteria on the rubric and the content of the assignment sheet. Therefore, it is best if you develop the rubric *alongside* a draft of the assignment sheet, and shape each document based on how the other one develops. For instance, if you write a rubric category that assigns points to the strength of a thesis, yet the assignment sheet does not indicate that the project is thesis-based, then you have identified a space for revision within the assignment sheet.

▪ Strong rubrics exhibit:

- Direct connections to the assignment sheet, including shared language
- As few criteria categories as possible (4-5 criteria)—keep it manageable!
 - E.g., “Meets assignment,” “Development,” “Organization,” “Research,” “Language”
- Criteria categories that can act as umbrella terms for several individual elements of the assignment
 - E.g., “Meets assignment” can encompass formatting requirements, length requirements, source requirements, etc.
 - E.g., “Language” can encompass tone, grammar/mechanics, and proofreading effort
- Weighting or points associated with each criteria category
 - Points/point ranges should reflect instructor's priorities for each assignment
 - E.g., “Meets assignment” 15 pts, “Development” 40 pts, “Organization” 25 pts, “Language” 20 pts
- Format/readability
 - Grid format affordances:
 - Levels of achievement
 - Students can visualize themselves in a “Competent” section and compare descriptions to understand what it would take to move to “Outstanding”
 - Checklist format affordances:
 - There may be more flexibility for you as an instructor to assign points rather than placing a student “in a box”
 - However, without levels of achievement, a student may question the point number assigned to a grading category
- Short descriptions for each criteria category and levels of achievement
 - Descriptions of the criteria category help students understand how the elements are contained under an umbrella term

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- Descriptions of levels (in grid format) help students understand how they may be able to move to a higher category and gives more concrete information about how a student earned placement in a particular category
- Specific language is more helpful than vague language
 - “Meets expectations in terms of research sources” is not as helpful as “Incorporates 4-5 scholarly research sources using full quotation analysis”
 - Descriptions should identify how each criteria category is *unique*—avoid redundancy in descriptions (such as “uses examples” in both a “Development” category and a “Critical Thinking” category)

▪ Tips for creating rubrics:

- Use your assignment sheet as a basis for the rubric, if available.
- Be sure to consider your goals for the assignment and for the rubric.
- Work to identify key components of the assignment sheet that will form the basis for grading.
- Group similar components together under umbrella terms.
- Work to prioritize the categories for point assignment/weighting.
- Explore the format that would work best for your grading style and needs (grid or checklist).
- Draft categories, levels, and descriptions for the rubric.
- Compare the rubric draft to the assignment sheet, checking for consistency and ambiguity.
- Rubrics, as with any tool within the course, should be evaluated and revised at least each semester. The rubric is a tool that should work *for* you as the instructor, not a tool that you have to fight against in order to achieve best results.
- A rubric is most helpful when also paired with in-text and summary comments. You may want to include a “Comments” section in the rubric document, at the least.

CCR 094
Summary/Response Paragraphs
Grading Rubric:

| Category | Good to Excellent (8-10) | Fair to Average (5-7) | Needs Improvement (0-4) |
|---|---|---|--|
| Meets assignment in terms of length and style | Meets all requirements | Attempts to meet requirements but is missing an element | Elements are not present or significantly lacking |
| Summary | Demonstrates strong grasp of accurately representing the author's ideas and avoiding plagiarism | Demonstrates adequate grasp of representing the author's ideas and avoiding plagiarism | Demonstrates below satisfactory grasp of representing the author's ideas or plagiarizes the author |
| Response | Demonstrates strong grasp of expressing and explaining opinion-based or evaluative responses | Demonstrates adequate grasp of stating and explaining opinion-based or evaluative responses | Demonstrates below satisfactory grasp of expressing responses, responses are undeveloped, or category is not represented |
| Language | Effectively and eloquently expresses clear, descriptive, and academically-appropriate language | Adequately expresses clear, descriptive, and academically-appropriate language | Demonstrates below satisfactory aptitude for clear, descriptive, and academically-appropriate language, or category is not represented |
| Mechanics | Demonstrates strong handle of standard written English | Demonstrates adequate handle of standard written English | Demonstrates below satisfactory handle of standard written English |