Rubric Construction

Adapted from *Introduction to Rubrics* by D. Stevens and J. Levi 2005

Five Basic Parts of a Rubric

Part 1: Course Learning Outcome

We have added this as a rubric component (to the basic four outlined in *Introduction to Rubrics*). Course learning outcomes are your expectations for what you want students to learn by the end of a course. Your assignments and other curricular activities should help students achieve these outcomes and the rubric is an effective way of assessing the levels of their achievement. Placing the course learning outcome at the top of the grading rubric gives relevance to the assignment.

Part 2: Task Description

The task is almost always some type of "performance" by the student. The task can take on a multitude of forms such as a paper, specific assignment, poster, or presentation. It can also focus on other skill sets such as participation or use of proper lab protocols. The task description fits well just below the course learning outcome and serves to remind us later on, like during grading, what the assignment was or how it was written.

Part 3: Scale

The scale portion of the rubric shows how poorly or highly the task was executed. Terms used for scaling should be tactful but clear. Scale terms are placed in the top row of the rubric.
Examples of terms:
- Excellent, satisfactory, unsatisfactory
- Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
- Distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice
- Advanced, developing, beginning

Part 4: Dimensions

The dimensions are a way of showing the different components of the task simply and completely. Dimensions of a rubric help clarify, to students, what aspects are relevant or important to successfully complete the task (such as grammar, analysis, factual content, research techniques). Dimensions can be weighted differently to stress the importance of each component. The dimensions comprise the first column of the rubric.

Part 5: Description of the Dimensions

Descriptions of dimensions help show where a student failed to reach the highest expectation of a given task. Dimensions with only one description, the highest level of performance, are referred to as scoring guide rubrics. They allow greater flexibility and more personalization but they also expand the amount of time needed to grade. The most common number of dimension descriptions is three. The more descriptions, the harder it becomes to grade. Once a dimension has exceeded five descriptions, the ability to grade becomes very difficult; there are only so many differentiations a dimension can have before they become repetitive. The rubric matrix is filled in with the dimension descriptions.

Four Stages of Rubric Construction

Stage 1- <u>Reflection</u>
1. Why did you create this assignment?
2. Have you given this assignment before?
3. How does this assignment relate to the rest of what you are teaching?
4. What skills will student need to have or develop to successfully complete this assignment?
5. What exactly is the task assigned?
6. What evidence will demonstrate students' knowledge and skills regarding this assignment?
7. What are the highest expectations you have for student performance on this assignment overall?
8. What is the worst fulfillment of the assignment you can imagine, short of simply not turning it in at all?

Stage 2- <u>Listing </u>(capturing the details of the assignment)
Make a list of the learning outcomes to be accomplished with the completion of the assignment and describe the highest level of performance for each. These are the specific outcomes (skills, knowledge, applications…) that fall under the broader course learning outcome represented in the assignment. Refer your answers to the reflection questions (especially 4, 5, 6, and 7) for help in completing this list.

Stage 3- <u>Grouping and Labeling</u>
Organize similar learning outcomes into labeled groups that will ultimately become dimensions in the rubric.

Stage 4- <u>Application</u> (constructing the rubric)
Place the labeled dimensions in the left column of the matrix and the scale terms in the top row.
Fill in the matrix with the dimension descriptions for each level of performance. Add weight (or points) to the dimensions for scoring.