Introduction to Rubrics

AN ASSESSMENT TOOL TO SAVE GRADING TIME, CONVEY EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK AND PROMOTE STUDENT LEARNING

DANNELLE D. STEVENS AND ANTONIA J. LEVI

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PREFACE

This book developed out of a conversation about college teaching held in a Turkish coffee shop between a professor of modern Japanese history and popular culture, Dr. Antonia Levi, and a professor of graduate teacher education and educational psychology, Dr. Dannelle Stevens. Dr. Levi was teaching in the interdisciplinary, yearlong freshman core (Freshman Inquiry) and working at adapting her teaching style from mostly lecturing to a more learner-centered, interactive approach. Dr. Stevens was in the midst of a 2-year guest appointment at Bilkent University in Ankara where she was engaged in teaching and running workshops on learner-centered theories and techniques to a new generation of Turkish teachers for whom such ideas were even more radical than they were for a set-in-her-lecturing-ways professor of modern Japanese history. As we talked about the ways in which our academic lives, seemingly so different, overlapped, one word emerged with great regularity: rubric.

Rubrics, we agreed, were one of the handiest aids to educators since the invention of the blackboard. They saved us hours of time when used for grading while providing timely, meaningful feedback to our students. Moreover, when used properly, they became a normal part of classroom teaching, often promoting some of our best class discussion experiences and increasing the rate at which our students became self-motivated, independent learners. We concluded that the only reason more of our colleagues did not use rubrics was because they did not fully understand what they were or how they can improve the teaching experience for any educator.

And so we decided to write a book.

Our Book

Our book is a primer for professors who are considering using rubrics as grading and instructional tools for the first time or who wish to refine their use of rubrics. In this book, we define what rubrics are, explain their basic components, and show a variety of ways in which those components can be arranged and rearranged to suit a variety of needs and disciplines. We include a large number of sample rubrics, but we also describe how professors can construct their own rubrics from scratch using a step-by-step approach, and we show how others, including students, can be involved in rubric construction. We show how we use rubrics to grade student work and to evaluate our own teaching effectiveness. We also discuss the theoretical bases for using rubrics and their importance in conveying meaningful feedback to students in ways that are most likely to result in enhanced learning.

Our Audience

We intend this book to serve primarily as a resource for educators in higher education including graduate education. We recognize that it may also be useful to teachers in high school, especially those teaching Advanced Placement classes, but on the whole, teachers of K-12 already use rubrics that are better adapted to their needs. These rubrics are designed to reflect the more complex demands professors place on students in higher education.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many friends and colleagues who freely offered their advice and assistance to us as we wrote. To list all who assisted is impossible. This style of rubric creation is above all interactive, and literally hundreds of friends, colleagues, students, and a few total strangers added their input along the way.

We are particularly grateful to Cheryl Ramette, Susan Agre-Kippenham, Suzanna Johnson, Cate Pfeifer, Feride Guven, Serap Emil, and Zeynep Girgin, who shared their time and experience with rubrics in the classroom with us. We are also grateful to the entire

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The majority of the Rubrics reproduced in this book were developed by the University Studies Program at Portland State and we thank the program, its director Judy Patton, and participating faculty for permission to use them.

Special thanks are also due to Molly Stevens, who retrieved lost files, straightened out our graphics, and otherwise operated as our chief troubleshooter in cyberspace. And, of course, none of this would have been possible without the invaluable advice and assistance of our editor, John von Knorring of Stylus Publishing.

PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO RUBRICS

1

WHAT IS A RUBRIC?

> \Ru″bric\, n. [OE. rubriche, OF. rubriche, F. rubrique (cf. it. rubrica), fr. L. rubrica red earth for coloring, red chalk, the title of a law (because written in red), fr. ruber red. See red.] That part of any work in the early manuscripts and typography which was colored red, to distinguish it from other portions. Hence, specifically: (a) A titlepage, or part of it, especially that giving the date and place of printing; also, the initial letters, etc., when printed in red. (b) (Law books) The title of a statute;—so called as being anciently written in red letters.—Bell. (c) (Liturgies) The directions and rules for the conduct of service, formerly written or printed in red; hence, also, an ecclesiastical or episcopal injunction;—usually in the plural.
>
> —Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 1913

> Rubric: n 1: an authoritative rule 2: an explanation or definition of an obscure word in a text [syn: gloss] 3: a heading that is printed in red or in a special type v : adorn with ruby red color.
>
> —WordNet, 1997

Today, a rubric retains its connection to authoritative rule and particularly to "redness." In fact, professors like us who use rubrics often consider them the most effective grading devices since the invention of red ink.

At its most basic, a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment. Rubrics divide an assignment into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance for each of those parts. Rubrics can be used for grading a large variety of assignments and tasks: research papers, book critiques, discussion participation, laboratory reports, portfolios, group work, oral presentations, and more.

Dr. Dannelle Stevens and Dr. Antonia Levi teach at Portland State University in the Graduate School of Education and the University Studies Program, respectively. Rubrics are used quite extensively for grading at Portland State University, especially in the core University Studies program. One reason for this is that the University Studies Program uses rubrics annually to assess its experimental, interdisciplinary, yearlong Freshman Inquiry core. Because that assessment is carried out by, among others, the faculty who teach Freshman Inquiry, and because most faculty from all departments eventually do teach Freshman Inquiry, this means that the faculty at Portland State are given a chance to see close up what rubrics can do in terms of assessment. Many quickly see the benefits of using rubrics for their own forms of classroom assessment, including grading.

In this book, we will show you what a rubric is, why so many professors at Portland State University are so enthusiastic about rubrics, and how you can construct and use your own rubrics. Based on our own experiences and those of our colleagues, we will also show you how to share the construction or expand the use of rubrics to become an effective part of the teaching process. We will describe the various models of rubric construction and show how different professors have used rubrics in different ways in different classroom contexts and disciplines. All the rubrics used in this book derive from actual use in real classrooms.

Do You Need a Rubric?

How do you know if you need a rubric? One sure sign is if you check off more than three items from the following list:

- ❑ You are getting carpal tunnel syndrome from writing the same comments on almost every student paper.
- ❑ It's 3 A.M. The stack of papers on your desk is fast approaching the ceiling. You're already 4 weeks behind in your grading, and it's clear that you won't be finishing it tonight either.
- ❑ Students often complain that they cannot read the notes you labored so long to produce.
- ❑ You have graded all your papers and worry that the last ones were graded slightly differently from the first ones.

- ❑ You want students to complete a complex assignment that integrates all the work over the term and are not sure how to communicate all the varied expectations easily and clearly.
- ❑ You want students to develop the ability to reflect on ill-structured problems but you aren't sure how to clearly communicate that to them.
- ❑ You give a carefully planned assignment that you never used before and to your surprise, it takes the whole class period to explain it to students.
- ❑ You give a long narrative description of the assignment in the syllabus, but the students continually ask two to three questions per class about your expectations.
- ❑ You are spending long periods of time on the phone with the Writing Center or other tutorial services because the students you sent there are unable to explain the assignments or expectations clearly.
- ❑ You work with your colleagues and collaborate on designing the same assignments for program courses, yet you wonder if your grading scales are different.
- ❑ You've sometimes been disappointed by whole assignments because all or most of your class turned out to be unaware of academic expectations so basic that you neglected to mention them (e.g., the need for citations or page numbers).
- ❑ You have worked very hard to explain the complex end-of-term paper; yet students are starting to regard you as an enemy out to trick them with incomprehensible assignments.
- ❑ You're starting to wonder if they're right.

Rubrics set you on the path to addressing these concerns.

What Are the Parts of a Rubric?

Rubrics are composed of four basic parts in which the professor sets out the parameters of the assignment. The parties and processes involved in making a rubric can and should vary tremendously, but the basic format remains the same. In its simplest form, the rubric includes a task description (the assignment), a scale of some sort

Title

Task Description

	Scale level 1	Scale level 2	Scale level 3
Dimension 1			
Dimension 2			
Dimension 3			
Dimension 4			

Figure 1.1 Basic rubric grid format.

(levels of achievement, possibly in the form of grades), the dimensions of the assignment (a breakdown of the skills/knowledge involved in the assignment), and descriptions of what constitutes each level of performance (specific feedback) all set out on a grid, as shown in Figure 1.1.

We usually use a simple Microsoft Word table to create our grids using the "elegant" format found in the "auto format" section. Our sample grid shows three scales and four dimensions. This is the most common, but sometimes we use more. Rarely, however, do we go over our maximum of five scale levels and six to seven dimensions.

In this chapter, we will look at the four component parts of the rubric and, using an oral presentation assignment as an example, develop the above grid *part-by-part* until it is a useful grading tool (a usable rubric) for the professor and a clear indication of expectations and actual performance for the student.

Part-by-Part Development of a Rubric

Part 1: Task Description

The task description is almost always originally framed by the instructor and involves a "performance" of some sort by the student. The task can take the form of a specific assignment, such as a paper, a poster, or a presentation. The task can also apply to overall behavior, such as participation, use of proper lab protocols, and behavioral expectations in the classroom.

We place the task description, usually cut and pasted from the syllabus, at the top of the grading rubric, partly to remind ourselves

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	Scale level 1	Scale level 2	Scale level 3
Dimension 1			
Dimension 2			
Dimension 3			
Dimension 4			

Figure 1.2 Part 1: Task description.

how the assignment was written as we grade, and to have a handy reference later on when we may decide to reuse the same rubric.

More important, however, we find that the task assignment grabs the students' attention in a way nothing else can, when placed at the top of what they know will be a grading tool. With the added reference to their grades, the task assignment and the rubric criteria become more immediate to students and are more carefully read. Students focus on grades. Sad, but true. We might as well take advantage of it to communicate our expectations as clearly as possible.

If the assignment is too long to be included in its entirety on the rubric, or if there is some other reason for not including it there, we put the title of the full assignment at the top of the rubric: for example, "Rubric for Oral Presentation." This will at least remind the students that there is a full description elsewhere, and it will facilitate later reference and analysis for the professor. Sometimes we go further and add the words "see syllabus" or "see handout." Another possibility is to put the larger task description along the side of the rubric. For reading and grading ease, rubrics should seldom, if ever, be more than one page long.

Most rubrics will contain both a descriptive title and a task description. Figure 1.2 illustrates Part 1 of our sample rubric with the title and task description highlighted.

Part 2: Scale

The scale describes how well or poorly any given task has been performed and occupies yet another side of the grid to complete the rubric's evaluative goal. Terms used to describe the level of performance should be tactful but clear. In the generic rubric, words such as "mastery," "partial mastery," "progressing," and "emerging" provide a more positive, active, verb description of what is expected next from the student and also mitigate the potential shock of low marks in the lowest levels of the scale. Some professors may prefer to use nonjudgmental, noncompetitive language, such as "high level," "middle level," and "beginning level," whereas others prefer numbers or even grades.

Here are some commonly used labels compiled by Huba and Freed (2000):

- Sophisticated, competent, partly competent, not yet competent (NSF Synthesis Engineering Education Coalition, 1997)
- Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
- Advanced, intermediate high, intermediate, novice (American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, 1986, p. 278)
- distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice (Gotcher, 1997):
- accomplished, average, developing, beginning (College of Education, 1997)

(Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 180)

We almost always confine ourselves to three levels of performance when we first construct a rubric. After the rubric has been used on a real assignment, we often expand that to five. It is much easier to refine the descriptions of the assignment and create more levels after seeing what our students actually do.

Figure 1.3 presents the Part 2 version of our rubric where the scale has been highlighted.

There is no set formula for the number of levels a rubric scale should have. Most professors prefer to clearly describe the performances at three or even five levels using a scale. But five levels is enough. The more levels there are, the more difficult it becomes to differentiate

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	Excellent	Competent	Needs work
Dimension 1			
Dimension 2			
Dimension 3			
Dimension 4			

Figure 1.3 Part 2: Scales.

between them and to articulate precisely why one student's work falls into the scale level it does. On the other hand, more specific levels make the task clearer for the student and they reduce the professor's time needed to furnish detailed grading notes. Most professors consider three to be the optimum number of levels on a rubric scale.

If a professor chooses to describe only one level, the rubric is called a holistic rubric or a scoring guide rubric. It usually contains a description of the highest level of performance expected for each dimension, followed by room for scoring and describing in a "Comments" column just how far the student has come toward achieving or not achieving that level. Scoring guide rubrics, however, usually require considerable additional explanation in the form of written notes and so are more time-consuming than grading with a three-to-five-level rubric.

Part 3: Dimensions

The dimensions of a rubric lay out the parts of the task simply and completely. A rubric can also clarify for students how their task can be broken down into components and which of those components are most important. Is it the grammar? The analysis? The factual content? The research techniques? And how much weight is given to

each of these aspects of the assignment? Although it is not necessary to weight the different dimensions differently, adding points or percentages to each dimension further emphasizes the relative importance of each aspect of the task.

Dimensions should actually represent the type of component skills students must combine in a successful scholarly work, such as the need for a firm grasp of content, technique, citation, examples, analysis, and a use of language appropriate to the occasion. When well done, the dimensions of a rubric (usually listed along one side of the rubric) will not only outline these component skills, but after the work is graded, should provide a quick overview of the student's strengths and weaknesses in each dimension.

Dimension need not and should not include any description of the quality of the performance. "Organization," for example, is a common dimension, but not "Good Organization." We leave the question of the quality of student work within that dimension to the scale and the description of the dimension, as illustrated in Part 4 of the rubric development.

Breaking up the assignment into its distinct dimensions leads to a kind of task analysis with the components of the task clearly identified. Both students and professors find this useful. It tells the student much more than a mere task assignment or a grade reflecting only the finished product. Together with good descriptions, the dimensions of a rubric provide detailed feedback on specific parts of the assignment and how well or poorly those were carried out. This is especially useful in assignments such as our oral presentation example in which many different dimensions come into play, as shown in Figure 1.4, where the dimensions, Part 3 of the rubric, are highlighted on page 11.

Part 4: Description of the Dimensions

Dimensions alone are all-encompassing categories, so for each of the dimensions, a rubric should also contain at the very least a description of the highest level of performance in that dimension. A rubric that contains only the description of the highest level of performance is called a scoring guide rubric and is shown in Figure 1.5 on page 12.

Scoring guide rubrics allow for greater flexibility and the personal touch, but the need to explain in writing where the student has failed

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	Excellent	Competent	Needs work
Knowledge/understanding 20%/20 points			
Thinking/inquiry 30%/30 points			
Communication 20%/20 points			
Use of visual aids 20%/20 points			
Presentation skills 10%/10 points			

Figure 1.4 Part 3: Dimensions.

to meet the highest levels of performance does increase the time it takes to grade using scoring guide rubrics.

For most tasks, we prefer to use a rubric that contains at least three scales and a description of the most common ways in which students fail to meet the highest level of expectations. Figure 1.6 illustrates the rubric with three levels on the scale that was actually used for grading the "Changing Communities in Our City" assignment. Note how the next level down on the scale indicates the difference between that level of performance and the ideal, whereas the last level places the emphasis on what might have been accomplished but was not. This puts the emphasis not on the failure alone, but also on the possibilities. This final rubric on page 13 emphasizes Part 4 of rubric development for an oral presentation with the descriptions of the dimensions highlighted.

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	Criteria	Comments	Points
Knowledge/ understanding 20%	**The presentation demonstrates a depth of historical understanding by using relevant and accurate detail to support the student's thesis.** **Research is thorough and goes beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned texts.**		
Thinking/ inquiry 30%	**The presentation is centered around a thesis, which shows a highly developed awareness of historiographic or social issues and a high level of conceptual ability.**		
Communication 20%	**The presentation is imaginative and effective in conveying ideas to the audience.** **The presenter responds effectively to audience reactions and questions.**		
Use of visual aids 20%	**The presentation includes appropriate and easily understood visual aids, which the presenter refers to and explains at appropriate moments in the presentation.**		
Presentation skills 10%	**The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard, using eye contact, a lively tone, gestures, and body language to engage the audience.**		

Figure 1.5 Part 4: Scoring guide rubric: Description of dimensions at highest level of performance.

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	Excellent	Competent	Needs work
Knowledge/ understanding 20%	The presentation demonstrates a depth of historical understanding by using relevant and accurate detail to support the student's thesis. Research is thorough and goes beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned texts.	The presentation uses knowledge that is generally accurate with only minor inaccuracies and that is generally relevant to the student's thesis. Research is adequate but does not go much beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned text.	The presentation uses little relevant or accurate information, not even that which was presented in class or in the assigned texts. Little or no research is apparent.
Thinking/ inquiry 30%	The presentation is centered around a thesis, which shows a highly developed awareness of historiographic or social issues and a high level of conceptual ability.	The presentation shows an analytical structure and a central thesis, but the analysis is not always fully developed or linked to the thesis.	The presentation shows no analytical structure and no central thesis.
Communication 20%	The presentation is imaginative and effective in conveying ideas to the audience. The presenter responds effectively to audience reactions and questions.	Presentation techniques used are effective in conveying main ideas, but they are a bit unimaginative. Some questions from the audience remain unanswered.	The presentation fails to capture the interest of the audience and/or is confusing in what is to be communicated.
Use of visual aids 20%	The presentation includes appropriate and easily understood visual aids, which the presenter refers to and explains at appropriate moments in the presentation.	The presentation includes appropriate visual aids, but these are too few, are in a format that makes them difficult to use or understand, or the presenter does not refer to or explain them in the presentation.	The presentation includes no visual aids or includes visual aids that are inappropriate or too small or messy to be understood. The presenter makes no mention of them in the presentation.
Presentation skills 10%	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard, using eye contact, a lively tone, gestures, and body language to engage the audience.	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard but tends to drone or fails to use eye contact, gestures, and body language consistently or effectively at times.	The presenter cannot be heard or speaks so unclearly that she or he cannot be understood. There is no attempt to engage the audience through eye contact, gestures, or body language.

Figure 1.6 Part 4: Three-level rubric: Description of dimensions with all levels of performance described.

In this sample rubric, the descriptions are limited enough that when a student does not fit neatly into one column or the other, we can convey that fact by circling elements of two or more columns. Under "Presentation skills," for example, we might easily find ourselves circling a "using eye contact and a lively tone" in the "excellent" column, but circling "fails to use" and "gestures and body language consistently or effectively at times" in the "Competent" column. When the descriptions are more comprehensive and include more options, we often use boxes that can be checked off beside each element of the description to make conveying this mixed response easier and tidier.

Seen in its entirety, the rubric for this oral presentation may seem more of a task than simply grading students the old-fashioned way. Stripped down to its four components, however, and developed step by step, it becomes a template on which to place the expectations most professors have in the backs of their minds anyway.

Creating Your First Rubric: Is It Worth the Time and Effort?

Professors who regularly construct and use rubrics can create a rubric like the oral presentation rubric we used as an example in less than an hour, less if they are simply modifying an existing rubric designed for a similar assignment. For beginners, however, the first few rubrics may take more time than they save.

This time is not wasted, however. When we first began constructing and using rubrics, we quickly found that they not only cut down on grading time and provided fuller feedback to our students, but they affected our classroom preparation and instruction as well.

The first step in constructing or adapting any rubric is quite simply a time of reflection, of putting into words basic assumptions and beliefs about teaching, assessment, and scholarship. We put ourselves in the place of our students by recalling our own student days and focusing not only *what* we learned but *how* we learned it best—that is, what expectations were clear, what assignments were significant, and what feedback was helpful. That reflection translated into classroom practices as we became more adept at imparting not only our knowledge and expectations for each assignment, but what we hoped our students would accomplish through fulfilling the assignments we

gave. Further down the road, we realized our students were not like us and out assignments should acknowledge different student learning styles.

We even began to involve our students in developing the rubrics. In so doing, we found that, as Cafferalla and Clark (1999) concluded in their analysis of studies of adult learners, making the process of learning as collaborative as possible for our students resulted in better teaching.

Moreover, although the first few rubrics may take considerable time to construct, they do save time in grading, right from the very beginning. When the sample rubric used in this chapter was used in a class of more than thirty students, for example, the time taken to grade the presentations was reduced to the actual class time in which the presentations were given, plus an extra hour or so devoted to adding a few individualized notes to each rubric. We simply circled whatever categories applied during or immediately after the student presented. Aside from saving time, this meant that the grades and comments were handed back to the students the very next class period, while the memory of the assignment was fresh in their minds. Timely feedback means more student learning.

Rubrics not only save time in the long run, but they are also a valuable pedagogical tools because they make us more aware of our individual teaching styles and methods, allow us to impart more clearly our intentions and expectations, and provide timely, informative feedback to our students. Chapter 2 elaborates on these reasons for incorporating rubrics into your classroom instructional practices.

2

WHY USE RUBRICS?

Rubrics save time, provide timely, meaningful feedback for students, and have the potential to become an effective part of the teaching and learning process. In fact, the main reason we don't use rubrics more often is simply because most of us have been unaware of them. Rubrics were not part of our own experience as students, and most of us find that we often teach as we were taught.

However, there are many reasons to use rubrics, reasons having to do not only with efficient use of time and sound pedagogy but, moreover, with basic principles of equity and fairness. In this chapter, we will look at the pragmatic, pedagogical, and equitable reasons for using rubrics.

Rubrics Provide Timely Feedback

The timing of feedback can be a vexed point between professors and students. We struggle to grade each assignment fairly and individually; students then complain that work is not handed back soon enough. Sometimes it seems to us as if students don't care as much about quality feedback (detailed feedback they can act on) as they do about getting their work back speedily. Many of us interpret this to mean that all students care about is their final grade. Although this may be at least partly true, Rucker and Thomson's (2003) research on feedback and learning among college students suggests the students' demand for speed may be valid. After studying 104 students in education and communication classes, Rucker and Thomson concluded that time actually was a factor in making feedback meaningful and useful to students. Feedback was most effective when given as soon as possible after task completion in helping students make positive changes in their subsequent work. Taras's (2003) work with British

undergraduates also noted the importance of feedback both for learning and for developing personal habits of self-assessment. Ilgen, Peterson, Martin, and Boeschen's (1981) classic work went further to note an actual decline in the value of feedback as time between it and the task increased: "The longer the delay in the receipt of feedback, the less the effect of feedback on performance" (p. 354). Extensive research over the years has validated that feedback, especially timely feedback, facilitates learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

But how are we expected to grade 30 research papers in the space of 48 hours so that they can be handed back while the feedback will still do the most good? The answer, of course, is rubrics. Rubrics are wonderful time savers and, for many of us, when first starting to use rubrics, timeliness is the main virtue that justifies their use. Rubrics allow us to meet the deadline posed by student attention spans and expectations and to do it without sacrificing the need for that feedback to be detailed and specific to each student's individual case.

As many of us know, most students make the same or similar mistakes on any given assignment. The combination of mistakes may be different and individual, but the actual mistakes are much the same. As a result, when we seriously try to offer specific, individual feedback to each student in note form, we often find ourselves writing variations on the same themes on most of the papers.

A rubric eliminates this problem. In a rubric, we simply incorporate easily predictable notes into the "descriptions of dimensions" portion of the rubric. Then, when grading time comes, all we need do is circle or check off all comments that apply to each specific student and perhaps add a note here and there where the rubric does not cover what was done precisely enough, where added emphasis is needed, or where the connection between one or more aspects of the student's performance needs to be stressed. The use of the rubric does not, of course, preclude notes specific to the student that can be placed on the rubric, the paper itself, or elsewhere. The evaluative process of grading remains the same, as does the specificity of the feedback, but the time taken to transmit the feedback to the student is cut by at least 50% and often more.

The result is an easier grading process for us, and timely, detailed, often easier-to-read feedback for the student.

Rubrics Prepare Students to Use Detailed Feedback

It's a vicious cycle. Students *say* they want detailed feedback so that they can know what they are doing right so they can keep doing it, as well as what they are doing wrong so that they can improve.

Yet, as we often discover, students barely seem to read, let alone absorb, the extended notes on their work that took up so much of our grading time. In time, some of us may become discouraged and stop writing such detailed notes. If this continues, eventually we may find that our written comments are confined to terse statements such as "lacks cohesion, needs more references, organized, C+."

Students are understandably confused and discouraged by such laconic remarks, and here too, research bears them out. Brinko (1993) found that feedback was most effective when it contained as much information as possible rather than simply evaluating the level of the work. The same study revealed, however, that including a description of the highest level of achievement possible was also useful to students. Balancing these two findings is where rubrics excel.

The demand for an explanation of the highest level of achievement possible and detailed feedback is fulfilled in the rubric itself. The highest level descriptions of the dimensions are, in fact, the highest level of achievement possible, whereas the remaining levels, circled or checked off, are typed versions of the notes we regularly write on student work explaining how and where they failed to meet that highest level. The student still receives all the necessary details about how and where the assignment did or did not achieve its goal, and even suggestions (in the form of the higher levels of descriptions) as to how it might have been done better.

Moreover, because we discuss the rubric and thereby the grading criteria in class, the student has a much better idea of what these details mean. Even when we make extensive notes and students actually do read them, there can still be quite a gap between comments and student understanding of expectations. For example, students may not have been acquainted with terms such as "context," "analysis," or "citations" before the rubric discussion began, but by the time they receive their graded work back, such words should have clear meaning for them.

Rubrics can also come to the rescue when students ask for serious help on specific, ongoing problems in their class work. In this case, we have to try to determine if their work is improving overall. Except for numbers or letter grades in the grade book, we have found that we have little idea whether and how a student's individual work may or may not be improving over time, still less in what ways. So we ask the student to bring in all work done to date, preferably the copies with the grading notes on them. All too often, we discover the student has not saved those notes or even the work. Neither have we.

Students are, of course, no more likely to keep completed rubrics than they are to keep complete collections of their other graded work. This is why some of us keep rubrics separate from the actual work until we have had a chance to run the rubrics through a copy machine. Only later is the original rubric stapled to the assignment to be handed back. In this way, we are able to keep a complete record of each student's progress without much extra effort. Moreover, the detailed feedback on the rubric becomes a useful tool for analyzing precisely where a student's strengths and weaknesses lie.

Using rubrics for overall assessment as well as immediate grading meets the demand for greater detail in feedback and also for determining whether a student's work is actually improving over time. A quick scan across several rubrics can even provide detailed information about the dimensions in which a student's work is improving and is not improving. Moreover, because many of us are likely to use similar formats and dimensions in constructing rubrics, the accumulated record is easy to read for both of us. Laid side by side, three or more rubrics usually reveal a pattern over time. For example, if "Organization" is a dimension on several rubrics and the student continually gets low marks in that area, we immediately know where to start in giving meaningful, useful advice and suggestions.

Students are often surprised to realize that they are receiving the same levels of commentary in the same dimensions with great regularity. Such students might, of course, have also noticed that they were receiving the same comments in written notes, but the grid pattern of the rubric with its clearly defined dimensions makes doubly clear which areas need work. If a student is taking classes from more than one professor who uses rubrics, the pattern may become even clearer.

Using several rubrics of completed assignments, students can draw their own conclusions about the weaknesses in their work and set out their own plans for improvement as well. As Huba and Freed (2000) have pointed out, this is the ideal way that motivation develops and learning occurs: "Feedback that focuses on self-assessment and self improvement is a form of intrinsic motivation (p. 59)". Once students clearly see how to improve, they can focus on that. Then the rubric comparisons of student performance over time may begin to reflect a more cheerful pattern of steady improvement.

Rubrics Encourage Critical Thinking

Because of the rubric format, students may notice for themselves the patterns of recurring problems or ongoing improvement in their work, and this self-discovery is one of the happiest outcomes of using rubrics. By encouraging students to think critically about their own learning, rubrics can inspire precisely the pattern of "self-assessment and self-improvement" intrinsic to creating the kind of motivated, creative students we all want in our classes. Used in conjunction with good academic advising, rubrics can play a major role in contributing to students' development of a more scholarly form of critical thinking—that is, the ability to think, reason, and make judgments based on an independent, accurate accumulation of data and an open-minded approach to each new topic (Huba & Freed, 2000).

We all want students who demonstrate such traits. Most of us hope that our classes, regardless of discipline, will contribute to producing such habits of thinking and learning. We also know that students need to be challenged to think critically, and we know what kinds of assignments will lead to critical thinking in our respective disciplines. Yet research shows that many of us continue to give too many of the multiple choice tests and short answer writing assignments that we know produce mostly rote memory skills and low-level, unconnected thinking (Boud, 1990; Huba & Freed, 2000). A major issue here is time constraints imposed by the need to grade the results. Using rubrics speeds up grading time enormously, thus allowing us to assign more complex tasks leading to critical thinking. However, that is not the limit of what rubrics can do toward promoting greater emphasis on critical thinking.

The greatest way that rubrics begin to promote scholarly critical thinking is in the classroom discussion of the rubric prior to the students beginning the assignment. Many of the rubric's dimensions break down the components of critical thinking in an explicit manner, while the descriptions of those dimensions spell out explicit demands for the basic components of critical thinking. These usually include such basics as the inclusion of an independent thesis, supporting data that is accurate and relevant, thought processes and analyses that are clearly shown, and judgments based on an open-minded consideration of all of these components. For most professors, these demands are so basic that they are often left implicit in the assignment and so may be overlooked by the students until the assignment is complete. By passing out the rubric in advance and allowing time for these components to be discussed, we make our implicit expectations explicit. In discussing the rubric, we are modeling, in reverse, the criteria by which the work will be graded and also the elements of critical thinking that are important in almost every scholarly work in almost any discipline.

Not all components of a rubric relate equally to critical thinking, of course. Punctuality, grammar and spelling, and other technical skills can and do affect communication and therefore grading but are not themselves evidence of scholarly critical thinking. If we want our students to understand that some dimensions are far more important than others, we can communicate that on the rubric by assigning points or percentages according to importance of that dimension to the final product. For example, on the 100-point paper illustrated in Chapter 1, the dimension "Communication" got 20 percent (or 20 points) of the grade, whereas "Presentation skills" got only 10 percent (or 10 points) of the final grade and "Thinking/inquiry" pulled a whopping 30 percent (or 30 points) of the final grade. By including points that make it clear that those components that relate to critical thinking are worth more in the overall grade than the technical skills, a rubric communicates what is important in scholarship in a direct and visual way. Further classroom discussion of the meaning of these critical thinking components can also clarify and explain the habits of mind we expect our students to demonstrate not only for a given assignment or class, but throughout their college careers and, for that matter, the rest of their lives.

Rubrics Facilitate Communication with Others

Whether we think about it that way or not, most of us teach in collaboration with others. The most common "others" in our academic teaching life are usually teaching assistants of some sort. Other significant groups involved in teaching our students may include the staff of a university writing center, tutors or remedial teaching staff, adjunct, and every other professor from whom those students are learning. Rubrics allow us to communicate our goals and intentions to all these people, sometimes without us even being aware that communication is taking place.

Teaching assistants (T.A.s) are the most obvious "other" people involved with our teaching, particularly if they lead discussion or lab sections for the class or grade papers. Rubrics tell the T.A. directly and clearly what we expect from the students; what they should be focusing on in the small group work, the lab, or the seminar, and what grading criteria we have in mind. Sometimes it is useful to involve T.A.s in the construction of the rubric from the start, as T.A.s often have a clearer idea of the individual students' needs and level of comprehension (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of rubric construction with T.A.s and others). Moreover, because many T.A.s plan to become professors in the future, modeling the use of rubrics can affect their teaching practices later on.

Another group who can benefit from our use of a rubric are those who assist students with specific learning problems. The most common of these teaching collaborators is the staff of the writing center. As anyone who has ever worked in a writing center knows, students who are having the most serious problems with their writing are often the last people who can explain the details of the assignment; often the reason they are at the writing center is because they have problems communicating. Much of the time, the writing center staff wind up calling the professor simply to be sure they are not leading the student in the wrong direction. If the student arrives at the center with a rubric, however, the task assignment and expectations are right in front of the person working in the writing center, and most writing center staff members can easily decode the intent behind the details of the rubric. The same is true of math tutors, language drill leaders, and even computer staff who may be called on to help with analytical programs.

The next group who may find rubrics useful are new faculty and adjunct professors. These newcomers are often less distressed at finding themselves without a desk or a mailbox than they are about finding themselves without a clue about the departmental expectations for the classes they are about to teach. A review of past syllabi will show them the lay of the land and the overview of the content, and it will give them some idea of the assignments. However, a review of past rubrics goes further, showing the new faculty member or adjunct not only the assignments but also the expectations for student performance in the course and in the discipline. Armed with both past syllabi and rubrics, newly arrived faculty can feel they have as good an idea of what led their new department to create the course as they would have had if they had sat in on the original department meetings where the faculty spelled out the reasons for creating the classes they will teach.

The final group of "others" who may benefit from rubrics are professors who are teaching the same class or even the same students. Most of us have little knowledge about what our colleagues do in class, even when those colleagues teach in the same discipline or in related fields. Often this is because many of us value our own autonomy in the classroom and worry about violating that of our colleagues, but the truth is that knowing what is going on in closely related classes can be useful, both in avoiding redundant efforts and in understanding what students are being taught. Within departments, rubrics can be shared to determine whether or not there is consensus on what is being taught at each level, how it is being taught, and why.

Sharing rubrics can also reveal the degree to which grading is consistent. Professors are often startled to find out how consistent their teaching and grading really are. In a recent and local case, Portland State University professors who collaborated on a single rubric for a shared assignment were surprised and reassured to discover that their standards and expectations were not wildly out of line with those of their colleagues. For a few of us, of course, rubrics may reveal that we do grade differently from our colleagues. Rubrics cannot tell us what to do about that, if anything, but they can at least make us aware of the situation.

Rubrics Help Us to Refine Our Teaching Skills

How do we know if we are good teachers? How can we find out what we can do to become better ones? Standardized student evaluations are one source. Yet, the questions are often broad, and, therefore, difficult to apply. Moreover, because they can be used in faculty promotion and tenure, most of us are a bit defensive about them. Even in the best of circumstances, these evaluations only reflect the students' responses as to items about whether the professor was knowledgeable, an engaging lecturer, or well organized in running the class (Huba & Freed, 2000). Even the evaluations that actually ask students whether or not they learned anything may simply ask for the students' opinions on that topic. They do not provide actual evidence or reveal details of what students may or may not have learned.

In the same way that keeping copies of individual student rubrics can allow us to pinpoint a student's continuing improvement or weaknesses over time, rubrics showing student development over time can also allow us to gain a clearer view of teaching blind spots, omissions, and strengths. If, for example, the majority of students in several classes are showing weak results in the use of citations, this should be a wake-up call to us that we need to be talking more about how and why citations are important. If there is a pattern of problems regarding inadequate use of examples, this too can be pinpointed and corrected. And subsequent rubrics from subsequent classes should provide us with evidence as to whether or not our changed teaching strategies are working. Needless to say, such results can also be used to provide persuasive evidence of teaching improvement in applications for promotion and tenure (see Chapter 6).

Referencing overall rubric results in class can also be a wonderful way to address class problems without singling out any particular student or group of students. If, for example, fully half the class lost points on the "Reflection" dimension of an essay, perhaps they really do not understand what critical reflection means. Mentioning this as we pass the graded assignments back, and again as we begin the discussion of the next assignment, can not only cut down on the number of individual conferences we might otherwise have with students in our office, but it can also allow us to reach the student who is too

shy, too insecure, or too unaware of academic survival skills to show up in our offices. Discussing problems that a large number of students share with direct reference to the rubric not only provides a solid rationale for discussing a task after the fact, but also offers students a chance to see how they can and should be using rubrics in evaluating their own performance, preferably before assignments are turned in.

Whatever we choose to do with them, collected rubrics provide a record of the specific details of how students performed on any given task, allowing us to quickly notice and correct any across-the-class blind spots or omissions. They can also provide an unexpected pat on the back as we notice improvements across the board, or perhaps even evidence of teaching areas that need no improvement from the start. And for junior faculty, they can provide that evidence in a form that can be included in portfolios submitted for promotion and tenure.

Rubrics Level the Playing Field

In recent years, the numbers of minority first-generation students coming into universities has increased enormously (American Council on Education, 2001; Mellow, Van Slyck, & Eynon, 2002). Most of us have welcomed the change, noting the benefits of a more diverse student body on the educational experience of all students and the educational benefit for citizens in our democracy. Yet the more diverse student body also presents challenges, as shown by the proliferation of support programs for these students (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Rodriguez, 2003). Most of these support programs, however, deal with issues other than in-class learning, such as English language problems, financial issues, childcare, and time management. All of these issues impact class learning, of course, but issues specific to the classroom experience are left for teachers to deal with.

One issue that is specific to the classroom experience is that of "translation." We do not refer here to the fact that many of these students may have English communication problems, but to the fact that even native speakers of English may not speak the kind of English that is used in academia. In the past, many of our students came from college-educated families where such English was taken

for granted or went to preparatory schools where basic academic terminology was used and explained, which led to success in postsecondary institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). Now, however, teachers must learn to communicate with students for whom the words we use in daily academic speech are a foreign language or at least a bizarre dialect.

Rubrics can act as wonderful translation devices in this new environment. Not only do they help such students understand what teachers are talking about, but they help teachers understand when and where our words are not being understood or, worse yet, are being completely misunderstood. In discussing papers, for example, we may be startled to discover that many students think "introduction" and "conclusion" are synonyms for "beginning" and "end" or that "critical thinking" means criticizing something. We may also not realize that our students do not understand the difference between a discussion and an argument or between an academic debate and a shout-down match. Similarly, some students may assume that "analysis" refers only to situations in which numbers are involved or to the analyses contained in secondary sources. The revelation that in an academic paper, for example, "analysis" most often means their own conclusions informed by data can be startling to them.

Above all, first-generation students are apt to think of education in terms of the concrete knowledge absorbed. The correct use of rubrics can alter their entire understanding of the task of getting an education by introducing them to whole new concepts such as critical thinking, argumentation, objective and subjective views, and the other academic terms teachers take for granted. Rubrics offer a way for us to pinpoint problems in communication and deal with them until we are sure that our students are actually speaking the same language we are. Then we can communicate our expectations in ways that go beyond merely knowing the content of the class, especially if the rubrics are discussed or even constructed (see Chapter 4) in class.

Such "translation" is not mere hand holding, because we cannot always assume that students will be able to figure these things out "on their own." The truth is, they never did it "on their own." Some students arrive with that knowledge already in place because of a privileged upbringing or education. Many of those who are now arriving in our classes lack that privileged past. Failing to address

this reality by keeping assignments vague and failing to spell out what we mean by the academic terms we use benefits those who have already had the advantage of growing up in college-educated households or attending preparatory schools. Pretending all students are starting from the same point does not assure equity in the classroom; it simply privileges those who were privileged already.

Few of us would ignore such inequity deliberately, but we may do so unthinkingly or accidentally. Rubrics certainly are not the only way to address these inequities, nor are they a panacea. However, they can and should be a major component in the ongoing effort to create more equitable classrooms.

Conclusion

Why use rubrics? This chapter provided six key reasons for constructing and using rubrics in our classrooms:

- Rubrics provide timely feedback.
- Rubrics prepare students to use detailed feed back.
- Rubrics encourage critical thinking.
- Rubrics facilitate communication with others.
- Rubrics help us refine our teaching methods.
- Rubrics level the playing field.

The incredibly useful and flexible rubric accomplishes many objectives for our own classes as well as for our students' overall university experience. In the next chapter, we will describe in detail how to construct a rubric from the assignment in our syllabus to its final form.

3

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A RUBRIC

Constructing your first rubric may seem daunting. Time consuming too. In this chapter, we will share some ways to make constructing useful, high-quality rubrics easier and faster.

First, we remind ourselves that rubric construction gets easier with time, partly because we get better at it and also because we often find ourselves revising rubrics we created for other, similar assignments. One shortcut to creating your first rubrics is to adapt the model rubrics provided in the appendix of this book and at http://styluspub.com/resources/introductiontorubrics.aspx to serve your needs.

Second, we break the task down into four key stages. These four stages apply whether you choose to revise an existing rubric or construct your own from scratch.

Four Key Stages in Constructing a Rubric

Whether you choose to construct your own rubric from scratch by yourself, with teaching assistants, with colleagues, or even with students (see Chapters 4 and 5), four basic stages are involved in constructing any rubric regardless of the number of people participating:

Stage 1: Reflecting. In this stage, we take the time to reflect on what we want from the students, why we created this assignment, what happened the last time we gave it, and what our expectations are.

Stage 2: Listing. In this stage, we focus on the particular details of the assignment and what specific learning objectives we hope to see in the completed assignment.

Stage 3: Grouping and Labeling. In this stage, we organize the results of our reflections in Stages 1 and 2, grouping similar

expectations together in what will probably become the rubric dimensions.

Stage 4: Application. In this stage, we apply the dimensions and descriptions from Stage 3 to the final form of the rubric, using the grid formats shown in Chapter 1 or in the appendix.

In this chapter, we will show each step in each stage of rubric construction in detail, using examples from both a freshman core course and a graduate seminar. We do this to show how rubrics are drawn from and integral to our overall teaching goals and methods of instruction and to suggest some of the adaptations that may be necessary in different disciplines and at different levels of higher education.

Stage 1: Reflecting

In Stage 1, reflecting, we reflect not only on the assignment but also on the overall course objectives for this particular class. Moon (1999) defines reflection simply as a "mental process with purpose and/or outcome" (p. 5). Whether it is called "reflection" or something else, this kind of focused thinking is a part of every discipline. Even though the way we reflect may be different, the purpose is the same. All of us journal, meditate, draw mind maps, create outlines, make lists, analyze data, synthesize results, or engage in any number of personal or professional forms of reflection. All of us reflect prior to beginning a scholarly task such writing or creating a new lecture or class plan.

Constructing a rubric requires reflection on our overall class objectives, the assignment itself, its purposes, the task objectives, and students' prior knowledge, as well as our own previous experience with this type of assignment. The kind of reflection we all already do is easily adapted to rubric construction.

To begin a fruitful rubric reflection for any level, we have found it useful to focus on eight questions geared toward focusing our minds on what we already know but may never have articulated:

1. *Why did you create this assignment?* Think back to a previous reflective period, the one you engaged in before or as you wrote your syllabus. Is this assignment primarily designed to push the students to absorb as much content knowledge as possible (e.g., an exam), to develop a learning skill such as critical

thinking (e.g., a paper or critique), or to involve students in some sort of experiential learning (e.g., a lab, workshop, or performance)?

2. *Have you given this assignment or a similar assignment before?* What happened the last time you gave this or a similar assignment? What questions did the students ask about this assignment before and after they completed it? Were you pleased or displeased with the general result? What particularly satisfactory results can you recall? What particularly disappointing results can you recall? Are there any changes you can make to the task assignment to improve your chances of getting the same satisfactory results and avoiding the same pitfalls?
3. *How does this assignment relate to the rest of what you are teaching?* In what ways does it relate to other assignments? How important is it to the completion of future assignments that students complete this task successfully? How important is it to your discipline or their scholarly lives as a whole that they do well on this assignment?
4. *What skills will students need to have or develop to successfully complete this assignment?* Do they already have such skills and need to develop them further, or are they starting from scratch? Is the class mixed in terms of their existing capabilities? What, if anything, do you want to do about their skill levels? Is demonstrating one or more of these skills more important to you than others?
5. *What exactly is the task assigned?* Does it break down into a variety of different tasks? Are one or more of these component tasks more important than others? How can/will you explain the breakdown and nature of these component tasks to the students?
6. *What evidence can students provide in this assignment that would show they have accomplished what you hoped they would accomplish when you created the assignment?* What different kinds of evidence might students use to demonstrate their knowledge and skills?
7. *What are the highest expectations you have for student performance on this assignment overall?* What does an exemplary product look like?

8. *What is the worst fulfillment of the assignment you can imagine, short of simply not turning it in at all?* Where have students fallen short on the completion of similar assignments in the past? What are some of the pitfalls you might help your students to avoid this time?

We find it helps to write down the answers to these questions, but whether you do or not, the answers should supply the "big picture"—that is, the context of the assignment in the larger context of the class and your overall objectives. The answers should help you decide what kind of rubric will best serve your needs and the needs of your students. They should also help you decide whether you will construct your rubric from scratch or whether one of your old rubrics or a model rubric from this book or elsewhere can be adapted. These answers should also generate ideas that help you construct a high-quality rubric that communicates your expectations clearly to the students.

Stage 2: Listing

In Stage 2, listing, we turn our attention to describing how to capture the details of this assignment. We ask ourselves what specific learning objectives we hope will be accomplished with the completion of this assignment. The objectives will vary according to the overall course objectives, the nature of the task, the grade level of the students, and our experience in giving and grading this assignment in the past. In particular, the answers to Questions 4, 5, and 6 regarding skills required, the exact nature of the task, and the types of evidence of learning are most often our starting point in generating this list. Your choice of key questions may vary.

Whichever questions you choose, the answers can be used to create a new list of the most important (to you) learning objectives you expect students to accomplish by completing the task. As with writing, lecture preparation, or other scholarly tasks, the initial lists are apt to be messy accumulations of half-formed and even repetitious ideas to be refined, reorganized, and probably added to as you progress.

Lists of learning objectives can vary tremendously, even in classes that seem very similar and that are taught by the same professor. In the

examples that follow, we have included lists from two rather similar assignments taught by the same professor: oral presentations comparing and contrasting Japanese and American film versions of World War II. One of these, however, was a group project for a freshman core class designed to promote basic academic skills and interdisciplinary thinking. The other was for individual presentations of a similar topic in a graduate seminar in history. The learning objectives vary because of the different grade and skill level of the students, the different formats of the assignments (group and individual), and the long-term goals of the two classes (skills in the former, content in the latter).

The list of learning objectives for the *freshman core class* looked like the list in Figure 3.1. Note that for freshmen, the emphasis is more on skills than content. As Perry (1970) and others have documented, students do not necessarily come to College with the skills to engage in critical thinking. Most also have limited experience with public speaking, scholarly discussion, or cooperative work. Yet to succeed in higher education, students need these sets of skills (King & Kitchener, 1994; Leamnson, 2002). Many new freshmen core classes

Stage 2: Step 1
Freshman Core List of Learning Objectives

Develop public speaking skills.

Work well together as a group.

Learn to organize data and build a logical argument.

Show an awareness of different points of view including those of the presenters.

Recognize and express individual biases and opinions without letting them dominate or distort the evidence.

Recognize and understand how circumstances and events surrounding the creation of the film affect its nature and content.

Compile and effectively utilize accurate and appropriate evidence to support all points.

Figure 3.1 Stage 2: Listing. Step 1: List learning objectives. List of learning objectives for oral presentation assignment in a freshman core class at Portland State University.

Stage 2: Step 1
Graduate Seminar List of Learning Objectives

Tie the film analysis into the overall history and historiography of World War II.

Understand and use basic theories of film as presented in the text.

Select or develop a coherent theory to further explore the film in a focused, thematic manner.

Understand how this film compares or contrasts with other films being discussed in this class, especially those we have already seen.

Include and address other critiques of this film, whether to agree or disagree.

Present the results in an organized fashion using whatever visual or audio aids are appropriate and useful for the benefit of the class.

Figure 3.2 Stage 2: Listing. Step 1: List of learning objectives. Learning objectives for an oral presentation in a graduate seminar at Portland State University.

like those at Portland State University were, in fact, developed in good part to teach such skills. The list of goals and expectations for this class shown in Figure 3.1 reflects the emphasis on communication and critical thinking skills rather than content.

The list of learning objectives for individual presentations in the *graduate seminar* was quite different, as shown in Figure 3.2.

The second list is undoubtedly more satisfying to the "academic" in all of us, but comparing it to the list for the freshman core serves as a reminder of why this list of learning goals is necessary. The professor who created both lists not only drew on her experiential knowledge of student abilities at different levels, her disciplinary focus, and her theoretical biases within that discipline, but also on her understanding of her departments (history) or program's (Freshman Inquiry) objectives. In making her list, she made the difference crystal clear to herself first, a great asset in making things clear to students and for assuring that the final rubrics assessed what she hoped her students would learn in each class.

Once the learning goals have been listed, you can add a description of the highest level of performance you expect for each learning

Stage 2: Step 2
Freshman Core List of Highest Expectations for "Develop Public Speaking Skills" Learning Objective

Clear introduction that sets out the thesis and organization of the whole presentation.

Maintains good eye contact.

Body language is expressive and appropriate.

Speaks loudly and slowly enough to be easily understood.

Modulates voice quality and tone appropriately; does not drone.

Uses humor and stories that relate to the topic to liven up presentation.

Does not fumble with the overhead or projector.

Not too many words on the overhead or PowerPoint projection.

Captions of overhead or PowerPoint show key issues and themes.

Handouts are clear.

Handouts show key issues and themes.

Figure 3.3 Stage 2: Listing. Step 2: List of highest expectations. List of highest expectations for public speaking skills learning objective in a freshman inquiry class at Portland State University.

goal. These will later contribute to the "Descriptions of Dimensions" on the finished rubric. Like the objectives themselves, these descriptions also articulate the individual, disciplinary, and departmental objectives of the class. For example, Figure 3.3 presents the set of descriptions of the highest level performance of the "Develop public speaking skills" objective for the Freshman Inquiry group project.

There was no similar list of communication skills for the graduate seminar. Graduate students were expected to demonstrate decent communication and critical thinking skills, and these were therefore integrated into more content-focused learning objectives such as the "Tie the film analysis into the overall history and historiography of World War II", as shown in Figure 3.4.

Sometimes at this stage, rather than making lists, we use Post-its™. The ideas that would have been listed are now separated. We

Stage 2: Step 2
Graduate Seminar List of Highest Expectations for "Tie the Film Analysis into the Overall History and Historiography of World War II" Learning Objective

The major historical issue(s) addressed by the film are recognized and clearly articulated.

All major scholarly theories regarding this issue are articulated and the speaker takes a stand one way or another.

The speaker makes it clear what theories most affected her or his approach to the film.

The data introduced are accurate, appropriate, and, if controversial, defended.

Figure 3.4 Stage 2: Listing. Step 2: List of highest expectations. List of highest expectations for the history and historiography learning goal for an oral presentation in a graduate seminar at Portland State University.

put one idea or performance description on each Post-it™. These lists and/or Post-its™ often wind up stuck all over the office in little clumps of related ideas. The Post-its™ will give us the flexibility to move the ideas around when we begin grouping similar ideas together in the next stage. After listing or writing ideas on Post-its, we color code similar ideas. Color coding helps, although by the end our offices sometimes become so festooned with paper chains that we wonder if the holidays have come early. Cutting and pasting on the computer is tidier and works well for the more virtual minded.

At the end of Stage 2, you will have your overall learning objectives listed for the assignment, and under each objective you will also have a list that describes what the highest performance expectations for that particular learning objective are.

Stage 3: Grouping and Labeling

In Stage 3, grouping and labeling, we group similar performance expectations together and create labels for each group. We start with the final lists of highest performance expectations that we completed in Stage 2. We read through this list of performance expectations carefully

and begin to group together items that we think are related. We begin to construct groups of similar performance expectations such as organization, context, analysis, and presentation. This is inevitably a back-and-forth process in which existing groups suggest other groups that make up the overall assignment, while groups, once created, may result in ideas that went together under learning goals being reassigned to different groups. We often find that some performance expectations do not neatly fit in one group. When this happens to us, we construct an entirely new group of these related performance expectations.

Once the performance descriptions are in groups of similar skills, we read them and start to find out what is common across the group and label it. These labels will ultimately become our dimensions on the rubric, so its important to keep them clear and neutral. We try to limit them to a single word, such as "Organization," "Analysis," or "Citations."

In the case of the freshman core rubric, for example, most of the performance expectations listed in the "Develop public speaking skills" objective were grouped together in a category labeled "Presentation." However, the need for clear overheads, PowerPoints, or handouts also found their way into the "Organization" category, because caption selection and other aspects of creating visual aids involve developing an organizational framework. The need for a clear introduction that sets the thesis for the whole presentation might also have gone into the "Organization" category, but in the end it was considered sufficiently important to merit a group of its own labeled "Introduction." Thus, the original list of public speaking skills for the freshman core class wound up in three different groups as shown in Figure 3.5.

At the end of Stage 3, you will have all of the performance expectations related to your learning objectives now regrouped into new groups with labels. The original learning objectives, of course, will be hidden in your rubric but expressed through the individual descriptions of the performance expectations. The performance expectations related to each learning objective will have been separated into more familiar component skills such as "Organization," "Presentation," and "Introduction," which will become the dimensions of your new rubric.

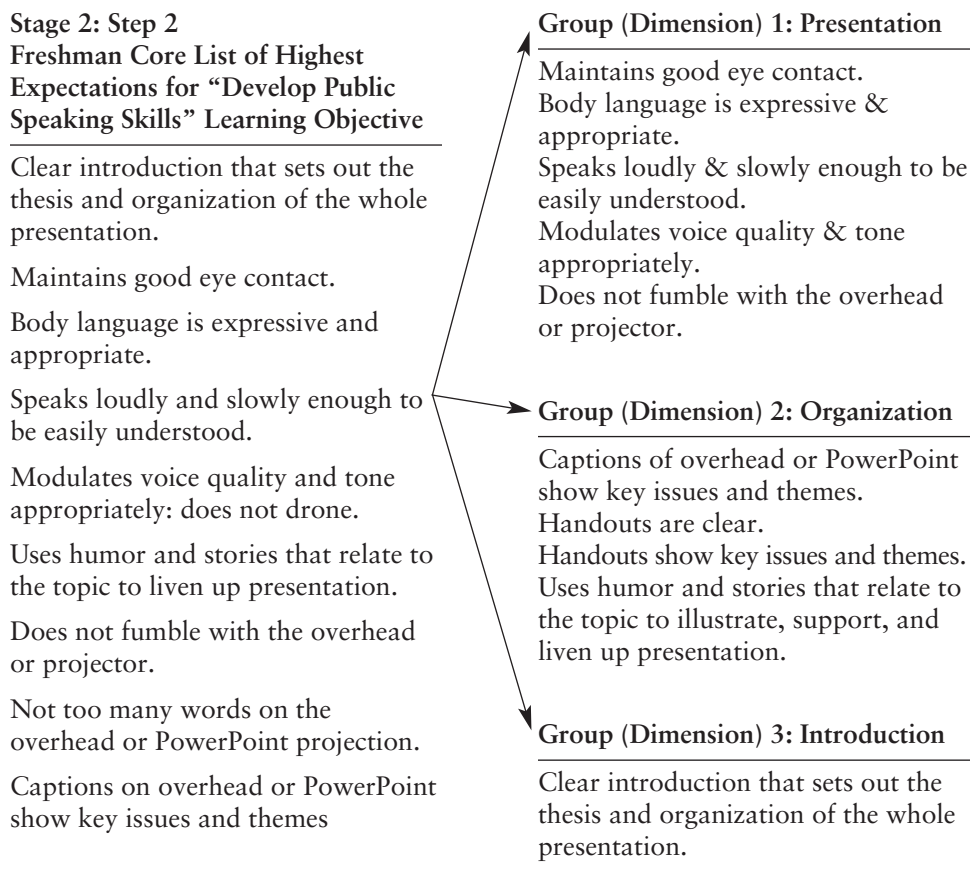

Figure 3.5 Stage 3: Grouping and Labeling. List of highest expectations moved into three groups that become rubric dimensions.

Stage 4: Application

In Stage 4: Application, we transfer our lists and groupings to a rubric grid. The labels for the groups of performance expectations now become the dimensions of the rubric and are placed in the left column of the rubric grid, while many of our earlier lists of learning and task objectives find their way into the descriptions of the highest level of performance for each dimension. In the case of the graduate seminar, the process stopped there with the creation of a scoring guide rubric.

Construction of a Scoring Guide Rubric

In the case of the graduate seminar described earlier, the professor decided to create a scoring guide rubric rather than a three-to-five-level rubric. A scoring guide rubric lists only one set of criteria: the

highest possible performance for each category. Individualized notes then tell students how completely they did or did not meet that criterion. Scoring guide rubrics require more grading time than three-to-five-level rubrics, but they are still faster to use for feedback than handwritten notes because we can reference what was left out without having to rewrite it each and every time. Scoring guide rubrics work best for assignments in which students are allowed greater flexibility of approach; in this case, they had the option of focusing on film theory or historical theory. For this reason, these theoretical frameworks were grouped together under the "Context" category, although they had originally been quite separate in terms of learning goals. The need to discuss the historical issues addressed by the film (it was a history class, after all) regardless of the theoretical approach found its way into both the "Introduction" category and the "Evidence" dimension.

Scoring guide rubrics provide greater flexibility of response and can make grading something that is happening rapidly (like an oral presentation) more organized and easier and quicker to grade when the work is good; they therefore fulfill most of the highest expectations spelled out in the scoring guide rubric. Scoring guide rubrics do not, however, save much time when dealing with a student who has to be given more explicit feedback to be successful the next time (see Chapter 6 on grading using scoring guide rubrics). Of course, sometimes just a simple "see me" encourages the student to seek the more elaborate feedback from the professor. Figure 3.6 on page 40 illustrates the finished scoring guide rubric used to grade the graduate seminar presentations.

Construction of a Three-to-Five-Level Rubric

Unlike the graduate students in the seminar, the professor decided that the students in the freshman class needed a clearer description of what constituted less than exemplary performances, partly in order to know what to avoid and partly to allow her to avoid lengthy written notes. She therefore decided on a three-level rubric with check boxes. A rubric with check boxes simply means breaking down the descriptions of dimensions into individual parts and including a box (❑) to check off beside each; this allows us to more accurately pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and show the student how he or she may actually incorporate bits of all three levels in one dimension.

Scoring Guide Rubric for Film Presentations

Task Description: Each student will develop an hour-long presentation on a Japanese or American movie about World War II designed to acquaint the class more fully with the theoretical, historical, and interpretive issues surrounding the film. Clips or other audio-visual aids may be used, but guard against overusing these items; remember that we have all seen the movie once.

Film:

	Criteria	Comments
Introduction	The introduction tells the audience exactly what to expect in terms of how the speaker feels about the movie, what theories and theoretical framework(s) she or he will introduce and what conclusions she or he will draw.	
Organization	The presentation is organized to create a logical argument and so that topics that need to be discussed together are presented together.	
Context	The presenter discusses the main historical issues raised by the film and how other film scholars and historians have dealt with these issues both with regard to this film and in general. The presenter explains where he or she stands on these issues, which theories he or she finds most useful, and why.	
Evidence	The presenter includes sufficient, detailed examples from the film and other sources to support her or his analyses.	
Analysis	The presenter uses her or his evidence to support a consistent, coherent analysis of how the film does or does not contribute to our understanding of World War II.	
Presentation	The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, loudly enough to be heard, but not too loudly; used appropriate, effective gestures and body language; and maintained eye contact with the class. Audio-visual aids, if used, are technically sound (to prevent fumbling with equipment), appropriate, and referenced in the presentation.	

Figure 3.6 Stage 4: Application. Groups placed on a scoring guide rubric listing only highest level of expectations for an oral presentation for a graduate seminar at Portland State University.

As we noted in Chapter 1, labeling the levels on the scale can be a delicate matter. We need to be clear about expectations and about failures as well as successes, yet we also try to avoid overly negative or competitive labels. These can discourage students. We have found that the best way to avoid overly negative scale labels is to remember that one major purpose of our rubric is to demonstrate for our students the steps toward an exemplary performance. In the case of the three-level rubric for the Freshman Inquiry group project, the professor considered the following options

- Exemplary, competent, beginning
- Proficient, intermediate, novice
- Exemplary, competent, not yet competent
- Excellent, good, developing
- 1, 2, 3
- Strong, satisfactory, weak

Eventually she settled on "Exemplary," "Competent," and "Developing" as the labels for each level of performance and placed these on the horizontal upper bar of the grid. Then, using her lists and groups from Stage 3, grouping and labeling, she added the "Dimensions" to the vertical side of the grid. Finally, she inserted the descriptions of the highest level of performance in each dimension to the appropriate place in the "Exemplary" column of the grid. The initial grid is shown in Figure 3.7 on page 42.

To complete the grid and the descriptions of the other levels, we find it easiest to fill in the lowest performance descriptions next. Because they are the lowest task expectations, these descriptions are often simply the negation of the exemplary task description, in which case, we can actually cut and paste the exemplary description and then edit it accordingly. In other cases, however, the lowest performance description is not a direct opposite, but a list of the typical mistakes that we have seen students commit over the years. It is sadly easy to define a very low performance.

This was certainly the case with the Freshman Inquiry rubric. In fact, it looked like Figure 3.8 on page 43, once the "Developing" descriptions of each dimension were filled in.

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five, students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All group members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentations	❑ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard without shouting, modulating voice tone and quality. ❑ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language and maintained eye contact with the audience. ❑ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long. ❑ The presenter used humor and anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation. ❑ The presenter or an assistant competently handled the equipment.		
Group work	❑ The presentation allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that promoted a logical discussion of the topic, and connections between individual presentations were clearly shown. ❑ Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect. ❑ The technologies used to illustrate and assist the presentation were appropriate and competently handled without any fumbling.		
Introduction	❑ The thesis is clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the rest of the presentation. ❑ The topics to be covered are introduced and the direction the overall presentation will take is made clear.		
Individual organization	❑ The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body, and conclusion. ❑ That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts.		
Individual content	❑ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate ❑ Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. ❑ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.		

Figure 3.7 Three-level rubric with check boxes. The scales have been defined and the description of the highest level of performance for each dimension have been filled in.

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five, students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All group members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentations	❑ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard without shouting, modulating voice tone and quality. ❑ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language and maintained eye contact with the audience. ❑ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long. ❑ The presenter used humor and anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation. ❑ The presenter or an assistant competently handled the equipment.		❑ The presenter mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or shouted, or droned to the point where intelligibility was compromised. ❑ The presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other body language that distracted seriously from the content. ❑ The presenter barely used the time allotted or used much too much time. ❑ The lack of humor and anecdotes made the presentation dull. ❑ There was a lot of fumbling with the equipment that could have been prevented with a little practice.
Group work	❑ The presentation allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that promoted a logical discussion of the topic, and connections between individual presentations were clearly shown. ❑ Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect. ❑ The technologies used to illustrate and assist the presentation were appropriate and competently handled without any fumbling.		❑ The presentation was seriously unbalanced so that one or a few people dominated or carried the ball. ❑ There was little if any evident logic in how the individual presentations followed one another, and the connections between individual presentations were unclear. ❑ Group members showed little respect or courtesy toward one another. ❑ The technologies used to illustrate and assist the presentation were unnecessary, clumsy, and accompanied by too much fumbling with the equipment.
Introduction	❑ The thesis is clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the rest of the presentation. ❑ The topics to be covered are introduced and the direction the overall presentation will take is made clear.		❑ The thesis is unclear, unstated, and not evident in the rest of the presentation, which is about something else. ❑ There is no indication of what topics will be covered or what direction that coverage will take.
Individual organization	❑ The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body, and conclusion. ❑ That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts.		❑ The presentation rambled with little evidence of an introduction, body, or conclusion. ❑ PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts either were not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant way.
Individual content	❑ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate ❑ Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. ❑ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.		❑ Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. ❑ Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. ❑ There is no clear connection between analyses, discussions, and examples, facts, and theories.

Figure 3.8 Three-level rubric with check boxes. The descriptions of the highest and lowest levels of performance for each dimension have been filled in.

Once this was done, filling in the middle level became a matter of distinguishing between the two; this is a bit more difficult when working with more levels, but even then, we have found that working from the outside in is the best method. Three level rubrics are relatively easy to construct. The middle level usually contains elements of both sides and some statements of degree of success or achievement. For example, in the Freshman Inquiry group presentation rubric, the professor differentiated between lapses that affected comprehensibility and those that did not. The result is shown in Figure 3.9 below.

Conclusion

Constructing rubrics using this four-stage approach does not require learning any new skills or procedures. It simply systematizes how we use the skills and talents that made us academics in the first place,

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five, students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All group members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentations	❑ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard without shouting, modulating voice tone and quality. ❑ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language and maintained eye contact with the audience. ❑ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long. ❑ The presenter used humor and anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation.	❑ The presenter was understood but mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered, shouted, or droned; intelligibility, however, was not compromised. ❑ The presenter's body language did not distract significantly, but the presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other inappropriate body language. ❑ The presenter's timing was too long or too brief. ❑ Humor and anecdotes were used, but they were over- or underused to liven up or illustrate the presentation. ❑ Equipment was used but there was some fumbling although not to the point where it seriously distracted from the presentation.	❑ The presenter mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or shouted, or droned to the point where intelligibility was compromised. ❑ The presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other body language that distracted seriously from the content. ❑ The presenter barely used the time allotted or used much too much time. ❑ The lack of humor and anecdotes made the presentation dull. ❑ There was a lot of fumbling with the equipment that could have been prevented with a little practice.

Figure 3.9 Three-level rubric. All descriptions of dimensions completed.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Group work	❑ The presenter or an assistant competently handled the equipment. ❑ The presentation allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that promoted a logical discussion of the topic, and connections between individual presentations were clearly shown. ❑ Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect. ❑ The technologies used to illustrate and assist the presentation were appropriate and competently handled without any fumbling.	❑ The presentation was unbalanced in the way time or content was assigned to members. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that mostly promoted a logical discussion of the topic, but connections between individual presentations were not clearly shown, or the presentation lost direction from time to time for other reasons. ❑ Group members mostly treated each other with courtesy and respect, but there were lapses where members were not listening to each other. ❑ Technologies were used to illustrate and assist the presentation; however, some were off topic, unnecessary, or accompanied by too much fumbling.	❑ The presentation was seriously unbalanced so that one or a few people dominated or carried the ball. ❑ There was little if any evident logic in how the individual presentations followed one another, and the connections between individual presentations were unclear. ❑ Group members showed little respect or courtesy toward one another. ❑ The technologies used to illustrate and assist the presentation were unnecessary, clumsy, and accompanied by too much fumbling.
Introduction	❑ The thesis is clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the rest of the presentation. ❑ The topics to be covered are introduced and the direction the overall presentation will take is made clear.	❑ The thesis emerges from the presentation but is either unclear, unstated, or not stated directly. ❑ A clear thesis is stated, but it is not carried through in the presentation. ❑ Topics to be covered and the direction the presentation will take are stated, but they are not the topics covered or the direction actually taken.	❑ The thesis is unclear, unstated, and not evident in the rest of the presentation, which is about something else. ❑ There is no indication of what topics will be covered or what direction that coverage will take.
Individual organization	❑ The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body, and conclusion. ❑ That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts.	❑ The individual presentation was mostly well organized, but there were problems with the introduction, body, or conclusion. ❑ The presenter used PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts, but these were too wordy or too vague to help the audience follow the organization.	❑ The presentation rambled with little evidence of an introduction, body, or conclusion. ❑ PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts either were not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant way.
Individual content	❑ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate ❑ Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. ❑ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate, and appropriate, but there were lapses. ❑ Theories were referenced but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used. ❑ The connection between analyses, discussions, and conclusions is evident or implied, but it is not explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. ❑ Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. ❑ There is no clear connection between analyses, discussions, and examples, facts, and theories.

Figure 3.9 *Continued*

from reflecting to listing to categorizing and applying. The use of these skills helps us create a grading tool, the rubric, that is advantageous to both teachers and students. By using the stages in this chapter, we can eventually streamline the process of rubric creation.

As is the case with creating syllabi and other teaching tools, most of us find that after constructing our first few rubrics, we begin to see that what initially seemed a time-consuming addition to our schedules becomes a real time-saver. In addition, we recognize that rubrics help us give more feedback, more consistently, with many more opportunities for all students to not only understand but to meet our expectations. In Chapter 4, we discuss the benefits and challenges of including others in this rubric construction process.

PART II

RUBRIC CONSTRUCTION AND USE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

4

RUBRIC CONSTRUCTION AND THE CLASSROOM

"Let the students create their own grading tool?" a curmudgeonly friend of ours once sneered. "While you're at it, why not put the fox in charge of the henhouse?" It does sound risky, doesn't it? But with our basic models, described in this chapter, involving students in rubric construction can be safe and highly rewarding for all concerned. In fact, the stages and steps of rubric construction described in Chapter 3 remain much the same regardless of whether you create your rubrics alone in the privacy of your office or in the classroom with the full input of your students.

This chapter introduces five models of how rubric construction can be integrated into classroom teaching, beginning with the rubric you create alone and ending with a model in which the teacher creates the assignment and the students create the rubric, working together in groups.

Involving Students in Rubric Construction

There are three good reasons for integrating rubric construction into classroom teaching:

- It prevents misunderstandings and misinterpretations before they affect student work; this makes for happier students and happier graders.
- It increases student awareness of themselves as "stakeholders" in the educational process, which, in turn, results in greater student involvement in the tasks assigned and greater professionalism and creativity (Boud, 1990; Lewis, Berghoff, & Pheeney, 1999).

- It can actually cut down your workload by letting your students do some of it—that is, create part of their own assessment tool.

Going further depends on your comfort with relinquishing some control over the construction of your grading tool, the rubric, and such instructional considerations as the class level, the objectives of the assignment, the importance of the assignment, and the amount of class time you want to devote to it. Students can always be involved in rubric construction, even if you limit that involvement to having them read and discuss a finished rubric before they begin the assignment.

An application to avoid is what we call the "surprise" rubric. Surprise rubrics happen when we grade an assignment with a rubric that students have never seen before, and then hand back the graded assignment with the rubric attached. When this occurs, students are justifiably miffed. "If you knew what you wanted, why didn't you tell us in the first place?" they ask testily. It is easy to fall into the trap of a "surprise" if we assume that students will automatically know the criteria based on what we say in class, write in the syllabus, and specify in the assignment. Students really want to see the criteria used for grading. Always show a rubric to your class before they begin the assignment.

Whether we use the simple presentation model with only a minor discussion or a highly interactive model, involving students lets us share the "burden of explanation" with them and we are no longer alone in explaining how to complete an assignment.

Avoiding student outrage is not, however, the main argument for involving students in rubric construction to some degree. Whether we use the simple presentation model, which involves only minor discussion, or the highly interactive 4X4 model, or something in between, by involving students, we share the "burden of explanation" with them and are no longer alone in explaining how to complete an assignment. Instead, we foster a discussion in which our students can tell us three basic things we need to know in order to make our explanation relevant:

- They tell us what they already know.
- They tell us what they don't know.

- They tell us what misconceptions and misunderstandings they have about the assignment.

By telling us what they know and don't know, students spare us considerable time and energy we might otherwise devote to unnecessary explanations and allow us to focus in on what really needs further explanation. In classes where student knowledge is highly uneven, students who are more advanced will also share what they know with their classmates who may not know it, thus sharing the teaching burden. This is desirable not only because students discussing ideas is a good thing, but because students are far more likely to retain knowledge that is not imparted by the professor (Light, 2001). They remember best the things they themselves said in class; second best, the things their classmates said; and last, the things the professors said. Thus, by sharing the "burden of explanation" through the rubric, we benefit both those students who understood something accurately, and who will now remember it all the better for having articulated their knowledge, and those who never knew it in the first place, who have now heard it in a form they are more likely to retain.

Each year the discussion of the first rubric presented in Portland State's Freshman Inquiry program is always an evaluation of the existing skills of the incoming class for the professor as well as a learning experience for the students.

For example, in one incoming class, the description of the highest expectation for the "Writing skills" dimension of the first rubric of the year, a three-level rubric with check boxes, generated markedly different responses within the same class, despite the fact that almost all the students were recent graduates of the same basic public school system. The description of the highest level of performance in the "Writing skills" dimension read:

- ❑ Spelling and grammar are accurate.
- ❑ Paragraphs are used appropriately and are internally well constructed.
- ❑ Transitions are smooth and logical.
- ❑ The tone is consistent and appropriate for a scholarly paper.

After presentation of the rubric, the student questions surfaced. Some were not even familiar with using a computer to assist with spelling and grammar. Others were unfamiliar with the concept of a Writing Center or how to use one. The professor, who in this case had passed out information regarding the Writing Center and therefore considered his job done in that regard, was stunned to discover that several of his students thought this was a place where those who liked to write hung out, a form of campus club. And while he was explaining the nature and uses of Writing Center, still other students in the same class were engaged in a lively discussion regarding the ideological reasons for using or not using "I" in an academic paper. Most of the class fell somewhere in between these extremes, and eventually these and many other questions were answered not by the professor, who wisely stuck to facilitating the process, but by the students themselves using the rubric as a mediator.

By creating a situation in which he invited his class to share what they did and did not know, this professor learned many things he needed to know about his students and the diverse nature of what turned out to be a lively but difficult class to teach. This is not unusual. He also learned that in many cases, his students did not really know what they thought they knew. The discussions that attend rubric construction are effective trouble-shooting techniques for finding out the misconceptions and misunderstandings students may have without knowing it.

For example, in a Portland State interdisciplinary Sophomore Inquiry class on Asian Studies, the professor asked her students to write a paper analyzing three Web sites on Hindu deities with regard to how they did or did not reveal Orientalist assumptions. She considered this a simple assignment, especially since the three sites were specifically selected because they represented extreme Orientalist stereotypes about Asia. When she presented the grading rubric to her class, however, she was astonished to find that many of the students were puzzled that the "Analysis" dimension carried such weight. After some class discussion, it emerged that these students thought the assignment was to discuss Hindu deities using the three Web sites as authoritative for research purposes. What a good thing that the confusion was sorted out before the students devoted considerable effort to deliberately

producing a poorly researched paper based entirely on questionable Internet sources!

Participation in rubric construction can also help to motivate students, partly because it helps them to understand the assignment better in its various parts, but also because this participation gives students a sense of ownership of the assignment. This is especially true when the participation is considerable. Lewis, Berghoff, and Pheeney (1999) studied the impact of "negotiated rubrics" on student motivation. Finding that negotiated rubrics create a greater sense of student involvement in the tasks assigned, they also noted that the papers produced showed a high level of professionalism and creativity.

Thus, collaborative construction of a rubric helps students understand assignment expectations, increases student motivation, and gives teachers invaluable feedback about their prior knowledge, skill levels, ability to self-assess, and motivation.

Five Models of Collaborative Rubric Construction

But how can you maintain control over your classroom and ensure that standards will be maintained while the foxes are not only guarding the henhouse, but often building it? The truth is that we never really give up that much control. Even when our students are racing about the classroom with Post-its™ or gathered in groups of four making lists to be presented in the 4X4 model—we retain the essential control over the structure and nature of the assignment. Beyond that is room for negotiation and student participation.

We control the process by which the rubric will be used in the classroom. We say whether the students' participation will be limited to discussion and questions as in the presentation model, expanded to include some input as in the pass-the-hat model, or extended as far as creating an entire rubric for our approval or disapproval as in the 4X4 model.

In Chapter 3, we described a four-stage process of rubric creation:

- *Stage 1: Reflecting* on the task and context
- *Stage 2: Listing* our learning objectives and expectations
- *Stage 3: Grouping and Labeling* the objective and criteria
- *Stage 4: Application* to a rubric grid format

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
1. Presentation	Professor	Professor	Professor	Professor and students who ask questions and reflect their own understandings
2. Feedback	Professor	Professor	Professor	Professor and students who edit for clarity
3. Pass-the-hat	Professor	Professor/ students	Professor and students who group student contributions	Professor and students who create final rubric
4. Post-it™	Professor	Students	Professor and students who facilitate grouping	Professor and students who create final rubric
5. 4X4	Professor	Students	Students	Students

Figure 4.1 Professor and student rubric construction roles in models of rubric construction.

Figure 4.1 shows how the stages can be used to understand the roles that professors and students play in our rubric construction models. As we move from Model 1, Presentation, to Model 5, 4X4, the professor plays a lesser role while the students play a larger role in rubric construction.

1. The Presentation Model

The Presentation Model is the most commonly used rubric construction model. In the Presentation Model, the teacher does all the work and makes all the major decisions. Following the stages set out in Chapter 3, you set the dimensions of the rubric by setting out what is expected in terms of fulfilling the specific assignment and presenting it an acceptable, scholarly fashion. You also determine the weight

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
1. Presentation	Professor	Professor	Professor	Professor and students who ask questions and reflect their own understandings

Figure 4.2 Professor and student rubric construction roles for the Presentation Model.

that will be given to each dimension, decide on a scale and, pulling on past experience and current expectations, decide what constitutes an excellent fulfillment of the assignment, establish one or more acceptable levels of fulfillment, and describe the lowest level of performance (see Figure 4.2).

All that remains is to communicate the results of your labors to the students. You begin by passing out the rubric before your students have started the assignment it will be used to grade and asking them to read it. That alone can be a challenge. We have found that some students tend to regard handouts as one more piece of information they don't have to write down and stow it away in their backpacks with only a cursory glance. Here again, we find that the obsession many students have with grades can be turned to our own advantage.

One way to assure that they do read it and take it seriously is to ask them to staple the rubric to the completed assignment when they hand it in. No rubric, no grade, and maybe even a penalty besides. This not only saves paper and copying costs, but it also emphasizes the connection between the rubric and the grade.

That can be the end of it as far as the presentation model is concerned. However, we have found that we get better results from having the students do the preliminary reading of the rubric in class, followed by a call for questions. We usually allow some time not only for questions but also for some serious discussion of the criteria and expectations reflected in the rubric, but students really have no opportunity to revise the rubric. We may occasionally alter the rubric if something comes up in the discussion that needs clarification, but we neither make nor imply any promises beforehand.

Faced with a list of clear expectations, sometimes with actual grading points or percentages attached, many freshmen are motivated for the first time to ask such questions as:

- What's a citation, and what's an acceptable format for a citation?
- What do you mean by my own analysis of the work?
- Do we lose points if it is late?

We were often surprised by such questions, which reveal the students' lack of awareness about some of the most basic academic expectations. Explaining such details as what a footnote is, what MLA or APA formats are, when to use which, and the rest of whatever confusion the rubric presentation has caused can seem lengthy, but it's surely better than informing an entire class that no one got an A because no one cited sources, or included a personal analysis, or whatever the issue was. We know that contrary to the rumors among some students, professors don't enjoy giving bad grades.

The Presentation Model, although not highly interactive, is an early warning system about student responses to and knowledge of expectations for professors and students alike. This model of rubric creation is well suited to large, lower-division, undergraduate classes in which lecturing is the main teaching style. The Presentation Model does not take up much class time. The professor does most of the talking and simply fields questions, which seldom takes more than half an hour and can take considerably less.

2. The Feedback Model

The Feedback Model differs from the Presentation Model only in that when we present the rubric to the class, it is with the understanding that it can still be changed through student feedback. Before the professor finalizes the rubric, the students are presented with a completed rubric but are given the option to revise it by making edits, offering ideas, and asking questions. Figure 4.3 summarizes the roles that professors and students play in constructing the rubric for the Feedback Model.

To foster student feedback, students can be divided into small groups to discuss the rubric and decide what needs clarification and

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
2. Feedback	Professor	Professor	Professor	Professor and students who edit for clarity

Figure 4.3 Professor and student rubric construction roles for feedback model.

elaboration. Suggestions then may be taken from a limited number of group spokespersons rather than from individuals. This not only cuts down on potential chaos, but also allows greater input from shy students and prevents the more verbal students from imposing their views on the others.

In some cases, we encourage more active student participation by suggesting ways in which students might want to alter the rubric. One simple area in which to allow student input is in the weighting of the dimensions. Sometimes we include weighted dimensions that add up to only 70 percent of the final grade but allow students to decide both the weight and nature of the remaining 30 percent of the grading criteria. Sometimes we weight all dimensions equally and ask the students if they are comfortable with this strategy. Few are, and the discussions that follow can be very productive because students debate, often for the first time in their lives, the differing value of content, ideas, and the technical side of writing.

Another method is to leave parts of the rubric blank and ask students to fill it in. This works well with three-to-five-level rubrics where we can fill in the best and worst expectations and ask the students to suggest what might lie midway between them. Not only does this force the students to read the dimension descriptions on each end carefully, but it also forces them to think back on their past experiences with academic writing including their past disasters. Students often add possibilities for disaster that we never even thought of. This method allows us to retain considerable control by including what we consider absolutely vital, while allowing the students considerable latitude in adding their input. Of course, we also take notes on their suggestions and eventually incorporate what we regard as valid into the final rubric.

In addition to the early warnings also provided by the Presentation Model, the Feedback Model can actually encourage quiet students to participate more fully. The promise of a better grade based on a rubric that at least partly highlights their strengths is a powerful incentive to speak up. Also, if we use the group presentations, the knowledge that their input will be presented as part of a group contribution and not an individual assertion often eases the way for students to understand that they do have something to contribute.

The need to contribute ideas also allows students to realize that assignments are not just hoops to leap through but a set of performance expectations that further their education in a variety of ways. Collaborating even in this initial way on the assessment tool itself indicates to students that they can self-assess against the rubric dimensions as they complete the assignment. Ideally, this will eventually lead them to self-assess with or without a rubric, thus becoming fully active learners.

The Feedback Model works best in smaller, lower-division undergraduate courses where discussion is part of the normal teaching style. In general, the Feedback Model is somewhat more time consuming than the Presentation Model because it encourages more active participation and discussion from the students. In general, however, it should not require more than one class period, and it can frequently be accomplished in less time.

3. The Pass-the-Hat Model

The Pass-the-Hat Model gives the students a maximum amount of flexibility and creativity in developing task expectations for a grading rubric, while allowing the professor to retain considerable control over the final product. In this model, the teacher does not create a rubric in advance but helps the students to create part of their own rubric during class time. Thus, students are involved in varying degrees in Stage 2 (Listing), Stage 3 (grouping and labeling), and Stage 4 (application). The students start with the professor-created assignment and list possible expectations for this assignment. The professor then groups and labels these expectations into dimensions and applies these to the rubric grid. Figure 4.4 summarizes these roles.

We begin by explaining both the assignment and the nature of a rubric as clearly as possible. Usually we try to use the Pass-the-Hat

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
3. Pass-the-Hat	Professor	Professor/ students	Professor and students who group student contributions	Professor and students who create final rubric

Figure 4.4 Professor and student rubric construction roles for a pass-the-hat model.

Model only with students who have already been introduced to the concept of rubrics through the Presentation or Feedback Models. In some cases, however, we have started students on a Pass-the-Hat Model of rubric construction without such previous experience. In those cases, we may pass out a generic rubric, usually a three-level rubric with the scales and possibly even some basic dimensions filled in to give students a better idea of what the finished product will look like. We also usually include a short presentation on rubrics, sometimes showing the students rubrics we have used in the past.

To begin the Pass-the-Hat exercise where we gather student input, we carefully review the assignment described in the syllabus. Then, we pass out three to five slips of paper to each student and ask them to write down what they think should define an A paper. We ask students to write only one suggestion per slip of paper. This facilitates Stage 3 (grouping and listing), allowing us to make the groupings for the rubric dimensions either in class or in our offices after class. We usually allow the students to consult with each other at this stage, and sometimes we actively organize them into groups.

We then collect the slips of paper in a hat or some other receptacle (some professors have great fun with this) and organize them into groups that will become the descriptions of the dimensions of the new rubric. Some professors prefer to take these slips to the privacy of their offices. However, doing the organization in front of the class creates greater student buy-in and also allows us to discuss the partly created rubric while student contributions and discussions are fresh in their own minds.

When we usually take their suggestions directly to our offices (mostly for time-related reasons) to do Stages 3 and 4, we are particularly careful to include student language in the final rubric as much as

possible. This not only increases the legitimacy of the rubric in the students' eyes, but when we pass out the final version, at least one student is certain to announce proudly, "That's my bit." The others then start looking for their bits, and as a result the rubric gets carefully and thoroughly read.

Many professors who have never used the Pass-the-Hat Model worry about what to do if the students leave out a vitally important aspect of the assignment. The surprise for us has been that as a group they rarely do. If they do leave something out, however, we put it in. We may make the addition while we are collecting and organizing the slips of paper in front of the class. "No one mentioned citations," we announce looking shocked, and then we add it. Few students will forget to include citations in their papers after that.

Regardless of whether or not we read the contributions out loud and begin grouping them into dimensions in front of the class, the process always ends with us retiring to our offices to produce the finished rubric. Thereafter, the process takes on the form of the Presentation or Feedback Model, depending on whether or not further changes are permitted.

The Pass-the-Hat Model is well suited to small to medium-sized classes (fewer than thirty students) at any level where discussion is a regular part of the teaching method. Although highly interactive and learner centered, the Pass-the-Hat Model is not terribly time consuming, especially if the professor simply collects the student contributions and constructs the rubric outside of class. If the professor wishes to read off the student contributions, invite further comments, and suggest initial dimension categories, it will, of course, take considerably longer. In its simplest form, however, it seldom takes longer than half an hour.

4. The Post-it™ Model

An extension of the pass-the-hat model, the Post-it™ Model gives greater control to the students who create not simply some of the descriptions of the dimensions, but the dimensions themselves. Figure 4.5 charts the roles that professors and students play. Students are more involved in Stages 2, 3, and 4 than in the previous models. Because the Post-it™ Model involves students in creating groups of

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
4. Post-it™	Professor	Students	Professor and students who facilitate grouping	Professor and students who create final rubric

Figure 4.5 Professor and student rubric construction roles for a Post-it™ model.

ideas and creating dimensions, we give them Post-its™ rather than slips of paper to write their ideas on. Then they can stick their Post-its™ on the whiteboard, the walls, posters, or any other surface that seems useful and be able to move them around easily to create groups.

We begin the Post-it™ Model in the same way we began the Pass-the-Hat Model. We pass out the Post-its™ and ask each student to write down two to three things they think should define an excellent fulfillment of the assignment, one per Post-it™. We do not, however, collect these in a hat or any other receptacle. Instead, we invite the students to stick them up on the whiteboard, blackboard, or any convenient wall.

Thereafter, chaos ensues. We ask the students to read one another's contributions and to try to organize them by putting related items together in the same area. We act as referees as they debate whether or not a Post-it™ reading "good ideas based on accurate facts" should be grouped with other Post-its™ dealing with ideas or with Post-its™ that relate to the importance of accurate research. What they are really doing, of course, is the grouping we would otherwise do in the Pass-the-Hat Model to create the dimensions of the new rubric. "Good ideas based on accurate facts" actually belongs in at least two dimensions (to be labeled "Analysis" and "Content," perhaps) and really should have been written on two separate Post-its™, but we let the students figure that out. In general, there are enough other Post-its™ bearing similar suggestions that this one need not be torn in half or duplicated, although that does sometimes occur. One major revelation students often mention after participating in the Post-it™ Model is a greater awareness of how the elements of good writing overlap and interact with each other.

Once the student contributions are grouped, we bring in poster boards or, if we can get them, the largest Post-it™ boards. We stick or prop these up around the classroom and call for volunteers; each volunteer is given a black marker and a poster or large Post-it™. Then we read off all the contributions in a single group and ask the class to come up with a title for the dimension that binds these together. Usually we demand they come up with a single word, although we've been known to settle for two or even three word titles; we've also been known to do some prompting at this stage. Once the class decides on a dimension title, a volunteer writes it on the top of one of the posters and copies the main descriptions from the original grouped Post-its™ onto the final poster. At this stage, it is not unusual for students to spot an omission and add new descriptions to the final list.

We then move on to the next loose grouping of Post-its™ and repeat the process. Once all the posters are completed, we collect them, take them back to our offices, and create the final rubric.

The Post-it™ Model is best suited to smaller, upper-division or graduate courses where students already have a fairly strong academic background. In larger classes, it is apt to cause confusion, partly because students are not accustomed to designing their own grading tool and partly because academic discipline is likely to be looser. In addition, the room design itself may not foster collaboration with bolted-down seats filled to the side walls.

The Post-it™ Model is quite time consuming and is mostly intended for large, complex, and end-of-term assignments. It can take as many as two or even three class periods. The time is seldom wasted, however. Even with upper division and graduate students, misconceptions can and do occur, and the extended discussions that accompany the grouping and labeling brings out these misconceptions.

5. The 4X4 Model

Anderson's (1998) 4X4 Model has some elements of control but allows for student input at all stages of the rubric construction process. In this model, the professor's role is limited to setting the assignment, explaining what the finished rubric will look like in a generic sense, and facilitating the creation of the rubric by the students. The students fully participate in all stages of creating the final rubric, as indicated in the summary chart in Figure 4.6.

Rubric Construction Model	Stage 1: Reflecting	Stage 2: Listing	Stage 3: Grouping and labeling	Stage 4: Application
5. 4X4	Professor/ Students	Students	Students	Students

Figure 4.6 Professor and student rubric construction roles for a 4X4 model.

To begin the process, we refer to the syllabus and read the assignment description. We then divide the students into groups of four; at least, four is the number used by Anderson (1998), but we have found that it's not essential to be that exact. In these groups, students draw on their own experiences to identify and discuss four task dimensions that they think are most important in successfully completing the assignment for which the rubric is to be designed. Each group writes down its list of four task dimensions on a board, an overhead transparency, or even a PowerPoint slide if computer projection technology is available.

One spokesperson from each group then presents the group's work to the class, focusing on one task dimension out of the four, possibly the one that generated the most discussion or about which everyone felt the most passion. As facilitators, we help identify similarities and differences among the various groups' task dimensions, but we avoid taking sides. After each group has presented its task dimensions, we ask the entire class to vote on which top four should be included in the rubric. Some professors insist on a consensus; we usually settle for a two-thirds majority vote. This is not always easy to achieve, and the groups may have to meet and develop a second or even a third set of task dimensions before finding four they can all (or two-thirds of them, anyway) agree on. The four task dimensions selected by this method become the dimensions of the new rubric.

The students return to their groups and write up four descriptions for each of the task dimensions describing four levels of performance from 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. These descriptions are again shared with the class using a board, an overhead, or a computer projection. As before, we act as facilitators, pointing out similarities and contrasts in each group's efforts. Finally, the class discusses the descriptions and votes on the results until consensus

or a two-thirds majority is reached. The results then become the descriptions of the dimensions on the new rubric.

Sometimes we send the students back to their groups at this point to label the scale of the new rubric with something more descriptive than four numbers. We try to provide encouraging, nonjudgmental labels like "Exemplary," "Proficient," "Developing," and "Emerging," but ultimately this too is a student decision.

The 4X4 Model is almost entirely a student creation. We simply take what has been produced in class and put it in a tidier form. We may sometimes tweak a few points, but students should recognize their work in the rubric.

The 4X4 Model is suitable to any level and almost any size class (more than eight and fewer than one hundred students). Despite the high level of student involvement, it works well even with freshmen because of the ample opportunity it affords for group reflection and refinement of initial ideas; if teaching assistants are available to circulate and monitor groups, so much the better. Freshmen are often surprised to discover that they know a lot more about what constitutes good academic work than they ever imagined.

Because the 4X4 Model takes even more time than the Post-it™ Model, often as much as one to two full class periods, it is best suited to large, content-heavy assignments such as research papers or term projects. You and your students will quickly discover that rubric dimensions and the descriptions of those dimensions cannot be developed in any meaningful way without also discussing the assignment and the content of the class. Thus, the time allocated for rubric creation can be blended with the time allocated for class discussions of content.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have described how we integrate rubrics and rubric construction into our teaching methods. We have also offered some advice, based on our own experiences, on how to determine which approach is best for different levels and class sizes and for different types of assignments. But don't take our word for it. Experiment for yourself. You can also combine different aspects of these five models to create your own model for your own unique teaching style and your own unique classes.

5

RUBRIC CONSTRUCTION WITH OTHERS: TEACHING ASSISTANTS, TUTORS, OR COLLEAGUES

How many professors does it take to construct a rubric? The same number it takes to change a lightbulb: one, plus maybe a few students. For a long time, those seemed to be the two options. We constructed our rubrics in the privacy of our offices and presented them to our classes (presentation model; see Chapter 4), and that was the beginning of clear communication of our expectations to students. At other times, we involved our students in rubric construction, using one of the models of rubric construction described in Chapter 4. Recently, however, we have found that involving our teaching assistants, the Writing Center, other tutorial staff, and even our colleagues in the act of rubric construction can often make our rubrics more effective as assessment and teaching tools as well as time-saving grading devices.

Involving Teaching Assistants in Rubric Construction

Certainly we have good reasons to involve our T.A.s in rubric construction. T.A.s are, by their very nature, there to help us, something they can do much better if they understand what we are trying to accomplish. Virtually all T.A.s appreciate a certain amount of leadership; they are inexperienced as instructors or graders and are often apprehensive. Even T.A.s who will not be grading have much to gain from being involved in rubric construction. Rubric construction requires articulating what is and is not important for each assignment and for the class overall. Simply knowing that can help a T.A. become better at leading discussion sections, overseeing labs, running practice

sessions, or doing whatever it is T.A.s assist with in different disciplines. Also, because many T.A.s plan to become professors eventually, involving them in rubric construction models good teaching practice.

T.A.s can also help us with rubrics regardless of whether or not they will be using them to grade. They are, as a rule, closer to the students and can often offer insights into what needs to be spelled out and what does not.

Collaborating with T.A.s who are going to be doing some or all of our grading is routine. We don't simply hand a stack of papers to a T.A. without offering some guidelines about how they are to be graded. Many professors who have never heard of a grading rubric regularly hand their T.A.s lists of key points they want to see covered in the papers; these lists are, in fact, the same kinds of lists we produced as part of the Stage 2 (listing) or Stage 3 (grouping and labeling) discussed in Chapter 3. As with so much of rubric construction, creating a rubric with a T.A. is simply a more systematized version of something most of us do anyway.

The key question we must ask ourselves is how much control over rubric creation we want to give to the T.A. The more work we do ourselves, the less opportunity the T.A. has for input and the less the T.A. is able to assist us. As noted earlier, even professors who do not care to have their T.A.s do anything beyond leading discussion, lab, or practice sections, and who prefer to do their own grading, still have something to gain from at least consulting T.A.s on rubric construction. For other professors, there is an escalating possibility for T.A. involvement to be considered:

- Professor creates the rubric and gives it to the T.A. to use in grading.
- Professor creates a list of the basic dimensions and main points (Stage 3, grouping and labeling, as shown in Chapter 3) but lets the T.A. create the rubric; the professor checks the rubric and makes changes before allowing it to be used for grading.
- Professor creates a list of goals and key points (Stage 2, listing, as shown in Chapter 3) and lets the T.A. create a rubric; the professor checks the rubric and makes changes before allowing it to be used for grading.

- Professor tells the T.A. to create a rubric but checks it and makes changes before it is used for grading.

Working with a T.A. can also be combined with working with the students. Often T.A.-led discussion sections are far more suitable places for the more time-consuming forms of interactive rubric construction such as the Post-it™, Pass-the-Hat, or 4X4 Models described in Chapter 4. We often find it useful to have the T.A. work with the students to produce a rubric. However, we never give up the right to look over, veto or make changes in a rubric created entirely by students and a T.A.

Involving Tutorial Staff in Rubric Construction

Collaborating on a rubric with a T.A. is usually just a more explicit way of delegating tasks and sharing our expectations. Collaborating directly with staff from the Writing Center, math tutors, librarians, computer specialists, or other academic facilities designed to provide specific forms of assistance to our students, however, is something else. Some professors do this when they assign a major paper or project in a class where they know many of the students lack the necessary skills.

For example, professors in Portland State University's Freshman Inquiry sometimes collaborate with the Writing Center on the grading rubric for a research paper that is a required component of the second term of the yearlong class. They know that many students still have serious writing problems at this stage, and the Writing Center staff will inevitably be involved one way or another. Collaborating with them on rubric construction allows them to give useful input and ask questions that will inevitably come up anyway.

Even when we do not collaborate directly with supporting student services, however, a rubric means that we collaborate with them indirectly through the rubric. We always notify support services about our use of rubrics and suggest that they insist on seeing the rubric whenever they are helping one of our students. When working closely with student services on complex and important assignments, this kind of collaboration takes no more than a few minutes on the phone. An e-mail message with the rubric attached is equally easy

and useful. For the most part, these notifications are met with gratitude. Rubrics provide a much richer array of information about the assignment than most students can generally offer, and most support staff find them a great aid in figuring out how to guide students in completing their assignments.

Involving Colleagues in Rubric Construction

Collaborating with colleagues on grading rubrics is a far less common occurrence. In general, it occurs only when we are team teaching or mentoring junior faculty or adjuncts. In both cases, however, collaborating on grading rubrics can be a rewarding experience for faculty, since it offers them an opportunity to discuss shared goals and teaching methodologies and also a chance to evaluate and validate their own grading practices.

Rubrics are certainly useful in providing needed consistency in team-taught classes. The term "team teaching" is usually applied to classes in which two or more professors teach a single class, but it can also apply to classes that are supposed to be the same, but are taught by different professors (e.g., 17 sections of first-year French language or 22 sections of Introduction to American Studies).

Sharing rubrics for major assignments in cases like these provides some consistency, without taking away from the flexibility and personalized approach most professors correctly expect to have in their classrooms. Sharing rubrics with colleagues can also reveal whether or not grading is more or less consistent.

Professors at Portland State, in a Freshman Inquiry class titled "Metamorphosis," created a rubric together. Although described as "team taught," in fact the professors differed considerably in their approaches, assignments, and even texts. This was not too surprising. The seven professors involved in teaching the class included two English professors, one historian, one gender studies scholar, a chemist, and a political scientist. To add chaos to confusion, two members of the team did not teach at Portland State but at a community college. All members of this team subscribed to the same general thematic organization and met regularly to exchange information on what was going on in the various classes. They shared one text per quarter and one assignment per year—a research paper on "a person,

institution, or movement that has created or sought to create significant change." Each professor was welcome to add his or her own requirements and limitations to that very broad assignment.

When the Metamorphosis team decided to put its research paper assignment to the test with a shared rubric that all team members would use to grade their students' papers, regardless of how the assignment had been altered for each class, they anticipated major problems. To begin with, they knew they had different teaching styles and opinions; they often clashed, albeit amicably, in their team meetings. Some gave their students extremely specific directions and limited the kinds of persons, institutions, or movements their students could choose. Others left the field wide open.

Yet when they sat down to begin Stage 2 of rubric construction, listing (see Chapter 3), they discovered that they differed far less than expected—to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, "a research paper is a research paper is a research paper." Their lists were remarkably similar and, with a little help from a consultant (who gently explained about grids, dimensions, and the other aspects of rubric design discussed in this book), they produced a rubric that was acceptable to all of them. The final collaboratively constructed rubric is shown in Figure 5.1.

The only real point of contention was that some of the professors wanted to ascribe different points to different dimensions. They resolved this problem by assigning no points to any dimension; professors were free to add them or to leave the matter of points to their own discretion. Given such flexibility, the Metamorphosis team expected that the rubric would reveal inconsistent grading practices. However, when a group of outside graders were brought in to provide a second opinion, the results showed that not only was grading very consistent across the team, but by using the rubric, nonteam members were also able to grade consistently and fairly (Redder, 2003).

This last advantage is of particular importance when we consider one other group of colleagues with whom we might want to share rubrics: adjuncts. The increasing use of adjuncts rather than new tenure track professors is regrettable but real. Rubrics will not solve the many overall problems this practice causes, but it can address the immediate issue of integrating an adjunct into an existing department and set of classes as rapidly as possible. Most professors

Grading Rubric for Metamorphosis Paper

Task Description: Write a research paper about a person, institution, or movement that has created or sought to create significant change. (Professors were allowed to add to this description but not to subtract from it.)

High mastery	Average mastery	Low mastery
Communication		
❑ An inviting introduction draws the reader in, a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.	❑ The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion, but the introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation or the conclusion may not tie the paper into a coherent whole.	❑ There is no real lead-in to set up what follows and no real conclusion to wrap things up.
❑ *There is a clear thesis.*	❑ *There is a thesis but it is ambiguous or unfocused.*	❑ *There is no clear thesis.*
❑ Transitions are thoughtful and clearly show how ideas connect.	❑ Transitions often work well, but some leave connections between ideas fuzzy.	❑ Connections between ideas are often confusing or missing.
❑ *Uses an appropriate variety of sources, which are well integrated and support the author's points.*	❑ *Sources generally support the author's points, but more or a greater variety need to be cited.*	❑ *Citations are infrequent or often seem to fail to support the author's points.*
❑ Quotations, paraphrases and summaries are used and cited appropriately.	❑ Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries generally work but occasionally interfere with the flow of the writing, seem irrelevant, or are incorrectly cited.	❑ Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries tend to break the flow of the piece, become monotonous, don't seem to fit or are not cited.
❑ *Uses the proper format (APA, MLA, etc.)*	❑ *Uses the proper format but there are occasional errors.*	❑ *Frequent errors in format or incorrect format used.*
❑ Sequencing is logical and effective.	❑ Sequencing shows some logic, but it is not under complete control and may be so predictable than the reader finds it distracting.	❑ Sequencing seems illogical, disjointed, or forced.
❑ *Spelling is generally correct even on more difficult words.*	❑ *Spelling is generally correct, but more difficult words may be misspelled.*	❑ *There are frequent spelling errors, even on common words.*
❑ Punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader effectively through the text.	❑ End punctuation is correct, but internal punctuation is sometimes missing or wrong.	❑ Punctuation is often missing or incorrect, including terminal punctuation.
❑ *Grammar and usage contribute to the clarity; conventions, if manipulated for stylistic effect, work.*	❑ *There are problems with grammar or usage, but they are not serious enough to distort meaning.*	❑ *Errors in grammar or usage are frequent enough to become distracting and interfere with meaning.*
❑ Voice and style are appropriate for the type of paper assigned.	❑ Voice and style don't quite fit with the type of paper assigned.	❑ Voice and style are not appropriate for the type of paper assigned.
❑ *Paragraphs are well-focused and coherent.*	❑ *Paragraphs occasionally lack focus or coherence.*	❑ *Paragraphs generally lack focus or coherence.*

Figure 5.1 Faculty-team-created rubric for shared assignments in a freshman inquiry class at Portland State University.

Critical Thinking ❏ The paper displays insight and originality of thought. ❏ *There is sound and logical analysis that reveals clear understanding of the relevant issues.* ❏ There is an appropriate balance of factual reporting, interpretation and analysis, and personal opinion. ❏ *The author goes beyond the obvious in constructing interpretation of the facts.* ❏ Telling and accurate details are used to reinforce the author's arguments. ❏ *The paper is convincing and satisfying.*	❏ There are some original ideas, but many seem obvious or elementary. ❏ *Analysis is generally sound, but there are lapses in logic or understanding.* ❏ The balance between factual reporting, interpretation and analysis, and personal opinion seems skewed. ❏ *Paper shows understanding of relevant issues but lacks depth.* ❏ Generally accurate details are included but the reader is left with questions—more information is needed to fill in the blanks. ❏ *The paper leaves the reader vaguely skeptical and unsatisfied.*	❏ There are few original ideas, most seem obvious or elementary. ❏ *Analysis is superficial or illogical, the author seems to struggle to understand the relevant issues.* ❏ There is a clear imbalance between factual reporting, interpretation and analysis, and personal opinion. ❏ *Author appears to misunderstand or omit key issues.* ❏ There are few details or most details seem irrelevant. ❏ T*he paper leaves the reader unconvinced.*
Content ❏ The paper addresses a topic within the context of promoting personal, social/cultural/political, or paradogmatic change. ❏ *The paper is complete and leaves no important aspect of the topic not addressed.* ❏ The author has a good grasp of what is known, what is generally accepted and what is yet to be discovered. ❏ *Appropriate significance is assigned to the information presented and irrelevant information is rarely included.* ❏ Connections between the topic of the paper and related topics are made that enhance understanding. ❏ *Specialized terminology, if used, is used correctly and precisely.* ❏ The author seems to be writing from personal knowledge or experience.	❏ The paper addresses a topic within the context of promoting personal, social/cultural/political, or paradogmatic change. ❏ *The paper is substantially complete, but more than one important aspect of the topic is not addressed.* ❏ The author has a good grasp of the relevant information but fails to distinguish between what is known, what is generally accepted, and what is yet to be discovered. ❏ *The paper often used information in a way inappropriate to its significance or includes much irrelevant information.* ❏ Few connections are made to related topics. ❏ *Specialized terminology is sometimes incorrectly or imprecisely used.* ❏ The author seems to be writing from knowledge or experience but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.	❏ The paper needs to be substantially more closely related to promoting personal, social/cultural/political, or paradogmatic change. ❏ *The paper is clearly incomplete with many important aspects of the topic left out.* ❏ The author has a poor grasp of the relevant information. ❏ *The paper frequently uses information inappropriately or uses irrelevant information.* ❏ No connections are made to related topics to help clarify the information presented. ❏ *Specialized terminology is frequently misused.* ❏ The work seems to be a simple restatement of the assignment or a simple, overly broad answer to a question with little evidence of expertise on the part of the author.

Figure 5.1 *Continued*

and department chairs routinely share syllabi previously used for the classes the incoming adjunct will teach. This is partly to help the adjunct write a new syllabus quickly by borrowing ideas, but it is also a way of telling the newcomer what the department expects her or him to cover in the course.

Looking over a selection of previous professors' syllabi can provide an adjunct with ideas for organization, texts, and assignments, so a selection of rubrics can give the newcomer a whole array of ideas regarding what to expect from the students in terms of their work. Adjuncts who receive rubrics when they begin a new teaching position often begin using and even constructing rubrics themselves, thus leaving their own records for the department and creating a record of their own teaching successes that can form a valuable part of their employment prospectuses as they search for tenure track jobs.

Rubrics can also serve this purpose for any professor who is not yet tenured or who is seeking promotion. A selection of rubrics not only shows what was assigned but leaves an easy-to-read record of the professor's expectations and how well the students she or he taught were ultimately able to meet those expectations.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the many benefits of collaborating on rubric construction and use with others. Even though it takes extra time, there are some real advantages to involving others in the construction of rubrics. This is true of T.A.s, librarians, and other support staff whose job is to help our students meet our expectations. Rubrics can also provide departments with a better record of shared expectations, continuity, and academic standards, and they provide individual faculty members with evidence of their own teaching skills. Above all, sharing rubric construction with others gives us, in the long run, more input about how we communicate our expectations.

6

GRADING WITH RUBRICS

Rubrics do many things in terms of student learning, classroom communication, and even collegial collaboration, but when the clock starts nudging its way toward the wee hours of the morning, it's the ways in which rubrics makes grading faster and easier where the value becomes obvious. Rubrics make grading easier and faster in several ways:

- Establishing performance anchors
- Providing detailed, formative feedback (three-to-five level rubrics)
- Supporting individualized, flexible, formative feedback (scoring guide rubrics)
- Conveying summative feedback (grade)

These four ways are generally chronological in nature. Establishing performance anchors helps us get started more quickly and also more fairly. Three-to-five-level rubrics allow us to provide detailed, formative feedback very rapidly by simply checking and circling prewritten criteria, whereas scoring guide rubrics allow us to do the same thing more flexibly and in a more individualized fashion, albeit at the cost of speed. Finally, by conveying summative feedback in an easy to read, almost graphic fashion, rubrics enable us to assign grades more rapidly and defend them more easily.

Indeed, many of us find the speedy, graphic nature of grading with rubrics so appealing that we have begun to use them to grade ourselves. In this chapter, we will also include examples of such grading with "metarubrics." Metarubrics are rubrics we have developed over the years to grade our own courses, to evaluate how effective our texts, lectures, and other teaching strategies really are. We even have a metarubric to evaluate our rubrics.

Most of us do this mentally as we grade, noting the results of our teaching in our students' work. Some of us even remember to write down our thoughts if we have the time. But using simple metarubrics speeds up the process of instructional self-assessment to the point where time is not much of an issue, and we really can take notes as we grade of what works and what doesn't, thus providing ourselves with a rich source of information to improve our teaching, texts, and rubrics the next time we teach that particular course, even if the next time is a year or more later.

Performance Anchors: Being Consistent and Focused

There they sit: a pile of papers awaiting our attention. We all have our tricks. We divide them up into batches of ten, batches of five if it's a particularly long assignment. As we finish each batch, we reward ourselves. One of our colleagues places little wrapped candy mints (a great favorite of hers) in the pile every five papers, not to be eaten until they are uncovered. Another plows right in, refusing to count how many there are, refusing even to snack until he's finished. Silly little tricks, but useful and innocent.

Any kind of rubric, or scoring guide rubric, can eliminate such little tricks. With rubrics, we grade faster than without rubrics. With rubrics, we know what we want from the very beginning when we tell the students about the assignment. We often find that we grade the earlier papers on the stack at roughly the same speed as later papers. We may find that sometimes we can even pick up speed as we go along as we note how this particular class responded to the assignment. With rubrics, we focus our attention on what we expect in the best and worst papers, and we do it the same way—in the same order—for each and every paper.

Detailed, Formative Feedback: Gaining Speed

We'll also notice an increase in speed because we are no longer writing extensive notes on the back of each and every paper. No more writing "good ideas, but you need to work on developing them more fully" 30 times on as many papers. Just a few quick checks or circles

on the rubric, or a word or two on a scoring guide rubric, and it's done. Our notes on the paper itself will probably be limited to proofreading and perhaps an occasional "good" or "check reference." If we feel we must add an individualized note, and many of us do, we can do that too.

Checks, circles, and a few well-chosen words are the keys to how rubrics speed up our grading process and make it easier while still giving detailed, formative feedback. Which of these we use depends on whether we are using

- Three-to-five level rubrics with check boxes (checks)
- Three-to-five level rubrics with circled text (circles)
- Scoring guide rubrics for narrative feedback (words)

In general, the degree to which rubrics facilitate grading by avoiding repetition is in direct inverse ratio to how long it took us to create the rubric. Some rubrics take longer to construct precisely because we are adding all of those feedback details ahead of time—that is, before the students even start the assignment.

Three-to-five level rubrics with check boxes are the most time consuming to create but the fastest and easiest to use. Three-to-five level rubrics that require us to circle relevant text take a bit more time to use. Scoring guide rubrics designed to give narrative feedback are the easiest and fastest to create, but their grading ease is somewhat limited by the time it takes to write out the feedback.

The three-to-five level rubric with check boxes is easily the most refined grading tool and also the fastest to use. It is especially appropriate for grading something that requires detailed feedback and particular speed such as an oral presentation. We simply check off categories as we go, possibly circling parts of the description here and there to further refine the details of what caused our positive or negative response. Note in the three-to-five level rubric in Figure 6.1 how the professor was able to tell a student that his speaking voice was generally good but that he spoke too fast, that his PowerPoints were too verbose, and that his conclusions were too implicit. All this accomplished with a few quick checks and circles.

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All groups members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentation skills	❑ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard without shouting, modulating voice tone and quality. ☑ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language and maintained eye contact with the audience. ❑ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long. ☑ The presenter used humor and anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation. ☑ The presenter or an assistant competently handled the equipment.	☑ The presenter was understood but mumbled, spoke (too fast) or too slow, whispered, shouted, or droned: intelligibility however, was not compromised. ❑ The presenter's body language did not distract significantly, but the presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other inappropriate body language. ☑ The presenter's timing was (too long) or too brief. ❑ Humor and anecdotes were used, but they were over- or underused to liven up and or illustrate the presentation. ❑ Equipment was used, but there was some fumbling although not to the point where it seriously distracted from the presentation.	❑ The presenter mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or shouted, or droned to the point where intelligibility was compromised. ❑ The presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other body language that distracted seriously from the content. ❑ The presenter barely used the time allotted or used much too much time. ❑ The lack of humor and anecdotes made the presentation dull. ❑ There was a lot of fumbling with the equipment that could have been prevented with a little practice.
Group presentation skills	☑ The presentation allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that promoted a logical discussion of the topic, and connections between individual presentations were clearly shown. ☑ Shown members treated each other with courtesy and respect.	❑ The presentation was unbalanced in the way time or content was assigned to members. ☑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that mostly promoted a logical discussion of the topic, but connections between individual presentations were not clearly shown, or the presentation lost direction from time to time for other reasons. ❑ Group members mostly treated each other with courtesy and respect, but there were lapses where members were not listening to each other.	❑ The presentation was seriously unbalanced so that one or a few people dominated or carried the ball. ❑ There was little if any evident logic in how the individual presentations followed one another, and the connections between individual presentations were unclear. ❑ Group members showed little respect of courtesy toward one another.

Figure 6.1 Three-level rubric with check boxes. Note how the professor has used checks and circles to clarify and individualize feedback.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Group organization	☑ The group thesis is clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the rest of the presentation. ❑ The topics to be covered are introduced and the direction the overall presentation will take is made clear.	❑ The group thesis emerges from the presentation but is either unclear, unstated, or not stated directly. ❑ A clear thesis is stated, but it is not carried through in the presentation. ☑ Topics to be covered and the direction the presentation will take are stated, but they are not the topics covered or the direction actually taken.	❑ There is no stated group thesis. ❑ There is no indication of what topics will be covered or what direction that coverage will take. ❑ No order or focus emerges in the course of the presentation.
Individual organization	☑ The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body, and conclusion. ❑ That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts.	❑ The individual presentation was mostly well organized, but there were problems with the introduction, body, or conclusion. ☑ The presenter used PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts, but these were too wordy or too vague to help the audience follow the organization.	❑ The presentation rambled with little evidence of the introduction, body, or conclusion. ❑ PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts either were not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant way.
Individual content	☑ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate. ☑ Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. ❑ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate, and appropriate, but there were lapses. ❑ Theories were referenced but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used. ☑ The connection between analyses, discussions, and conclusions is evident or implied, but it is not explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. ❑ Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. ❑ There is no clear connection between analyses, discussions, and examples, facts, and theories.

Figure 6.1 *Continued*

The three-to-five-level rubric with circled text takes a bit more time and thought to use effectively and is best suited to written assignments, although it can be used for oral presentations and other fast-moving grading moments if handled correctly. In using a three-to-five-level rubric without check boxes, we simply circle those parts of the rubric that apply; usually this means circling those whole descriptions that apply to a specific part of the assignment. In some cases, however, depending on how we wrote the dimension descriptions, it may mean circling bits of two or more descriptions in the same dimension to indicate a mixed response. Either way, without the check boxes breaking the descriptions down into even more detailed categories, this kind of rubric requires us to read more of the rubric as we work. And that, in turn takes more time.

How much more time? Not a lot, really. We find that the absence of check boxes slows us down for the first few assignments we grade, but after that, we become played into the options and where they appear on the rubric and circle almost as speedily as we could check. The results, however, are often untidy and harder for the student to read. Figure 6.2 aptly illustrates the use of the three-to-five-level rubric with circled text as feedback. It is the same rubric as the one with check boxes only more simply written with circling substituted for the individual checked-off boxes.

In its finished form, this rubric proved not only more difficult to use in the short time allotted to the student presentation, but it was also harder for the students to understand. It was also just plain sloppy to look at. The reason for this was its complexity. The professor was equally interested in the content and the method of presentation. With less complex rubrics, circling works very well, as can be seen in Figure 6.3. This is an all-purpose "presentation rubric" for business students.

Because the criteria the professor evaluating are fairly simple, circling works well. In only one case, "Elocution," is any further clarification needed to show that the problem was one of speaking too softly rather than too rapidly. The use of letter grades with pluses or minuses allows for some fine tuning; the B+ for content, for example, tells the student that, although not quite professional, the content was generally well handled, whereas the B– in eye contact suggests that this is an area that still needs some work.

Individualized, Flexible Feedback: A Trade-off

Three-to-five-level rubrics, checked or circled, save an enormous amount of time when grading and provide incredibly rich feedback. Why, then, would anyone care to use the more time-consuming scoring guide rubric to grade student work?

One easy reason is that although the actual grading process takes longer with a scoring guide rubric, creating the guide itself is less time-consuming. This is not an equal trade-off, however. In the long run, scoring guide rubrics save less time than three-to-five-level rubrics.

Scoring guide rubrics do, however, have two other advantages. They allow for much greater individualization and flexibility in grading. This makes them the grading tool of choice in cases where we want to allow our students as much freedom as possible. Scoring guide rubrics are therefore usually reserved for graduate students and creative assignments.

And scoring guide rubrics do save time in grading, just not as much time as three-to-five-level rubrics do. They are essentially a format for the notes we would otherwise write freehand on a piece of student work, but that format is the all-important part when it comes to grading. That format supplies the focus that speeds up grading even in cases where we still write as many notes as before, sometimes more. That format also provides a structure to our notes so that we don't have to worry about what to say first and how the various elements relate to one another. The scoring guide rubric essentially organizes our notes for us.

It can also save considerable time in making notes, provided that we are grading a strong work. Since the criteria of the scoring guide rubric spell out the highest level of performance, often our notes are limited to noting that the student has met these standards or perhaps almost met them. In some cases, we may find pleasure in taking the time to add some further explication of how the student has exceeded our demands or expectations. That's always time well spent, even at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Figure 6.4 illustrates a completed rubric for a very good film presentation in a graduate seminar on World War II in film. The professor literally produced these notes and the grade (an A) as the student spoke; the professor's written comments are shown in script.

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five, students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All group members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentation skills 20%	The presenter spoke clearly and intelligibly, modulating voice tone and quality, maintaining eye contact, and using appropriate body language. The use of humor and competent handling of technology also contributed to the excellence of the presentation. The presenter used all the time available but did not go over the time limit.	The presenter was intelligible but mumbled or droned, spoke too fast or to slow, whispered or shouted, used inappropriate body language, or failed to maintain eye contact, inappropriate excessive, or too little humor or technical problems detracted from the presentation. The presentation ran over or under the time limit but not dramatically.	The presenter mumbled or droned, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or shouted used inappropriate body language, or failed to maintain eye contact to the point where intelligibility was compromised. Too much or too little humor or technological problems seriously detracted from the presentation. The presentation ran seriously over or under the time limit.
Group presentation skills 20%	The presentations followed a logical progression and allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect and assisted each other as needed.	The presentations followed a logical progression but were unbalanced in the way time or content was assigned to members, or the division of labor was fair but impeded the logical progression of the argument. Group members were mostly respectful and helpful toward one another, but there were lapses.	The presentations followed no logical progression, seriously overlapped one another, or allowed one or a few people to dominate. Group members showed little respect or courtesy toward one another and did not assist one another even when it was clear that a group member was in trouble.
Group organization 20%	The group thesis, topics to be covered and the direction the individual presentations will like are clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the test of the presentation.	The thesis, topics to be covered, and the direction the individual presentations will take are clearly stated at the beginning but not carried through in the rest of the presentation, or the thesis, topics to be covered, and direction emerge in the presentation but are not clearly stated in the introduction.	The thesis, topics, and direction are unclear, unstated or not evident in the body of the presentation.

Figure 6.2 Three-level rubric with circled feedback.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual organization 20%	The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction body and conclusion. That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts.	The individual presentation was mostly well organized but there were problems with the introduction, body, or conclusion. The presenter used PowerPoints overheads, or handouts, but these were too wordy or too vague to help the audience follow the organization.	The presentation rambled with little evidence of an introduction, body, or conclusion. Power Points, overheads, or handouts were either not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant way.
Individual content 20%	Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate. Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate, and appropriate, but there were lapses. Theories were referenced, but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used. The connection between analyses, discussions, and conclusions is evident or implied but not explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. There was no clear connection between analyses discussion, and examples, facts, and theories.

Figure 6.2 *Continued*

Presentation Rubric

Student: Stanley Livingston
Topic: Ad campaign

	Professional	Adequate	Needs work	You're fired	Grade
Content	Full grasp (more than needed) of material in initial presentations and in answering questions later.	Solid presentation of material and answers all questions adequately but without elaboration.	Less than a full grasp of the information revealed rudimentary presentation and answers to questions.	No grasp of information, some misinformation, and unable to answer questions accurately.	B+
Organizations	Information is presented in a logical interesting sequence that is easy for the audience to follow.	Information is presented in a logical sequence that is easy for the audience to follow but a bit dull.	Presentation jumps around a lot and is not easy to follow although it is possible.	Audience cannot follow presentations because it follows no logical sequence.	C
Graphics	Graphics explain and reinforce the rest of the presentation.	Graphics relate to the test of the presentation.	Graphics are too few or not sufficiently related to the rest of the presentation.	Graphics are either not used or are superfluous.	B
English	No misspelled words or grammatical errors.	No more than two misspelled words or grammatical errors.	Three misspelled words or grammatical errors.	Four or more misspelled words or grammatical errors.	A
Elocution	Speaks clearly, correctly, and precisely, loud enough for audience to hear and slowly enough for easy understanding.	Speaks clearly, pronounces most words correctly, loud enough to be easily heard, and slow enough to be easily understood.	Speaks unclearly, mispronounces many major terms, and speaks too softly or rapidly to be easily understood.	Mumbles, mispronounces most important terms, and speaks too softly or rapidly to be understood at all.	C
Eye Contact	Eye contact constant; minimal or no reading of notes.	Eye contact maintained except when consulting notes, which is too often.	Some eye contact, but mostly reading from notes.	No eye contact; reads from notes exclusively.	B–

Figure 6.3 Three-level rubric with circled feedback. Note how the less complex descriptions make this a viable way to grade using circles.

Scoring Guide Rubric for Film Presentations

Task Description: Prepare a one-hour presentation on an assigned film. You are expected to discuss how the film relates to the political, economic, or cultural aspects of the historical period it claims to depict and also the historiography of that era. You may also discuss it in terms of film theory if you wish.

FILM: ***Black Rain***

Dimensions	Criteria	Comments
Introduction	The introduction tells the audience exactly what to expect in terms of how the speaker feels about the movie, what theories and theoretical framework(s) he or she will introduce, and what conclusions he or she will draw.	*All points covered succinctly. Used a PowerPoint to list the major points.*
Organization	The presentation is organized to create a logical argument and so that topics that need to be discussed together are presented together.	*Well ordered PowerPoints with clear captions show organization and connections.*
Context	The presenter discusses the main historical issues raised by the film and how other film scholars and historians have dealt with these issues both with regard to this film and in general. The presenter explains where he or she stands on these issues, which theories he or she finds most useful and why.	*Discusses:* • *Shinto, Buddhism, death, and disease* • *Family and community patterns* • *Attitudes toward insanity (PTSD)[1]* • *Novel and novelist* • *Reason for B/W[2] choice*
Evidence	The presenter includes sufficient, detailed examples from the film and other sources to support her or his analyses.	*Approach was thematic with examples woven in.* *Video clips were short but effective.*
Analysis	The presenter uses her or his evidence to support a consistent, coherent analysis of how the film does or does not contribute to our understanding of World War II.	*Absolutely. A constant, elegantly complex analysis combining all elements listed above in a scholarly way despite the speakers' evident emotional involvement.*
Presentation	The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, loudly enough to be heard, but not too loudly; used appropriate, effective gestures and body language; and maintained eye contact with the class. Audio-visual aids, if used, are technically sound (to prevent fumbling with equipment), appropriate, and referenced in the presentation.	*Excellent.*

1. Post-traumatic stress disorder
2. Black and white as opposed to color film

Figure 6.4 Scoring guide rubric with narrative feedback for a very good presentation.

Note how the professor's notes for the "Introduction," "Organization," and "Presentation" sections merely commented briefly on how well the student had fulfilled the highest expectations for these sections, whereas the notes for "Context" and "Evidence" itemized specific ways in which the student had fulfilled these expectations, a more flexible option three-to-five-level rubrics do not easily allow. The comments in the "Analysis" portion of the scoring guide rubric were pure applause, a way of expressing the professor's sheer delight in creativity and accomplishment that went beyond the highest expectations listed on the scoring guide rubric.

Scoring guide rubrics do not take much longer to use than three-to-five-level rubrics when the work being graded is so strong. The greater time consumption occurs when the work does not come up to, or perhaps even close to, the highest levels of expectation listed on the scoring guide rubric. Then the lower levels of performance must be spelled out.

Figure 6.5 shows the same scoring guide rubric used in a different year for a weaker presentation on the same film in the same graduate seminar. As before, the professor's notes are in script.

In this case, the professor roughed out the notes as the student spoke, but she had to take them back to her office to elaborate (and to allow herself time to reflect on the work). The scoring guide rubric did not actually save much time. It made itemizing the nature of the student's weaknesses easier to organize, but the professor still had to write out in detail just precisely where, how, and to what extent the student had failed as well as succeeded in meeting expectations. It was also necessary to comment on the "creative and flexible" ways in which this student had "misunderstood" the assignment.

Fortunately, this sort of thing does not happen often in graduate classes where students are more motivated and can usually be expected to fulfill our expectations better than this, which is why scoring guide rubrics are usually preferred for upper-division and graduate classes. Even in cases where we are seriously disappointed in a student performance, however, the scoring guide rubric, like the three-to-five-level rubrics, also saves us time simply by keeping us focused on what we are looking for as we grade and, of course, it also assures greater consistency.

Scoring Guide Rubric for Film Presentations

Task Description: Prepare a one-hour presentation on an assigned film. You are expected to discuss how the film relates to the political, economic, or cultural aspects of the historical period it claims to depict and also the historiography of that era. You may also discuss it in terms of film theory if you wish.

FILM: *Black Rain*

Dimensions	Criteria	Comments
Introduction	The introduction tells the audience exactly what to expect in terms of how the speaker feels about the movie, what theories and theoretical framework(s) she or he will introduce, and what conclusions she or he will draw.	*You did everything right except that you never mentioned the title of the movie. More seriously, although you included the fact that this movie is based on a novel, you never addressed this again.*
Organization	The presentation is organized to create a logical argument and so that topics that need to be discussed together are presented together.	*Dividing your historical research data from your analysis of the film itself weakened the impact of both and prevented you from noticing that your focus kept changing.*
Context	The presenter discusses the main historical issues raised by the film and how other film scholars and historians have dealt with these issues both with regard to this film and in general. The presenter explains where she or he stands on these issues, which theories she or he finds most useful, and why.	*Way too much focus on why America dropped the bomb. This is not actually a major issue in the movie or the novel. We needed to hear more about how accurately the movie shows the effects of the bombing, what it reveals about Japanese attitudes toward disease or marriage, and perhaps something about the stylistic elements that reveal Japanese artistic values. Some film theory might have helped with the latter. We also could have used more information on how this film is regarded both here and in Japan, such as reviews.*
Evidence	The presenter includes sufficient, detailed examples from the film and other sources to support her or his analyses.	*The research on effects of fallout was excellent, but you also needed to introduce specific examples from the film to support your contention that the film was accurate in depicting the progress of radiation illness. Some further introduction of scenes showing specific cultural elements (e.g., the twisted Jizo statues the shell-shocked soldier creates or the role of the mystic) would also have given you more to work with in your analysis.*
Analysis	The presenter uses her or his evidence to support a consistent, coherent analysis of how the film does or does not contribute to our understanding of World War II.	*Although your research focused mostly on the reasons America dropped the bomb and the effects of fallout, your analysis of the film focused on how the young soldier's story showed post-traumatic stress disorder. This is an interesting subplot, but it's still a subplot and you have not established any evidence or context to justify such a focus.*
Presentation	The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard, but not too loudly, used appropriate, effective gestures and body language, and maintained eye contact with the class. Audio-visual aids, if used, were technically sound (to prevent fumbling with equipment), appropriate, and referenced in the presentation.	*The clip from the army film showing the effects of the bomb was appropriate, but 20 minutes was too long for an hour-long presentation, especially since you only referenced it once or twice. Also, you were reading from your notes and looked up only rarely, and your voice was so soft it was difficult to hear you.*

Figure 6.5 Scoring guide rubric with narrative feedback for a weak presentation.

Summative Feedback: Assigning Grades

Then comes the moment of truth, the summing up, assigning grades or points. If we've quantified each dimension on the rubric, this can be a simple mathematical exercise. That was the case with the scoring guide rubric shown in Figure 6.6, which was used for a teacher education class in which students were to watch a non-Western film to deepen their understanding of diversity and present a creative response to the experience. Each item listed on the rubric was worth a set number of points; the professor provided a comment section to explain why a student might not be getting all points possible.

In addition, it should be noted that the rubric was created using the feedback model of collaborative rubric construction. The professor took the incomplete rubric into the classroom with the assignment on the top and the dimensions along the side but no descriptions for the

Creative Expressions- Adding Affirming Diversity 32 Points
Scoring Rubric

Application of what we know and can learn from our increasingly diverse student population is imperative. Honestly facing our own biases and reactions and and grappling with them is very important. The arts, in particular, provide an avenue of comprehension and expression that often reveal our deeper values. Thus, you are expected to do ONE of the following:

Attend lecture by Sonja Nieto on January 16—take notes
OR Go to a non-English foreign film (subtitles), preferably not Western
OR Read a book furthering your understanding of diverse students or written by a person from another culture

Then create an expression of your response to this experience or otherness that relates somehow to the lecture or debate/discussion on themes in the class. This could be a POSTER, a POEM, a PIECE OF MUSIC, a PIECE OF ART, FOOD, or a STORY. To make the connection to the class clear to other audiences, either add a written narrative piece to the work or tell us how this directly relates to the class.

Dimension	Description	Comment	Points
Topic and outline 3 pts.	☑ Paragraph description of project turned in on time ❑ Details of project, type of project ❑ Link to class topic clear	*Unclear if it's a movie or a book at heart of project.* *No mention of diversity*	1

Figure 6.6 Collaboratively constructed scoring guide rubric with check boxes and narrative as feedback.

Dimension	Description	Comment	Points
Content: 8 pts. Karen Dianas Jana Gwenda Tanya Denise Chisa Karen Jennifer	☑ Clear focus of project—what lecture, reading, movie inspired the idea ☑ Grabs attention right from the beginning ❑ Identifies a significant cultural difference ❑ Describes values of that difference to the culture ❑ Describes how you viewed previous assumptions of the culture ☑ Includes brief summary of the movie, book ☑ Describes clear purpose behind this choice ❑ Clear connection to adding/affirming diversity	*No discussion of previous assumptions* *Cultural differences described but not recognized as such* *Diversity never mentioned; focus on artistic expression.*	4
Organization: 5 pts. Lori Sheila Debbie Tanya Julie	☑ Clear beginning, middle, end ☑ Understandable to others, not confusing ☑ Clear directions and wrap up ❑ Easy to see connections to adding/affirming diversity ❑ Clear link to class topics	*Well-written short story, but still no mention of topic diversity.*	3
Creativity: 11 pts. Lori Gwenda Sherrie Tanya Chisa Bobbi Jennifer Brad	❑ Puts together a presentation that is "out of your comfort zone" ☑ Expresses emotional response ☑ Open/honest ☑ Attractive ☑ Visually pleasing ☑ Creates at least half of the images ☑ Obvious extra effort (not copied pages) ☑ Authenticity and uniqueness of effort ☑ Thought provoking ☑ Original ❑ Strong expression of "otherness"	*Stuck to recognizable relationships and situations, ignoring those not understood or related to.* *Strong expression of universality, also a valid perception, but not the point of the assignment.*	9
Reflection: 2 pts. Bobbi Brad	❑ Indicates how your perceptions and assumptions have changed ❑ Indicates how this might affect your future teaching and adding/affirming diversity in your life	*Lack of previous assumption discussion prevents comparison.* *No direct reference to educational implications.*	0
Conventions: 3 pts. Sheila Chisa Gwenda	☑ All grammar, spelling, punctuation correct ☑ Neatly presented ☑ If typed, double-spaced and pages numbered		3

dimensions. The students were divided into five groups. Each group wrote a series of descriptors for that dimension, and then the professor used those descriptions to create the final rubric. These descriptors were very meaningful to students. In fact, during the presentations, the professor noted that several students actually used the words "out of my comfort zone," a phrase also used on the rubric, to describe what they did on the assignment. The student names were put on the rubric to honor their individual contributions in creating the rubric. Quantifying in this way is often reassuring to students because it reveals priorities so well. By weighing the dimensions differently, it shows that the dimensions are not all equal in importance. And using numbers, of course, makes it is easier to come up with a final grade.

The professor also found that this scoring guide rubric, with its assigned point system, made it easier to keep the differential weights of the dimensions in proper perspective when grading. The professor realized that she was often disproportionately affected by mistakes in spelling, sometimes allowing them to overshadow creative content in some students' work. Using the scoring guide rubric, however, she was reminded each time that such conventions were worth only 3 points, while content was worth 10 points, almost a third of the total points possible.

She also found that even giving conventions 3 points seemed to capture student attention to those details in a way that a mere description in the syllabus did not. Thus, the scoring guide rubric not only made her grading faster, fairer, and more focused, but it produced student work less likely to offend her eyes.

Quantification like this increases students' perception (and our intention) that we are being impartial, but it also makes it more likely that the students will be in during office hours to argue over 1 or 2 points. In this case, however, the professor could simply point to the names of the students who created the criteria, a tactic which most students accepted as validation of the rubric.

In other cases, however, concerns about those whining arguments over points is why some of us may not quantify the various dimensions of the rubric. Remember that before we used rubrics, the only feedback we gave were narrative comments and a letter grade. Now we have detailed descriptions of an exemplary performance with

scoring guide rubrics and even more details when we use the three-to-five-level rubric. Those descriptions are rich feedback to students even without quantitative grades.

The grid format also allows those of us who prefer to base our final grade on holistic judgments on the work as a whole to do so more quickly and more consistently. The three-level rubric for the group film report in Freshman Inquiry shown in Figure 6.7 contained no quantitative information. In this case, the professor simply checked off all the relevant categories, added a few circles for clarification, then added up how many checks were in each column. With nine checks in the Exemplary column and five in the Competent column, it was immediately clear that this would be an A– or B+ paper. Another quick glance at the circles revealed that the objections mostly related to only one aspect of at least three dimension descriptions. The professor paused for a moment, considered the impact of the overall paper, and made it an A–.

Grading Our Own Teaching Methods

We professors reflect on or "grade" our own teaching as we grade the students' papers. For many of us, this is just a matter of making mental notes on what worked and what didn't, or perhaps a muttered "I'm never doing this again." Some of us go further and write notes to ourselves. But those of us who routinely use rubrics to grade student work sometimes find ourselves using rubrics to grade our own teaching.

These rubrics are generally laconic because we know what we mean and these, after all, are for our own feedback. Figure 6.8, for example, shows a simple rubric used to summarize how students completed a major assignment, a research paper, in a class in early Japanese history. As the professor read through the papers and calibrated the students' grades, she simply checked off where she felt her students ranked in their accomplishment of specific learning goals and understanding of the discipline; the professor's notes are in script.

By identifying her own hopes for her students learning in advance and checking off what she did and did not find in the papers she was grading, the professor easily and quickly created a permanent record

Rubric for Film Presentation

Task Description: Working in groups of four or five, students will develop and present to the class an analysis of a Japanese movie about World War II. This analysis should go beyond a simple synopsis of the movie to discuss how well or poorly the film reflects a particular point of view about the war. You are expected to do additional research to develop this presentation and to use visual aids of some sort. All group members are expected to participate in the presentation.

	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Individual presentation skills	❑ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard without shouting, modulating voice tone and quality. ☑ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language and maintained eye contact with the audience. ❑ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long. ☑ The presenter used humor and anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation. ☑ The presenter or an assistant competently handled the equipment.	☑ The presenter was understood but mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered shouted, or droned; intelligibility, however, was not compromised. ☑ The presenter's body language did not distract significantly, but the presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other inappropriate body language. ☑ The presenter's timing was too long or too brief. ❑ Humor and anecdotes were used, but they were over-or underused to liven up and or illustrate the presentation. ❑ Equipment was used, but there was some fumbling although not to the point where it seriously distracted from the presentation.	❑ The presenter mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or shouted, or droned to the point where intelligibility was compromised. ❑ The presenter fidgeted, remained rigid, never looked at the audience, or engaged in other body language that distracted seriously from the content. ❑ The presenter barely used the time allotted of used much too much time. ❑ The lack of humor and anecdotes made the presentation dull. ❑ There was a lot of fumbling with the equipment that could have been prevented with a little practice.
Group presentation skills	☑ The presentation allowed each member an equal opportunity to shine. ❑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that promoted a logical discussion of the topic, and connections between individual presentations were clearly shown. ☑ Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect.	❑ The presentation was unbalanced in the way time or content was assigned to members. ☑ The individual presentations followed one another in a way that mostly promoted a logical discussion of the topic, but connections between individual presentations were not clearly shown, or the presentation lost direction from time to time for other reasons. ❑ Group members mostly treated each other with courtesy and respect, but there were lapses where members were not listening to each other.	❑ The presentation was seriously unbalanced so that one or a few people dominated and or carried the ball. ❑ There was little if any evident logic in bow the individual presentations followed one another, and the connections between individual presentations were unclear. ❑ Group members showed little respect or courtesy toward one another.

Figure 6.7 Three-level rubric with checked boxes for summative feedback and grading.

Group organization	☑ The group thesis is clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the rest of the presentation. ❑ The topics to be covered are introduced and the direction the overall presentation will take is made clear.	❑ The group thesis emerges from the presentation but is either unclear, unstated, or not stated directly. ❑ A clear thesis is stated, but it is not carried through in the presentation. ☑ Topics to be covered and the direction the presentation will take are stated but they are not the topics covered or the direction actually taken.	❑ There is no stated group thesis. ❑ There is no indication of what topics will be covered or what direction that coverage will take. ❑ No order or focus emerges in the course of the presentation.
Individual organization	☑ The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body, and conclusion. ❑ That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads, and/or handouts.	❑ The individual presentation was mostly well organized, but there were problems with the introduction, body, or conclusion. ☑ The presenter used PowerPoints, overheads, handouts, but those were too wordy or too vague to help the audience follow the organization.	❑ The presentation rambled with little evidence of an introduction, body, or conclusion. ❑ PowerPoints, overheads, or handouts either were not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant why.
Individual content	☑ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate. ☑ Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. ❑ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate, and appropriate, but there were lapses. ❑ Theories were referenced but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used. ☑ The connection between analyses, discussions, and conclusions is evident or implied, but it is not explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.	❑ Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. ❑ Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. ❑ There is no clear connection between analyses, discussions, and examples, facts, and theories.

Figure 6.7 *Continued*

Class: Hist. Early Japan

Assignment objectives	What students did on various aspects of the assignment	What I can do next time—changes in instruction and this assignment
Content	Names, dates, and events are ❑ Accurate ✓✓✓✓ ❑ Mostly accurate ✓✓✓✓✓ ❑ Inaccurate ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ They are used: ❑ Appropriately ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ ❑ Mostly approp. ✓✓✓✓✓✓ ✓✓ ❑ Inapprop. ✓✓✓	*Give more quizzes. Looks like they're doing the research for the assigned work but not the general class reading.*
Research	Used: Internet✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓ Books✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ Journals✓✓✓✓✓✓ Databases✓ Primary documents✓✓	*Watch their references. May need to allow no more than three Internet sources.* *Add class period in library to learn databases.* *Do class exercise using primary sources*
Historiography	Recognize authorial biases ✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ Recognize different schools ✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	*I think they've got it!*
Writing skills	Understand what a book critique is and can write one ✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ Understand what a research paper is and can write one ✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ Know when and how to cite sources ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓	*My tirade on citations seems to be working, and so are the grading rubrics for the papers.*

Figure 6.8 Rubric used by instructor to summarize how students completed the assignment.

she will use the next time she teaches this class. This is a quick and easy way to check the link between course objectives and student learning and ultimately to improve classroom instruction. It also provided meaningful feedback on the overall class performance that was shared with the students as the papers were handed back.

Evaluating Our Own Rubrics: Metarubrics

Rubrics are not cast in cement. They are flexible, adaptable grading tools that become better and better the more times we use them. Their strength, reliability, and validity increase as we use rubrics, discover limitations, and make revisions. But to make effective revisions, we first need to evaluate our existing rubrics.

A "metarubric" is a rubric used to evaluate rubrics. Some of us use a metarubric to evaluate a new rubric before showing it to our students. Some of us use metarubrics to reevaluate old rubrics after using them to grade a set of assignments, especially if that grading proved unsatisfactory in some way.

Like our evaluations of our assignments, metarubrics are for our own use and tend to be individual. Checklists are easier and quicker to use. When we use the metarubric, we glance back and forth from the rubric to the metarubric criteria. It helps refine and polish some of the details in the rubric. Figure 6.9 is a metarubric developed by some faculty in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University. The "yes/no" element allows for a quick check on key aspects of rubric construction without belaboring the details.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed and demonstrated the use of rubrics as a grading tool and as a form of self-assessment. Methods of using rubrics can and do vary, but on the whole, the checking, circling, and commenting methods described are the most commonly used.

Metarubric

Rubric part	Evaluation criteria	Yes	No
The dimensions	Does each dimension cover important parts of the final student performance?		
	Does the dimension capture some key themes in your teaching?		
	Are the dimensions clear?		
	Are the dimensions distinctly different from each other?		
	Do the dimensions represent skills that the student knows something about already (e.g., organization, analysis, using conventions)?		
The descriptions	Do the descriptions match the dimensions?		
	Are the descriptions clear and different from each other?		
	If you used points, is there a clear basis for assigning points for each dimension?		
	If using a three-to-five level rubric, are the descriptions appropriately and equally weighted across the three-to-five levels?		
The scale	Do the descriptors under each level truly represent that level of performance?		
	Are the scale labels (e.g., exemplary, competent, beginning) encouraging and still quite informative without being negative and discouraging?		
	Does the rubric have a reasonable number of levels for the age of the student and the complexity of the assignment?		
The overall rubric	Does the rubric clearly connect to the outcomes that it is designed to measure?		
	Can the rubric be understood by external audiences (avoids jargon and technical language)?		
	Does it reflect teachable skills?		
	Does the rubric reward or penalize students based on skills unrelated to the outcome being measured that you have not taught?		
	Have all students had an equal opportunity to learn the content and skills necessary to be successful on the assignment?		
	Is the rubric appropriate for the conditions under which the assignment was completed?		
	Does the rubric include the assignment description or title?		
	Does the rubric address the student's performance as a developmental task?		
	Does the rubric inform the student about the evaluation procedures when their work is scored?		
	Does the rubric emphasize the appraisal of individual or group performance and indicate ways to improve?		
Fairness and sensibility	Does it look like the rubric will be fair to all students and free of bias?		
	Does it look like it will be useful to students as performance feedback?		
	Is the rubric practical given the kind of assignment?		
	Does the rubric make sense to the reader?		

Figure 6.9 Metarubric. How to evaluate the overall quality of your rubric.

7

VARIATIONS ON THE THEME

The types of rubrics used often in grading are the three-to-five-level rubrics and scoring guide rubrics laid out on a grid. Dimensions and scales, likewise, tend to be similar for most assignments, especially in the humanities and social sciences. However, in some classes, especially hands-on or creative classes like science labs, studio art, or classes requiring performances of some kind, it may be necessary to vary the form and content of rubrics still further to assess classroom behavior and even to track projects as they evolve over a period of time. These variations often require slightly different formats, and as a result, they often look a bit different.

None of these are really different from the rubrics we have already discussed. All include the same basic components of scales, dimensions, and descriptions of dimensions arranged on a chart, but the ways in which these components are arranged may vary, and some disciplines require unique dimensions and combinations of dimensions. This chapter discusses these variations on the rubric by looking at some models of discipline-specific rubrics, staged rubrics, and multiple rubrics.

Discipline-Specific Rubrics

Most of the rubrics we have shown so far have focused on grading written or oral presentations. This is, of course, the most common form of grading done in academe, but in some disciplines, such as the fine arts and sciences, rubrics related to regular, hands-on, lab or studio activities may require some flexibility in how scales, dimensions, and descriptions of dimensions are conceived or arranged.

Science: Laboratory Work

The rubric for lab work, shown in Figure 7.1, includes a separate dimension for having the right materials on hand, something that is unlikely to occur on most rubrics for humanities or social science

Rubric for Conducting an Experiment in the Lab

Task Description: Conduct the assigned lab using the procedures and methods described below. Turn in your laboratory report at the beginning of the next class period.

	Exemplary	Competent	Needs Work
Materials	All materials needed are present and entered on the lab report. The materials are appropriate for the procedure. The student is not wasteful of the materials.	All materials needed are present, but not all are entered on the lab report, or some materials are absent and must be obtained during the procedure. The materials are appropriate for the procedure.	All materials needed are not present and are not entered on the lab report. The materials are not all appropriate for the procedure or there are some major omissions.
Procedure	The procedure is well designed and allows control of all variables selected. All stages of the procedure are entered on the lab report.	The procedure could be more efficiently designed, but it allows control of all variables selected. Most stages of the procedure are entered on the lab report.	The procedure does not allow control of all variables selected. Many stages of the procedure are not entered on the lab report.
Courtesy and safety	While conducting the procedure, the student is tidy, respectful of others, mindful of safety, and leaves the area clean.	While conducting the procedure, the student is mostly tidy, sometimes respectful of others, sometimes mindful of safety, and leaves the area clean only after being reminded.	While conducting the procedure, the student is untidy, not respectful of others, not mindful of safety, and leaves the area messy even after being reminded.
Purpose	Research question and hypothesis are stated clearly, and the relationship between the two is clear. The variables are selected.	Research question and hypothesis are stated, but one or both are not as clear as they might be, or the relationship between the two is unclear. The variables are selected	Research question and hypothesis are not stated clearly, and the relationship between the two is unclear or absent. The variables are not selected

Figure 7.1 Science laboratory rubric. Three-level rubric for conducting an experiment in a science laboratory.

	Exemplary	Competent	Needs Work
Data collection	Raw data, including units, are recorded in a way that is appropriate and clear. The title of the data table is included.	Raw data, including units, are recorded although not as clearly or appropriately as they might be. The title of the data table is included.	Raw data, including units, are not recorded in a way that is appropriate and clear. The title of the data table is not included.
Data analysis	Data are presented in ways (charts, tables, graphs) that best facilitate understanding and interpretation. Error analysis is included.	Data are presented in ways (charts, tables, graphs) that can be understood and interpreted, although not as clearly as they might be. Error analysis is included.	Data are presented in ways (charts, tables, graphs) that are very unclear. Error analysis is not included.
Evaluation of experiment	The results are fully interpreted and compared with literature values. The limitations and weaknesses are discussed and suggestions are made as to how to limit or eliminate them.	The results are interpreted and compared with literature values, but not as fully as they might be. The limitations and weaknesses are discussed, but few or no suggestions are made as to how to limit or eliminate them.	The results are not interpreted in a logical way or compared with literature values. The limitations and weaknesses are not discussed, nor are suggestions made as to how to limit or eliminate them.

Figure 7.1 *Continued*

classes (although perhaps we might like to consider penalizing students for arriving in class without a pen or notepad). In this rubric for a science lab too, the preparation and behavior in the laboratory are just as important as the final written report and have their own dimensions. The rubric is also designed to cover a period of time if necessary. It can be used equally well to grade a single lab session or a single experiment that takes place over a series of lab sessions.

Business Management: Classroom Participation

Classroom behavior can also be described in a rubric. As a way to encourage classroom participation, the professor of an introductory business management class in Turkey developed the rubric in Figure 7.2

Department of Management—Introduction to Business
Description of Assessment: In-Class Participation (15%)

For the purposes of this course, the in-class participation grade depends on the following:

- Regular and on-time attendance to class, not missing any classes without an acceptable excuse (e.g., illness, of you or a family member, accident, moving, any uncontrollable event). In the case of foreseeable reasons, you are expected to give advance notice.
- Doing the assigned homework (reading the course material critically, doing some research in the library, etc.).

Doing the above will help you to develop your responses as listed below, which will in turn affect your in-class participation grade positively. Therefore, a student who demonstrates a high level of in-class participation does the following:

- Listens—alert, eyes on the speaker, nonverbal signs of attention demonstrated
- Responds—answers questions when asked directly
- Volunteers—contributes to discussion, without being asked, takes notes
- Speaks—to the point being discussed
- Self-assesses—changes behavior based on feedback from the lecturer and fellow students
- Reflects—writes reflections during class and analyzes own behavior
- Participates in activities with energy and evident enthusiasm
- Becomes a contributing group member who solves problems and fosters positive communication
- Does not sit back and wait for directions
- Does not watch the clock and wait for the class to end
- Does not start getting ready to finish and leave the class before the lecturer says so

Figure 7.2 Business management rubric. Dimensions and description of dimensions on a rubric for classroom participation points for a business management class in a Turkish university *(Girgin & Stevens, in press)*.

(Girgin & Stevens, in press). Knowing that many Turkish students do not experience any classroom discussions in their schooling, she wanted to carefully describe to students what classroom participation looks like, by spelling out what sorts of behaviors are considered desirable both in classroom behavior and in preparation for class. Classroom participation was worth 15 percent of the grade. This rubric does not use a grid, simply two dimensions with their description given as lists of desired behavior: This listing is then calibrated on a separate scale that gives a more general overview of each student's in-class performance overall, as shown in Figure 7.3.

Graphics Design: Portfolio Review

The graphics design rubrics in Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 were created by the Graphics Design Department at Portland State (Agre-Kippenhan & Sylvester, 2003). The four basic components of any rubric—task description, scale, dimensions, and descriptions of those dimensions—are included, albeit separately and not arranged on a grid. The instructions to the students submitting portfolios, titled "Sophomore Portfolio Review Preparation" and shown in Figure 7.4 is, in fact, simply a rather complex task description.

The dimensions were also given a separate space under the heading "Sophomore Portfolio Review Criteria," as shown in Figure 7.5.

Evaluation of ICP (in-class participation) according to the above criteria:

High level of ICP:

15 points—consistent, positive, open to learning, risk taker, always attends class (on time), prepares for and participates in discussions, has a "can do" attitude.

Mid level ICP:

10 points—consistent most of the time, usually positive, misses five classes at most, is usually prepared for class and participates in discussions

Low level ICP:

5 points—not willing to take risks, complains and sits back most of the time, does not do the preparations for class, hardly participates in any class activity

Lowest level ICP:

0 to 4 points—unwilling to try new ideas, watches the clock, looks bored during classes, is often late or does not attend majority of the classes, unprepared when attends, has a "can't do" attitude.

Figure 7.3 Business management rubric. Descriptions of levels of performance of in-class participation (ICP) in a Turkish university business management class *(Girgin & Stevens, in press)*.

Graphics Design: Sophomore Portfolio Review Preparation

An important aspect of getting a position in the design field and analyzing a designer's abilities, skills, and talent is the portfolio. At the end of this term, you will have a portfolio review. Your work will be reviewed by three to four faculty members. There are three important aspects of this review:

—You will experience putting together a portfolio.
—You will receive feedback on the work you have done in the past year (or two).
—You will work on your critical thinking skills through writing. An important part of being a designer is being able to communicate both orally and in writing about your work.

Step 1 Portfolio

a. You will need to present 6 to 10 pieces (in the case of related or campaign pieces, e.g., letterhead/business card/envelope work is presented as one piece). Craft is important! (Work may come from either a graphic design or computer graphics class.)
b. Include a process notebook.
c. Additionally, you may include two studio pieces (drawings, printmaking, photography, books or slides of paintings and dimensional work.) Choose work that best demonstrates your ability to meet the evaluation criteria listed on page 3 of your syllabus.

Step 2 Writing Sample

Evaluate one of your pieces in writing (300 to 400 words). Demonstrate your critical thinking skills. Demonstrate your ability to address an assignment in a notable way.

a. Identify and describe the work.
b. Include a discussion of the following: the process used to develop ideas, the impact, (including concept and creative approach), the content, design principles and elements, typography, form, and the craftsmanship.
c. Address the work's successful aspects and what you would do to improve the piece. Utilize a design vocabulary in your writing. Be attentive to spelling, grammar, and word usage. Note: If there is a series of work represented, be able to discuss how the group works as a system.

Step 3 Title Sheet

Your name, contact information, and identification number. List and number all pieces included in your portfolio.

Step 4 Format and Labels

All work should be neatly mounted and labeled on the back with your name and work number (as listed on title sheet). All work, writing sample, and title sheet should be placed in a portfolio. Label the portfolio with your name on the outside.

Step 5 Deadline for Portfolio

Tentative: Drop off portfolio on Tuesday, June 1, in AB Main (Room TBD)

Figure 7.4 Graphics design program rubric. Sophomore portfolio review preparation.

Graphics Design: Sophomore Portfolio Review Criteria

Criteria—Dimensions or Characteristics to Be Considered

Methods—Quality of the Procedures and Processes
- A productive approach to the development of defining and solving conceptual design problems
- Thorough and extensive exploration of the design problem including audience, message, and context
- Thorough and extensive exploration of the possible messages/concepts/ideas and formal treatments needed to reach an audience and solve a design problem
- Demonstrate a command of the design process
- Demonstrate a command of design principles
- Utilize a design vocabulary

Impact—Success based on purposes, goals, and desired results
- Risk taking
- Personal voice
- Moving beyond the academic—claiming the project
- The ability to define a problem and develop an original concept or message to support your conclusions; the concept or message must address the audience and the context within which the audience will receive the message

Content
- Ideas, skills, materials used
- Word and picture usage
- Skilled use of visual design vocabulary
- Design principles and elements: form, scale, direction, hierarchy, organization, color
- Typographic skills: typeface choice, expert typography, detail
- Content mediated through form
- The work should demonstrate creative and appropriate use of materials and a skilled use of visual design vocabulary. Content as it is mediated by form, including all formal and material considerations and decisions. Mastery in creating or editing powerful and appropriate word and picture usage. In terms of formal considerations, mastery in usage of design principles (form, scale, weight, texture, direction, etc.), organization, use of color, typographic skills including typeface choices/combinations, and expert typography.

Craftsmanship—Overall polish, organization, and rigor
- Appropriate and skilled use of technology
- Skilled production
- Polished craft
- Capable of handling materials and technology
- High level of craft
- Command of manual and technical processes

Sophistication of Performance
- Complexity, maturity
- Thoughtful
- Original
- Innovation
- Visual choices support ideas

Figure 7.5 Graphics design program rubric. Sophomore portfolio review criteria.

In this rubric, separating the dimensions (the criteria by which the portfolios were to be assessed) from the rest of the rubric allowed the department to define each dimension more fully. Although the dimensions were single words as they are on most rubrics, these single labels were then followed by detailed explanations defining what terms such as "Impact" or "Craftsmanship" actually meant in the context of producing a graphics design portfolio. These were definitions of the dimensions rather than descriptions of levels of performance, and they were designed to help students understand what they needed to include in their portfolios.

The descriptions of dimensions, the five levels of performance for all dimensions, are again presented as a separate document, labeled "Sophomore Portfolio Quality Levels," and shown in Figure 7.6, which explains what each level of the scale means for all dimensions. This is designed for the benefit of both the student and the evaluators.

The final segment of the graphic design rubric, the scale, is the "Evaluation Sheet" shown in Figure 7.7, which maps onto both the dimensions (Sophomore Portfolio Review Criteria, Figure 7.5) and the descriptions of the dimensions (Sophomore Portfolio Quality Levels, Figure 7.6) and allows evaluators to produce a quantitative grade in a systematic, consistent manner.

Rubrics for Assignments Done in Stages: "Staged" Rubrics

"Staged" rubrics, as one might guess from the name, are used for assignments in which process is at least as important as the final product. Staged rubrics are used and reused at different times to assess different stages of a student's work, thus allowing us to monitor the student's work as it progresses. Staged rubrics can take the form of a three-to-five-level rubric format or even a scoring guide rubric. Their main difference from other rubrics is that the dimensions not only divide the task into its component parts but allow for each of those dimensions to be graded at separate times as the work goes forward. The same rubric is reused and turned back in at each stage so that the finished rubric is an itemized account of the feedback students received along the way.

Graphics Design: Sophomore Portfolio Quality Levels (1–5 HIGH)

Level 5
Excellent. Level 5 work clearly differentiates itself from other work and requires extra effort. It has memorable impact and pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. It exhibits what is done by a highly self-motivated student who puts forth above and beyond effort. The work meets/surpasses all of the criteria set in the project/assignment description. The content is exceptional with outstanding critical thinking, superb formal mediation of the concept, and impeccable craft. Ideas are original, thoughtful or imaginative. Spelling, punctuation, or grammar errors are nonexistent. A level 5 documents the ability to think critically and work independently. It demonstrates strong methods and process, the ability to research, explore, investigate, and experiment.

Level 4
Good. Level 4 work is good/very good and requires extra effort. Impact is good. The work demonstrates an ability to pursue idea and suggestions presented in class and work with extra effort to resolve required projects. Content is good. The work demonstrates better than average design sensitivity. Methods are good, demonstrating an understanding and utilization of process. Above average craft and attention to detail are shown.

Level 3
Satisfactory. Level 3 work is average and competent. The work has fulfilled the requirements of the project, has acceptable levels of impact, conceptual development, and visual interest. Content is sufficiently developed. Work doesn't demonstrate the additional effort needed to excel. It lacks thoughtful, original, and imaginative resolution or attention to detail and craft. It employs process but does not demonstrate notable solutions.

Level 2
Poor-Below Average. Level 2 work is lacking in many or most areas that show any understanding of design. The impact is weak with unsound, unoriginal, or unimaginative thinking. There is a lack of understanding of how to execute an idea. In terms of content, there is an overall lack of understanding of general design principles including form, typography, or image making. Problems may include lack of interest, procrastination, poor planning, and poor craft.

Level 1
Unacceptable. Level 1 work shows no overall understanding of the assignment on many levels. Work shows a severe lack of interest. Work that is so substandard that the project holds few if any redeeming characteristics.

N/A
Not an applicable consideration.

Figure 7.6 Graphics design program rubric. Sophomore portfolio quality levels.

Graphic Design: Sophomore Portfolio Review Evaluation Sheet

Methods					
Quality of the procedures and processes used to develop work	1	2	3	4	5
Research/process	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of research					
Quality of exploration discovery					
Work habits (familiar faculty to evaluate)	1	2	3	4	5
Oral and written communication (written sample, faculty input)	1	2	3	4	5
Impact—Success based on purposes, goals, and desired results, risk taking, personal voice. Visual choices support ideas, appropriate and inventive uses of historical references, and development of original concept that addresses audience/ purpose/context.					
Creativity	1	2	3	4	5
Originality, quality, and appropriateness					
Concepts	1	2	3	4	5
Strength of underlying ideas					
Understanding of audience/purpose					
Content—Mediated through form: design principles, typography, form, materials					
Composition and layout	1	2	3	4	5
Spatial relationships, placement, formal principles (scale, direction, etc.), organization					
Color/contrast/value	1	2	3	4	5
Typography: type as Image	1	2	3	4	5
Typography: line, paragraph, page	1	2	3	4	5
Sensitivity and sensibility, visual hierarchy, grid, layout					
Typeface choices/combinations					
Expert typography and attention to typographic detail					
Use of Imagery	1	2	3	4	5
Choices/skills					
Creation of original imagery (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5
Use of materials	1	2	3	4	5
Content and form relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Craftsmanship—Overall polish, organization, and rigor; use of technology and skilled production					
Polished craft	1	2	3	4	5
Hand skills	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of execution	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation of work	1	2	3	4	5
Use of technology	1	2	3	4	5
Sophistication of performance—Overall impression of portfolio: complexity, maturity, selection of pieces					
Overall impression of portfolio	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 7.7 Graphic design: Sophomore portfolio review evaluation sheet.

Staged rubrics give students advance knowledge about the process of completing a work while also offering immediate feedback on whatever has been accomplished most recently. The staged rubric helps students get practice in doing the several steps needed to complete a big project. Staged rubrics have the disadvantage that they cannot be as specific about the final work as a nonstaged rubric, but this is offset by the role they play in showing students that a big project takes time and a set of steps to accomplish. Staged rubrics not only show students what they must accomplish, but the steps they must take toward doing that.

Research Paper Rubric

Staged rubrics are usually used for large projects that might take a whole term or certainly several weeks to complete. The staged element of the rubric not only ensures that students begin the project at some time other than the night before it is due, but it also allows us to spot the moment(s), if any, at which students go off course before it affects their entire grade. Figure 7.8 illustrates a three-level staged rubric used for a research paper in a class on popular culture.

Book Review Rubric

A very different interpretation of what the stages might be is shown in Figure 7.9. This is a staged rubric for a book review assignment given to graduate students in education. The aim was not to teach them how to write a book review (presumably graduate students already possess this skill) but to introduce them to the world of professional writing. As a result, the stages do not particularly relate to the writing but to the professional activity (making contacts at appropriate times, determining and respecting publication guidelines, and so on) involved.

Several Rubrics for One Assignment: "Multiple" Rubrics

"Multiple" rubrics are more common to program assessment than to grading, but we do occasionally use them for grading complex, multifaceted assignments like an end-of-term portfolio or a full ad campaign designed over the course of a semester. The multiple portfolio approach still incorporates all the basic parts of the simpler rubric,

Staged Rubric for Research Paper

Task Description: Write a research paper on the popular culture topic of your choice. Your paper should be based on primary resources, although you should, of course, include whatever secondary sources are available on that topic. In addition to whatever other primary sources you use, you are required to create, distribute, analyze, and utilize the results of a survey on your topic. The survey must include at least 10 questions and must be distributed to at least 30 people to be valid.

	Excellent	Average	Weak
Preliminary bibliography (Stage 1) Due Week 2 of class	❏ All possible primary sources are listed. ❏ All possible secondary sources are listed. ❏ Formatting follows a recognized style.	❏ Some primary sources are listed but not all. ❏ Some secondary sources are listed but not all. ❏ Formatting includes all relevant information but follows no known format.	❏ No primary sources are listed. ❏ No secondary sources are listed. ❏ No recognizable format style is used and information on many entries is partial.
Working thesis (Stage 2) Due Week 3 of class	The thesis is clearly written, allows for a compelling paper whether your research proves the thesis correct or not.	The thesis is unfocused and too simplistic. What are you going to do if your results prove you wrong?	This is not a thesis, working or otherwise. Where are you planning to focus this paper?

Figure 7.8 "Staged" rubric for research paper.

	Excellent	Average	Weak
Survey (Stage 3) Due Week 3	❏ Questions relate clearly to the thesis. ❏ Questions are as objective as possible and do not "lead." ❏ There are at least 10 questions in addition to those relating to demographics. ❏ Survey formats (multiple choice, lickert scale, yes-no) are appropriately used. ❏ The demographic questions are limited to those that might make a difference to your thesis.	❏ Some questions do not seem to relate to your thesis. ❏ Questions show a bias toward a desired result; you are leading your respondents or failing to allow them to disagree if they wish to. ❏ Survey formats (multiple choice, lickert scale, yes-no) are not always used to their best advantage. ❏ Demographic questions are too general and either too many or too few	❏ Questions seem unrelated to your thesis; you need to rethink either the thesis or the survey. ❏ Questions do not allow for any flexibility of response. ❏ Survey formats are not well selected for the types of questions you are asking. ❏ Demographic questions are unclear and seem to have no relevance to thesis or topic.
Survey analysis (Stage 4) Due Week 6	❏ SSPS or Excel was effectively used to collate, cross-reference, and analyze the data ❏ Every method was used to gain as much information from the data as possible. ❏ The results were presented in both narrative and graphic forms.	❏ SSPS or Excel was used to collate, cross-reference, and analyze the data, but there are some mistakes in how used. ❏ More information can be wrung out of these data. ❏ The results were presented in narrative or graphic forms but not both.	❏ SSPS or Excel was not used or was used incorrectly. ❏ Very little analysis of the data was done. ❏ The results were not written up in narrative form or generated in graphic form.
Outline or mind-map (Stage 5) Due Week 8	The outline or mind-map shows clearly where every aspect of the research done will go in the final paper.	The outline or mind-map gives a general idea of how the research will fit into the final paper, but some parts are missing or some connections are unclear.	The outline or mind-map is unfocused and incomplete.

Figure 7.8 *Continued*

Book Review Rubric

Another resource in your work, of course, is the books you will be reading in your field of interest. You may have a stack of books right now waiting for you to crack them open and glean their seeds of knowledge. To foster and facilitate reading, you will be writing a book review of one of the books. However, you will not only give this book review to me, you will also send it to a journal.

Step 1. Identify a research journal in your field of interest that has book reviews. Select a book with a very recent publication date; 2001 may even be too old to review. The book review editor can tell you about that.

Step 2. Contact the book review editor and find the journal's book review guidelines. Tell the editor the book you would like to review and get "preapproval" of the review.

Step 3. Read the reviews in the journal that you have contacted. Make copies and analyze the text structure.

Step 4. Read the book and write the review using a structure similar to that used for other reviews in the journal. Send it in!

Dimension	Descriptions of exemplary completion of this book review project	Comments
1. Contacting the journal editor Week 1	**Identify a journal.** **Identify a book to review.** Contact the book review editor. Suggest this book to the editor.	
2. Analyzing the book review text structure Week 2	Analyze the text structure of the book reviews in the journal. **Make a list** of the elements in the text structure and be prepared to share your findings with the class.	
3. Writing the review Week 4	**Turn in the book review.** Include two copies of other reviews from that journal. Criteria: Text structure and tone similar to other reviews in the journal Length same as others Elements of evaluation are present Follows the text structure of other reviews in the journal Uses APA format. **Mail** in the book review to editor.	
4. Presenting in class Week 8	For the last class, **present information** about the content and the process of writing a book review. Turn in the book review guidelines and review examples from your journal. **Add a note** that describes your progress in getting this published.	

Figure 7.9 "Staged" rubric for a book review.

but it creates separate rubrics for each dimension. This approach makes it possible to further define and explain the importance of a single dimension. Figure 7.10 is a rubric developed for programmatic assessment at Portland State. Many professors also use it for grading.

"The Diversity of Human Experience" is one of the learning goals of the University Studies Program at Portland State University. Each year, this rubric and four others devoted to other goals (see the Appendix section for all five rubrics) are used to evaluate the entire program by applying them to randomly selected year-end student portfolios. The aim is not to grade the individual student but to assess the degree to which the entire program is meeting its goals.

In the classes where these portfolios are produced, however, grading is very much an issue, and some professors also use the assessment rubrics to grade all the portfolios at the end of the year. Some use only the lower four scales, because the full six point scale reflects the aspirations Portland State has for its graduates; Freshman portfolios are not actually expected to score much better than a four. Other professors create other variations of these assessment rubrics for grading individual student portfolios.

Multiple rubrics like these do not actually save much grading time, because they require repeated examination of the same work according to differing criteria, but grading freshman core portfolios (which consist of an entire year's work and the student's own reflections on that work) is a time-consuming process in any case, and a single rubric cannot totally or legibly include all aspects of all the learning goals. Using multiple rubrics does at least provide for an organized, consistent process for grading a work that is otherwise forbiddingly massive and multifaceted.

Conclusion

This chapter introduces the variety of ways that rubrics can be used. From the science laboratory to the business management class to a graphics design program, professors have adapted the basic rubric to meet instructional and programmatic objectives. In addition, staged rubrics and multiple rubrics show other ways to adapt this assessment tool.

Other variations are certainly possible. Once you have mastered the art of rubrics, you will undoubtedly come up with your own variations crafted to suit your own discipline, field, and unique teaching style.

The Diversity of Human Experience	
6 (highest)	Portfolio creatively and comprehensively demonstrates an understanding of personal, institutional, and ideological issues surrounding diversity in a scholarly fashion, using concrete examples. The work reflects an ability to view issues from multiple perspectives, to question what is being taught, and to construct independent meaning and interpretations. Demonstrates broad awareness of how the self appears from the greater perspective of human experience, questions own views in light of this awareness, and contemplates its implications for life choices in the personal and public spheres.
5	Portfolio presents persuasive arguments about, and insights into, prominent issues surrounding diversity, and it discusses ways in which personal and cultural experiences influence lives, ideas, and events. Reflects on personal experiences within the broader context of human experience, demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of the limitations of subjective experience and an informed view of the role difference plays in societies and institutions.
4	Portfolio analyzes some issues surrounding diversity and demonstrates an ability to understand particular situations in the context of current concepts and theory. Discusses personal experience within the broader context of human experience, demonstrating a working knowledge of features of diverse peoples, societies, and institutions, and analyzes these features in some way.
3	Portfolio demonstrates a basic working knowledge of central theories and concepts related to the study of diversity. Demonstrates some attempt to meaningfully locate oneself within the broader context of diverse culture.
2	Portfolio demonstrates a basic comprehension of some issues surrounding diversity but refers only in a limited way to current theory and concepts. Relates personal experiences within the context of broader human experiences but does not locate the self within that context in a thoughtful manner.
1 (lowest)	Portfolio uses some terminology surrounding diversity but fails to demonstrate meaningful comprehension of key concepts. Tells of personal experiences but does not connect, compare, or contrast those with the experiences of others.

Note: In this scoring guide, "diversity" refers to differences in ethnic, religious, and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability.

Figure 7.10 One rubric of a four-part multiple rubric: Diversity of human experience rubric from University Studies, Portland State.

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APPENDICES

A. Blank Rubric Format for a Three-Level Rubric
B. Blank Rubric Format for a Four-Level Rubric
C. Blank Rubric Format for a Four-Level Rubric, Landscape Format
D. Blank Rubric Format for a Scoring Guide Rubric
E. Interview Analysis Paper Scoring Guide Rubric
F. Leading a Class Discussion Scoring Guide Rubric
G. Portland State University Studies Program Rubric: Ethical Issues
H. Portland State University Studies Program Rubric: Holistic Critical Thinking
I. Portland State University Studies Program Rubric: Quantitative Literacy
J. Portland State University Studies Program Rubric: Writing
K. Portland State University Studies Program Rubric: Diversity
L. Web Site Information for *Introduction to Rubrics* *http://styluspub.com/resources/introductiontorubrics/aspx*

APPENDIX A

BLANK RUBRIC FORMAT FOR A THREE-LEVEL RUBRIC

Three-Level Rubric

Task Description:

Dimensions	Exemplary	Competent	Developing

APPENDIX B

BLANK RUBRIC FORMAT FOR A FOUR-LEVEL RUBRIC

Four-Level Rubric

Task Description:

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning

APPENDIX C

BLANK RUBRIC FORMAT FOR A FOUR-LEVEL RUBRIC, LANDSCAPE FORMAT

Four-Level Rubric, Landscape Format

Task Description:

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning

APPPENDIX D

BLANK RUBRIC FORMAT FOR A SCORING GUIDE RUBRIC

Scoring Guide Rubric

Task Description:

Dimensions	Description of highest level of performance	Comments	Points

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS PAPER SCORING GUIDE RUBRIC

Interview Analysis Paper: Rubric

Dimensions	Characteristics of a top performance	Comments/Points
Organization	Clearly developed sections Subheads appropriately used Easy to follow Clear and logical transitions between sections	
Process objectives: Shamu, Eric	Gives detailed background and summary of interview process Describes steps taken to complete the interview Tells what you learned about conducting an interview	
Content objectives: Yumiko, Jane	Describes at least three key points learned about the person and why these are important to you Describes any unexpected learning opportunities that arose from the conversation Describes whether met planned objectives or not and explains why or why not	
Relationship objectives: Christian, Angela	Describes perceptions, possibilities, and connections that occurred as a result of the interview.	
Presentation	Follows writing conventions ___ double-spaced ___ four to five + pages ___ clear writing, not confusing ___ perfect grammar Interview protocol is attached: Yes/No	
	Score:	

APPENDIX F

LEADING A CLASS DISCUSSION SCORING GUIDE RUBRIC

Leading a Class Discussion—Rubric Group, Points, Points 20 / Score___

Category	Qualities of best work	Points	Comments
Preparation	Handed out ahead of time Focus questions—during or before reading	3	
Content	Focus of readings: explained and clear Type of readings Topics of general interest Topics relevant to Advanced Ed. Psych.	4	
Discussion/ debate methods	Teaching methods Engage students—motivating Variety of methods used Introduced clearly Balanced; small/large groups All voices heard Guide but don't dominate discussion Summarize the discussion Discussion with different viewpoints, not a presentation	5	
Discussion questions	Questions asked Challenging, thought provoking Understandable Encourage participation Encourage students to refer to Text, cite sources	5	
Communication skills	Facilitators demonstrate good communication skills Eye contact Active listening Paraphrasing Summarizing Redirecting the questions	3	

Communication Skills Feedback for Individuals

	Name	Name	Name	Name
Eye contact Voice Gestures Stance				

APPENDIX G

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM RUBRIC: ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility

6 (highest)	Portfolio creatively and comprehensively articulates approaches to ethical issues and social responsibility, in a scholarly manner, citing specific evidence. Demonstrates an ability to view multiple sides of these issues, to question what is being taught, and to construct independent meaning and interpretations. Portfolio presents well-developed ideas on the role of ethical issues and social responsibility in both private and public life. Demonstrates a deep awareness of how a conceptual understanding of ethical issues and social responsibility manifests concretely in one's own personal choices, including decisions on when and how to act.
5	Portfolio analyzes ethical issues and social responsibility in a scholarly manner and makes thoughtful connections between this area of study and its effects on lives, ideas, and events. Portfolio discusses explicitly how a deepening understanding of ethical issues and social responsibility has influenced personal opinions, decisions, and views on the role of the self in society.
4	Portfolio thoughtfully analyzes, in a scholarly manner, a situation or situations in which ethical issues and social responsibility have played an important role. Begins to investigate connections between areas of controversy and to extrapolate meaning from specific examples. Portfolio applies learning in ethical issues and social responsibility to issues that arise in everyday life and contemplates the impact of personal ethical choices and social action in the context of interpersonal and broader societal spheres.
3	Portfolio exhibits a working knowledge of major themes and scholarly debates surrounding ethical issues and social responsibility and applies this understanding to some topics but offers no independent analysis. References ethical issues and social responsibility as a subject of personal inquiry, begins to question established views, and contemplates in some way the value and impact of individual choices and personal action on one's broader community.
2	Portfolio mentions some issue(s) involving ethics or talks about social responsibility in a general fashion but does not discuss these areas in a meaningful way. Portfolio contains some evidence of self-reflection in the area of ethical issues or social responsibility, but this reflection is superficial and reveals little or no questioning of established views.
1 (lowest)	Portfolio displays little or no engagement with the subjects of ethical issues and social responsibility. Demonstrates little or no recognition of ethical issues and social responsibility as subjects worthy of personal inquiry.
X =	No basis for scoring (Use only for missing or malfunctioning portfolios.)

Note: In this scoring guide, the phrase "ethical issues and social responsibility" refers to the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society—intellectually, socially, and personally.

APPENDIX H

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM RUBRIC: HOLISTIC CRITICAL THINKING

Inquiry and Critical Thinking Rubric

Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

6 (Highest)—Consistently does all or almost all of the following:

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Identifies the salient arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con.
- Thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates major alternative points of view.
- Generates alternative explanations of phenomena or event.
- Justifies key results and procedures, explains assumptions and reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.
- Makes ethical judgments.

5—Does most of the following:

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Thinks through issues by identifying relevant arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con.
- Offers analysis and evaluation of obvious alternative points of view.
- Generates alternative explanations of phenomena or event.
- Justifies (by using) some results or procedures, explains reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons leads.

4—Does most of the following:

- Describes events, people, and places with some supporting details from the source.
- Make connections to sources, either personal or analytic.
- Demonstrates a basic ability to analyze, interpret, and formulate inferences.
- States or briefly includes more than one perspective in discussing literature, experiences, and points of view of others.
- Takes some risks by occassionally questioning sources or by stating interpretations and predictions.
- Demonstrates little evidence of rethinking or refinement of one's own perspective.

3—Does most or many of the following:

- Responds by retelling or graphically showing events or facts.
- Makes personal connections or identifies connections within or between sources in a limited way. Is beginning to use appropriate evidence to back ideas.
- Discusses literature, experiences, and points of view of others in terms of own experience.
- Responds to sources at factual or literal level.
- Includes little or no evidence of refinement of initial response or shift in dualistic thinking.
- Demonstrates difficulty with organization and thinking is uneven.

2—Does most or many of the following:

- Misinterprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Fails to identify strong, relevant counter arguments.
- Draws unwarranted or fallacious conclusions.
- Justifies few results or procedures, seldom explains reasons.
- Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions.

1 (lowest)—Consistently does all or almost all of the following:

- Offers biased interpretations of evidence, statements, graphics, questions, information, or the points of view of others.
- Fails to identify or hastily dismisses strong, relevant counterarguments.
- Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view. Argues using fallacious or irrelevant reasons and unwarranted claims.
- Does not justify results or procedures, nor explains reasons.
- Exhibits close-mindedness or hostility to reason.

X—No basis for scoring (Use only for missing or malfunctioning portfolios.)

APPENDIX I

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY PROGRAM RUBRIC: QUANTITATIVE LITERACY

The Quantitative Literacy Rubric

6. Portfolio demonstrates evidence of ability to conduct independent research and to integrate the results with other methodologies in original work. The meaning of statistical significance, calculus, a comprehensive understanding of causality and correlation, applications of normal curves and outliers to physical and social phenomena, and an integrated comprehension of linear regression is comprehensively displayed.
5. Portfolio demonstrates evidence of ability to conduct independent research and to integrate the results with other methodologies in original work, although not to the fullest extent possible. The meaning of statistical significance, a comprehensive understanding of causality and correlation, applications of normal curves and outliers to physical and social phenomena, and an integrated comprehension of linear regression is present but not fully displayed.
4. Portfolio contains assignments demonstrating evidence of an ability to read, understand, and critique books or articles that make use of quantitative reasoning, using descriptive statistics, understanding the meaning of statistical significance, and displaying data using appropriate graphs and charts. Assignments are included in the portfolio as separate entities, and quantitative reasoning is integrated into other work.
3. Portfolio demonstrates evidence of an ability to read, understand, and critique books or articles that make use of quantitative reasoning, using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode), understanding the meaning of statistical significance, and displaying data using appropriate graphs and charts. Alternatively, well-designed and appropriate quantitative reasoning assignments are included in the portfolio, but are treated as separate entities.
2. Portfolio demonstrates evidence of limited ability to define, duplicate, label, list, recognize, and reproduce mathematical and statistical elements. Portfolio displays limited or no evidence of meaningful application of these numerical concepts.
1. Portfolio demonstrates no evidence of ability to evaluate mathematics and statistics, including no knowledge of basic descriptive statistics.

APPENDIX J

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM RUBRIC: WRITING

Portland State University University Studies Writing Rubric

Score of 6:

- The student portfolio demonstrates the ability to communicate clearly for a variety of purposes and diverse audiences.
- The portfolio shows the mark of the writer's own labor, critical judgment, and rhetorical shaping.
- It is marked by lucid and orderly thinking, substantial depth, fullness and complexity of thought.
- It articulates metacognition on the writer's part: analysis of learning strategies, revision techniques, and improvement in writing skills.
- It evidences control of diction, syntactic variety, and usage.

Score of 5:

- The student portfolio reveals the ability to communicate for a variety of purposes and diverse audiences.
- The portfolio satisfactorily shows the mark of the writer's own labor, critical judgment, and rhetorical shaping.
- The main ideas are well supported with a fair degree of specificity.
- Organization reveals clarity of thought and paragraphs are coherent units.
- The writing is largely free of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

Score of 4:

- The portfolio does come to terms with the basic tasks of the assignments, but overall it executes the assignments less completely or less systematically than a 6 or 5 portfolio.
- There is no serious weakness in organization. Though there may be some disjointedness and lack of focus, the reader can move with relative ease through the discourse.
- Generalizations are usually supported, though some detail may be lacking or irrelevant.
- The portfolio contains some errors in sentence structure and mechanics but not to the point of distracting the reader from the content.

Score of 3:

- The student portfolio shows difficulty in managing the tasks of the assignment.
- There is likely to be either a weakness in analytical thinking or lack of development of key ideas.
- The portfolio marginally demonstrates the ability to communicate for a variety of purposes.
- Errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics do interfere with readability.
- Overall, the portfolio shows some metacognition of the student's part, but there is lack of clarity and depth about revising and the writing process.

Score of 2:

- The portfolio does not come to terms with the assignment.
- There is little development of ideas, and the reader finds it difficult to follow from one point to the next.
- Writing tasks may be ignored or badly mishandled.
- There may be serious errors in reasoning.
- There may be serious and frequent errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics.
- Overall, the portfolio reveals an inability to communicate successfully.

Score of 1:

- The portfolio reveals a combination of rhetorical problems from conceptual confusion, disorganization, and a basic inability to handle language.

APPENDIX K

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM RUBRIC: DIVERSITY

	The Diversity of Human Experience
6 (highest)	Portfolio creatively and comprehensively demonstrates an understanding of personal, institutional, and ideological issues surrounding diversity in a scholarly fashion, using concrete examples. The work reflects an ability to view issues from multiple perspectives, to question what is being taught, and to construct independent meaning and interpretations. Demonstrates broad awareness of how the self appears from the greater perspective of human experience, questions own views in light of this awareness, and contemplates its implications for life choices in the personal and public spheres.
5	Portfolio presents persuasive arguments about, and insights into, prominent issues surrounding diversity and discusses ways in which personal and cultural experiences influence lives, ideas, and events. Reflects on personal experiences within the broader context of human experience, demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of the limitations of subjective experience and an informed view of the role difference plays in societies and institutions.
4	Portfolio analyzes some issue(s) surrounding diversity and demonstrates an ability to understand particular situations in the context of current concepts and theory. Discusses personal experience within the broader context of human experience—demonstrating a working knowledge of features of diverse peoples, societies, and institutions and analyzes these features in some way.
3	Portfolio demonstrates a basic working knowledge of central theories and concepts related to the study of diversity. Demonstrates some attempt to meaningfully locate oneself within the broader context of diverse culture.
2	Portfolio demonstrates a basic comprehension of some issues surrounding diversity but refers only in a limited way to current theory and concepts. Relates personal experiences within the context of broader human experiences but does not locate self within that context in a thoughtful manner.
1 (lowest)	Portfolio uses some terminology surrounding diversity but fails to demonstrate meaningful comprehension of key concepts. Tells of personal experiences but does not connect, compare, or contrast those with the experiences of others.

Note: In this scoring guide, "diversity" refers to differences in ethnic, religious, and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability.

APPENDIX L

WEB SITE INFORMATION FOR *INTRODUCTION TO RUBRICS*

We have created a website for

- Downloading rubrics
- Sharing rubrics
- Discussing the use of rubrics

Each of the authors has Web pages that you can access from the Web site. Please feel free to contact us about rubrics and even about doing workshops with faculty on creating rubrics. The address is http://styluspub.com/resources/introductiontorubrics.aspx

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Note: Rubrics appear in italics.