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Writing in your FYOS
FIRST-YEAR ODYSSEY UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
reflection    engagement    academic culture    dialogue

# Rubrics—Designing Evaluative Criteria

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.

—Stevens and Levi, *Introduction to Rubrics*

Rubrics are an excellent tool to help us provide timely feedback, comment constructively, clarify assignment expectations, and encourage critical thinking, communication and reflection. Sharing a thoughtful rubric with our students will help them understand the kinds of criteria that we expect them to meet and will connect these criteria to assignment/course goals; students may even be involved in the creation of a rubric to enhance their commitment to (and understanding of) the assignment.

Levi and Stevens identify four "basic parts" to a rubric:
1. A task description (the assignment),
2. A scale of some sort (levels of achievement, such as "Excellent," "Competent", and "Needs Work"),
3. The dimensions of the assignment (a breakdown of the skills/knowledge involved in the assignment), and
4. Descriptions of what constitutes each level of achievement (specific feedback).

And they describe four "key stages" in constructing a rubric:
1. **Reflecting**: We take the time to reflect on what we want from students, why we created this assignment, what happened the last time we gave it, and what our expectations are. Consider, for example, how the assignment meets a particular FYOS goal.
2. **Listing**: We focus on the particular details of the assignment and what specific learning objectives we hope to see in the completed assignment. Once we've determined the objectives, we can articulate what the highest level of performance might look like.
3. **Grouping and Labeling**: We organize the results of our reflections in Stages 1 and 2 and group similar expectations together in what will probably become the rubric dimensions. Levi and Stevens list "Organization," "Presentation," and "Introduction" as examples, but students may appreciate more robustly defined dimensions.
4. **Application**: We apply the dimensions and descriptions from Stage 3 to the final form of the rubric, using a grid format.

A Skeleton Rubric:

Task Description: A thoughtful, detailed assignment.

|  | Excellent | Good | Competent | Ineffective |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dimension 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Dimension 2 |  |  |  |  |
| Dimension 3 |  |  |  |  |
| Dimension 4 |  |  |  |  |

A description of each level of achievement according to each dimension

Stevens, Dannelle D., and Antonia J. Levi. *Introduction to Rubrics: an Assessment Tool to save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2005. Print.

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