Using Rubrics

What is a rubric?

“*A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of an outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic.*”

Rubrics allow an opportunity to clearly articulate levels of achievement and provide a direct measure of learning to students. Rubrics help to clearly define expectations and what meeting, not meeting, or exceeding those expectations can look like.

A typical rubric could look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACHIEVEMENT SCALE</th>
<th>Does not meet expectations</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSIONS ➔</td>
<td>Description of what this would look like.</td>
<td>Description of what this would look like.</td>
<td>Description of what this would look like.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Effectively</td>
<td>How is this level of achievement met?</td>
<td>How is this level of achievement met?</td>
<td>How is this level of achievement met?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rubrics can:

- Provide consistency in evaluation of behaviours and performance
- Be mixed-method:
  - Quantitative and/or qualitative in nature
    - Rubrics provide qualitative descriptions of learning, through the use of quantifiable results
  - Direct (displaying the knowledge behaviour or thought process) and/or indirect (reflect upon the knowledge behaviour or thought process)
    - e.g. ‘Where do you go on campus for health services?’ versus ‘I know where to go on campus for health services.’
- Communicate expectations to students in a clear way
- Combine student feedback and programmatic feedback in one
Steps for Developing a Rubric

1. Identify an outcome
   a. Learning outcomes – what a student is to do or think as a result of engaging in a learning activity
   b. Program outcome – what a program or process is aiming to achieve for its own improvement (needs driven or satisfaction driven)

2. Determine how evidence will be obtained
   a. Observation – presentation, performance, training
   b. Artifact analysis – reflection, portfolio, journal

3. Develop the rubric
   a. Use best practices in the field to guide rubric development (The American Association of Colleges & Universities provides many examples of rubrics)
   b. Incorporate a solid foundation including learning outcomes statements, important definitions, theoretical bases (groundings in research), connections to guiding documents (Academic Plans, Mission, Vision, etc.)
   c. Determine a structure
      i. Holistic Rubric – overall assessment of an individual, of a shorter list of more general dimensions or between dimensions or competencies that are difficult to differentiate. Potential to be more subjective.
      ii. Analytic Rubric – more detailed and specific to individual dimensions and a longer list of dimensions. Potential to be more objective.
      iii. Competency Scale – Beginner, Developing, Accomplished, Advanced
      iv. Frequency of Behaviour Scale – Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Always
      v. Extent to Which Performed – Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Considerably, A great deal

4. Test the rubric
   a. Avoid multiple outcomes and/or too many dimensions
   b. Avoid unclear differences that are too complex or too general
   c. Use language from Bloom’s Taxonomy for clear descriptions