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:

ACHIEVEMENT SCALE ➔ DIMENSIONS ↓ Communicates Effectively	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations	COMMENTS
	Description of what this would look like. How is this level of achievement met?	Description of what this would look like. How is this level of achievement met?	Description of what this would look like. How is this level of achievement met?	

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