Rubrics and Scoring

A scoring rubric is a set of grading guidelines. These guidelines present clearly defined criteria and describe different levels of expected student performance on those criteria. A score is assigned to the work the student has done according to the specific quality of various dimensions reflected in the student’s work. The rubric describes the expected quality of performance and is therefore an integral part of the task. Students should receive it together with the task.

The advantages of a rubric include the following. A rubric:
• clarifies criteria in specific terms;
• shows students not only how their work will be assessed, but also provides guidelines for what is expected;
• provides more informative feedback than a simple grade;
• allows for both self-assessment and peer assessment;
• makes scoring more consistent;
• promotes reliability.

When designing rubrics, it is recommended to keep in mind that rubrics should be:
• designed and developed through discussion with colleagues and/or students, and by mutual agreement;
• changed and refined as necessary;
• available to the student. As the student becomes more familiar with them, he/she can participate in the design process in subsequent tasks.

For most of the tasks in the bank an analytic rubric has been chosen. An analytic scoring rubric, as the name suggests, allows for judgements concerning the quality of separate dimensions or aspects of performance. Scoring is based on discerning different aspects of performance and evaluating the quality of performance on each aspect. In an analytic rubric, each criterion is scored on a different descriptive scale.

The advantages of an analytic rubric include the following. It:
• provides detailed and descriptive information for different aspects of performance;
• provides a profile of student performance, highlighting strengths and weaknesses;
• is useful for formative evaluation: the student knows what to improve and the teacher knows what to review.

The dimensions (general categories comprising a number of criteria, e.g. text type, content, vocabulary, etc.) and criteria (standards or reference points on which judgments are based, e.g. relevance, accuracy, spelling, etc.) in the analytic rubrics are consistent throughout. This enables you, the teacher, to:
• define specific performance on a specific task;
• follow language progress over time along any particular dimension.

The descriptors (detailed descriptions of different levels of performance) for each specific task may differ in accordance with the specific demands of the task.
The rubrics in the bank provide detailed descriptions of three levels of performance for each dimension. As you can see in Figure 1, the scores assigned are 5 (high score), 3 (average score) and 1 (low score). In cases where performance is lower than 5 but higher than 3, you can assign a 4. In cases where performance is lower than 3 but higher than 1, you can assign a 2. After using the rubric and collecting samples of performance, you may want to write your own detailed descriptions for both 4 and 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Discourse &amp; Organization</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Language Usage and Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Target 5</td>
<td>Written according to all the features.</td>
<td>Relevant information</td>
<td>Message is clear. Logical flow of ideas. “Hangs together.”</td>
<td>Appropriate use and correct form of verbs. Mostly correct spelling. Mostly correct punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>On Your Way 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Out 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 1 Rubric Format*

*A* dimension is an aspect of performance, for example (in writing) content, organization. A dimension is usually described by a number of criteria.

**A** criterion is a parameter according to which scores are assigned.

***A** descriptor is a detailed description of performance for any particular level.

Even though the language in the rubrics may at first seem difficult, it is recommended that you go over them with your class. The aim of this is two fold:
- it enables the students to internalize the criteria;
- due to repetition and uniform format, once students are familiar with the rubrics, they can continue independently.
Please note that since the rubrics were designed for the purposes of teaching, the dimensions defined were driven by **pedagogical considerations** and relate mainly to the aspects of language that are dealt with in the classroom. In other words, this is what the teacher will be examining when looking at students’ work and evaluating it. Moreover, we have chosen to use terminology that is **teacher-oriented** rather than strictly adhering to theoretical terminology. The following are definitions of the dimensions for the rubrics appearing in the bank:

| **Text Type** | relates to the external layout (heading, font size, etc.) and internal conventions and features (greeting, sign-off) of a particular text (in both written and oral products). (For example, a letter, a magazine article, a diary entry, a presentation, etc.) |
| **Content** | relates to the relevance and accuracy of the information and ideas (in both written and oral products). |
| **Discourse and Organization** | relates to the clarity of the message, as well as to the logical flow of language and cohesion (how well the text “hangs together” and use of transitions) (in both written and oral products). |
| **Vocabulary** | relates to lexical choice (word/phrase/expression) in context, as well as range and richness (in both written and oral products). |
| **Language Usage and Conventions** | relates to grammar (form and function) spelling and punctuation (in written products; in oral products this dimension relates only to the grammatical aspects of performance). |
| **Speech** | relates to the fluency of communication, as well as to pronunciation (in oral products). |
| **Interaction** | relates to the flow of conversation (in oral products) |

For some tasks a **holistic rubric** is suggested. Holistic scoring rubrics support broader judgements concerning the quality of the process or the product. Scoring is based on an overall impression of the quality of the product. In a holistic rubric the criteria are considered in combination on a single descriptive scale.

A holistic rubric is often preferred when it may not be possible to separate evaluation of independent factors or when there is an overlap between the criteria set for the evaluation of the different factors or when the resultant language product is limited.

A **checklist** is a type of rubric that includes a list of criteria but without detailed descriptors of levels of performance. A checklist has been included for each task in the bank. Please note that the checklists (which may be more student friendly) represent the same criteria as those in the detailed rubrics. As mentioned above, students should receive the rubric together with the task, but for those of you who feel your students are not quite ready to handle a detailed rubric, it is essential that the students at least have the checklist which is the next best thing. Ideally, the students should have both the rubric, which defines quality performance, and the checklist, which the student can use as a tool to help review important aspects of the task to make sure nothing was forgotten.
Please note:
The rubrics are a guideline to be used by whoever is assessing the product—this may be the teacher, the student or the student’s peer(s). A response sheet is included with each task and it includes a space for teacher, self and peer assessment, to be used at your discretion. Moreover, please keep in mind that the rubrics here are only suggestions. You may wish to change a holistic rubric to an analytic one, or vice versa. You may feel the necessity to adapt the dimensions and/or criteria and/or descriptors. Your adaptations should suit your:
• individual assessment purposes;
• particular instructional setting;
• specific student population.