Instructional Assessment and Evaluation

Quick Tip 10.1

Grading Rubrics

Description: A grading rubric is a systematic scoring guideline to evaluate students' performance (papers, speeches, problem solutions, portfolios, cases) using a detailed description of performance standards. When students are made aware of the rubrics prior to instruction and assessment, they know the level of performance expected and they are more motivated to reach those standards. Rubrics provide both a grade (summative evaluation) and detailed feedback to improve future performance (formative evaluation).

Suggested Uses:

- Getting consistent scores across all students
- Allowing students to be more aware of the expectations for performance and consequently improve their performance

Types of Rubrics:

- ***Holistic*** rubrics provide a single score based on an overall impression of a student's performance on a task. The converse is an analytic rubric.
    - Advantages: quick scoring provides an overview of student achievement
    - Disadvantages: does not provide detailed information, may be difficult to provide one overall score
    - Use when
        - you want a quick snapshot of achievement.
        - a single dimension is adequate to define quality.
- ***Analytic*** rubrics provide feedback along several dimensions. The converse is a holistic rubric.
    - Advantages: more detailed feedback, scoring more consistent across students and graders
    - Disadvantage: time consuming to score
    - Use when
        - you want to see relative strengths and weaknesses.
        - you want detailed feedback.
        - you want to assess complicated skills or performance.
        - you want students to self-assess their understanding or performance.
- ***General*** rubrics contain criteria that are general across tasks. The converse is a task specific rubric.
    - Advantage: can use the same rubric across different tasks
    - Disadvantage: feedback may not be specific enough.
    - Use when:
        - you want to assess reasoning, skills, and products.
        - all students are not doing exactly the same task.

- ***Task specific*** rubrics are unique to a specific task. The converse is a general rubric.
    - Advantage: more reliable assessment of performance
    - Disadvantage: difficult to construct rubrics for all tasks.
    - Use when
        - you want to assess knowledge.
        - when consistency of scoring is extremely important.

Creating a Rubric:

1. ***Clearly define the assignment,*** including the topic, the process that students will work through, and the product they are expected to produce.
2. ***Determine the key components*** that you are interested in such as coherence, content, and organization for a writing assignment.
3. ***Decide what type of rubric to use*** (holistic/general, holistic/task specific, analytic/general, analytic/task specific) based on the type of assignment and what you are interested in evaluating.
4. ***Clearly define key components.*** For example, what do you mean by coherence? What does coherent writing look like?.
5. ***Establish clear and detailed standards*** for performance on each component
    - Determine what the different levels of performance look like within each category of assessment. Think of the lowest, middle-range, and highest level of performance.
    - Avoid relying on comparative language when distinguishing among performance levels. For example, don't define the highest level of performance as thorough and accurate and the middle level as less thorough and less accurate. Find qualities and descriptors that are unique to each performance standard.
6. ***Develop a scoring scale***
    - Determine how many score levels you want to use based on the performance standards you set in step five.
    - Clearly define the differences between the score levels.
    - The scoring scale should be consistent across all key components for an analytic rubric. For example, a score of 4 for one area should be comparable to a score of 4 in another area.

Additional Information:

Arter, J. (2000). *Rubrics, scoring guides, and performance criteria: Classroom tools for assessing and improving student learning*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, 2000.

Taggart, G. L., Phifer, S. J., Nixon, J. A., & Wood, M. (Eds.) (n.d.). *Rubrics: Handbook for construction and use*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Co.

Zimmaro, D. M. (2004). *Developing grading rubrics.* Retrieved July 20, 2005 from the University of Texas at Austin, Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment Web site: http://www.utexas.edu/academic/mec/research/pdf/rubricshandout.pdf. (includes examples)