Teaching Tips for TAs: Grading Rubrics

What is a Grading Rubric? Simply stated, a grading rubric is a guide for the evaluation of student papers, projects, or exams. It defines the teacher’s expectations and identifies the grading criteria point by point. Typically, a grading rubric is presented in a table format. However, many teachers prefer to prepare rubrics in a bulleted list.

Why use a Grading Rubric? A rubric provides a clear set of criteria for judging students’ work. It specifies the factors on which the teacher will grade the student, helping the teacher define his or her expectations and prompting the student to focus on specific points. Rubrics make it easier for teachers to explain grades, and they guide students’ learning. In some cases, instructors may find it valuable to prepare their rubrics with the students. This participatory approach to the instructional rubric assures mutual expectations from both teachers and students.

How do I create a Grading Rubric? Rubrics take extensive thought and planning to be effective. Teachers need to be lucid in their explanations of grading standards, and to create a rubric that is pedagogically sound, the teacher needs to be sure of the assignment’s objective. Nevertheless, once an instructor decides upon a general format for assignment categories (i.e. essays, research papers, presentations, etc.), the rubric may be easily updated. There are three main elements to any Instructional Rubric: the grading criteria, the scale, and the descriptions of the criteria. All three elements will be different for each teacher and each project. A simple rubric would this look as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Criteria</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Poor (1)</th>
<th>Below Average (2)</th>
<th>Average (3)</th>
<th>Good (4)</th>
<th>Excellent (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td>The essay is unclear with no organization.</td>
<td>The main points of the essay are ambiguous.</td>
<td>Writing has minimal organization and a basic thesis statement.</td>
<td>Writing follows logical organization, but sometimes drifts from the thesis.</td>
<td>Writing is clear, logical, and organized around a developed thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td>The essay does not attempt to use evidence to support thesis.</td>
<td>The evidence provided does not support thesis.</td>
<td>The use of evidence is minimal, but thesis is supported.</td>
<td>There is evidence to support almost every point.</td>
<td>Every point is clearly supported by strong evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Essay does not attempt to explain how the evidence relates to thesis.</td>
<td>The analysis of the evidence has no relation to the thesis.</td>
<td>The analysis of evidence stretches its meaning to support thesis.</td>
<td>The analysis explains how the evidence supports the thesis in most cases.</td>
<td>The analysis shows a strong relationship between the evidence and the thesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography


Prepared by Jason M. Kelly
TA Development Program, UC Santa Barbara