Module 3d: Rubrics
March, 2014

Jeremy Penn, Ph.D.
Director

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
ASSESSMENT

Resources
http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/Rubrics.htm
Activity: Scoring Chocolate

- Identify the critical characteristics (e.g., smell, texture, etc.) that you will use to score your chocolate.
- For each characteristic, briefly list the difference between a "high" and "low" score.
- Provide a score (1-5) on each characteristic for each chocolate and provide a final ranking.
- If you are avoiding chocolate for Lent, use your memory or have a friend taste for you.
  - (I volunteer)

Discussion

- Which chocolate did you score the highest?
- Which chocolate did you score the lowest?
- What characteristics did you use?
- Did you develop descriptors for each score level for each characteristic?
  - If so, you just made a rubric!
- What did you learn from this experience?

Why Use Rubrics

- Direct measure
  - Higher credibility than indirect measures such as surveys
  - Can also use in multiple ways (e.g., self-report, supervisor review, review of samples of work, etc.)
- Can be used with a range of artifacts (such as observations, samples of student work, interviews, oral presentations, etc.)
- Clearly communicates expectations
Challenges to Using Rubrics

- Creating high-quality rubrics (but many good examples available)
- Reliability across raters
- Ceiling effect (difficult to show growth if everyone starts out at a high level)
- Some statisticians believe scores are ordinal, not interval or ratio (limiting some of the analyses that can be performed)

Locating Existing Rubrics

- NDSU Student Affairs Assessment Resources
- AAC&U VALUE Rubrics
  [http://sil.o.tamu.edu/rubrics](http://sil.o.tamu.edu/rubrics)
- Rubistar
- Campus Labs Baseline Rubric Templates

Examples

(handouts)
Modifying, Creating, Evaluating Rubrics

- Most rubrics need some modification before they will work in your setting
- You might consider creating your own rubric if there is not one that fits your purpose
- Important to consider what you want to assess and how you want to use the results

Qualities of Effective Rubrics

- Characteristics / components make up the first column
- Each successive column has the achievement levels (descriptors)
- Include a final column for the score and comments

Qualities of Effective Rubrics

- No more than two pages (one is even better if appropriate)
- Fits the task but is not exclusively specific to the task
- Communicates clearly to both the person doing the scoring and those being scored
  – Characteristics are sufficiently distinguishable but not excessive
Qualities of Effective Rubrics

- Clear descriptors for each level of performance – leads to reliable scoring
  - Levels reflect the range expected in the population with whom the rubric will be used
- Defines key terms and has an overall definition for the outcome / construct
- Reflects appropriate use of theory in defining the outcome / construct

Qualities of Effective Rubrics

- Continuity: “threshold” to move from 2-3 is same as from 3-4
- Link to exemplars or “anchor papers” at various levels of achievement

Qualities of Effective Rubrics

- Try out your rubric prior to wide-scale implementation
- Don’t be afraid to revise your rubric over time
  - You may discover unclear wording, lack of agreement between raters, etc.
Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics
Issue: Some characteristics are more important than others (often comes up when grading)
Solution: Weight sections of the rubric differently (1-5 vs. 1-10)

Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics
Issue: Multiple people will be using the same rubric to score samples of student work
Solution: Training, training, training
  Monitor similarity in scores
  Work in pairs
  Calculate Inter-rater reliability
  Adjust scores for rater severity

Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics
Issue: Collecting scores in a single place
Solution: Use Campus Labs rubric product (part of Baseline) – works similar to a survey but designed for rubrics
Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics

Issue: Should students receive a copy of the rubric upfront?

Solution: Yes

Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics

Issue: How many score categories should I use?

Solution: Depends on your purpose and how you want to use the scores.
“Coaching” model: 2-3 categories
Development model: 5-7 categories

Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics

Issue: Lots of students are at the “maximum” score, difficult to show growth over time (ceiling effect)

Solution: Make your rubric “harder” or change the descriptors (e.g., typical freshman, typical sophomore, etc.)
Show examples to be clear what a top-level performance looks like (training)
Retrospective scoring (where were you really, and where are you now)
Compare how you (as supervisor) would score them with how they scored themselves
Common Issues that Arise when Using Rubrics

Issue: Rubric length

Solution: Long enough to clearly communicate, but short enough to be usable
Will you (and others) actually be able and willing to use this rubric routinely?

Rubrics in Campus Labs

(Handout / demo)

Going Forward

- Developed a “checklist” for teams to use during the planning, development, and implementation of a rubric
- Goal is not to “check” every item on the list – rather goal is to encourage thoughtful reflection and opportunity to catch errors before they occur