

## Rubrics

### Designing for Clarity, Consistency, and Student Success

**Purpose:** Rubrics can transform the assessment and feedback process for both instructors and students. When used thoughtfully, they clarify expectations, save time, and help students understand not just how they are graded—but how they can improve. What are the best ways to make rubrics an integral part of your course?

Below are practical strategies for integrating rubrics into your teaching, especially in online and asynchronous classes.

#### 1. Share the Rubric Early

For rubrics to be as useful as possible, students need to see them well before their work is due.

- a. Post the rubric alongside the assignment in your course site.
- b. Walk through the rubric in a quick video or written overview so students know what matters most.
- c. Encourage students to review the rubric as they plan and draft their work.
- d. If you require a draft, you can ask students to assess a peer's work using the rubric at the draft stage, then rewrite for final submission.

#### 2. Use Rubrics for Consistency and Transparency

A rubric helps ensure all students are evaluated by the same standards—and helps you grade efficiently and fairly.

- a. Use the rubric to frame both your comments and your grades: “Your analysis is well-supported with evidence, which earns full points in that category.”
- b. For courses with multiple instructors or TAs, rubrics foster consistent grading.

- c. Tip: Refer to specific rubric categories in feedback so students see exactly how their work matches expectations.

### **3. Make Rubrics Actionable for Growth**

- a. Rubrics are also powerful teaching tools when used to drive learning beyond the grade.
- b. Focus on criteria that have clear descriptions and distinguish between different levels of performance (“basic” vs. “proficient”).
- c. Use the rubric to identify 1-2 main areas for growth.
- d. If possible, offer revision opportunities where students can use the rubric and your feedback to improve their work.

### **4. Invite Students to Reflect and Self-Assess**

- a. Rubrics work best when students engage with them actively.
- b. Before the due date, have students complete a self-assessment using the rubric. This builds metacognitive skills and reduces grading surprises.
- c. After assignments, invite students to review feedback in the context of the rubric and set goals for future work.

### **5. Make Rubrics Accessible and Jargon-Free**

- a. For all students to benefit, rubrics should use clear, straightforward language.
- b. Keep criteria descriptions concise and free of technical jargon.
- c. Consider providing brief examples or explanations for each rubric level.
- d. Offer to answer questions about the rubric before assignments are due.

## Instructor Planning Guide

### 1. Learning Goals

What skills or knowledge should this assignment assess?

### 2. Rubric Criteria

What specific qualities or dimensions will I evaluate?

### 3. Performance Levels

How will I describe varying levels of achievement (e.g., developing, proficient)?

### 4. Student Transparency

How will I ensure students understand the rubric before starting the assignment?

### 5. Feedback Use

How will I use the rubric to guide and communicate my feedback?

### 6. Student Engagement

How will students use the rubric to self-assess or reflect on their work?

### 7. Canvas Setup

Have I attached the rubric to the Canvas assignment and confirmed the grade settings?

## Instructor Checklist

- ☐ I have identified clear assignment goals and aligned them with rubric criteria.
- ☐ I have created a rubric with descriptive, jargon-free performance levels.
- ☐ I have shared the rubric with students before they begin the assignment.
- ☐ I have explained the rubric's purpose and use to students (e.g., through class discussion or written overview).
- ☐ I will reference the rubric when providing feedback to reinforce expectations.

- ☐ I have invited students to reflect or self-assess using the rubric.
- ☐ I have considered offering revision opportunities informed by rubric feedback.
- ☐ I have uploaded the rubric to Canvas and linked it to the correct assignment.
- ☐ I have reviewed consistency if working with a co-instructor or grader.
- ☐ I have confirmed DCE grading policies and communicated expectations clearly.

**Resource:** [Sample Research Presentation Rubric](#) (Harvard Catalyst)