Designing a Rubric

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a scoring tool that clearly identifies the expectations for an assignment, by dividing it into component parts that contain specific criteria for evaluation (Stevens and Levi, 2005). Rubrics simplify the task of grading and enhance learning by establishing clear expectations for performance and providing constructive follow-up and feedback. Rubrics can be used to evaluate a wide range of assignments such as discussion papers, proposals, presentations, design projects, group work, and scientific experiments.

How do you create a rubric?

Although rubrics vary greatly in the level of detail contained, they typically contain three predominant components:
- the factor or trait of the assignment being evaluated;
- the criteria for evaluation; and,
- the relative weighting of the factor/trait in relation to the assignment total.

Stevens and Levi (2005) state that there are 4 stages in constructing a rubric:
1. **Reflecting** upon the purpose of the assignment;
2. **Outlining** the specific details and learning objectives of the assignment;
3. **Grouping** and **Coding** the factors and traits to be evaluated in the assignment; and,
4. **Creating** the final rubric by establishing the weighting and evaluation criteria for each factor/trait.

Careful consideration must be taken in steps 1 and 2 to effectively complete the details contained within the rubric's matrix. The level of complexity contained within the evaluation criteria for each factor/trait will vary by assignment. It is often easiest to establish the descriptors which constitute an exemplary performance and poor performance, and then to determine how many additional levels of evaluation are warranted (be sure to refer to the University's grading guidelines during this process).

The purpose of a rubric is to ensure that grading is fair, efficient and effective. It is important that each rubric be designed to meet the specific needs of the instructor and the learner in relation to each course assignment.   Rubrics allow instructors to establish clear criteria and standards for grading, thus saving valuable time, ensuring consistency, and enhancing shared learning and communication between the students and the instructor (Walvoord and Anderson, 1998).

Stevens, D.D. and Levi, A. 2005. *Introduction to Rubrics.* Stylus Publishing, Virginia.

Walvoord and Anderson. 1998. *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment.* Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.