



- ▶ What are the characteristics of a good marking rubric?
- ▶ How do I formulate clear criteria and standards descriptors?
- ▶ What strategies are useful for refining my rubrics?

A rubric is an assessment tool that clearly indicates achievement criteria across all the components of student work. Having a good marking rubric will not only help you (and the teaching team) to mark consistently and effectively, but it will also help to set expectations and guide students' efforts as well as providing feedback to students. This resource is designed to assist you in reviewing and refining your marking rubrics.

What are marking schemes (rubrics)?

A marking scheme is a document which explains how student responses to assessment tasks will be evaluated. It identifies assessment criteria and articulates qualitative standards of achievement for each criterion. Marking schemes (terminology used in UK and Australia) may also be called rubrics (US terminology), matrices, scoring grids or scales and grading sheets.

Marking schemes (rubrics) can come in various formats, depending largely on whether you have described holistic or analytic standards. In the following section, we will be focusing on analytic rubrics, which are commonly used to improve marking efficiency and provide student feedback. An analytic marking rubric has three parts: criteria, standards and performance descriptors.

	HD	D	C	P	N
Knowledge and understanding					
Critical thinking skills					
Research skills					
Communication skills					

- ▶ **Criteria** are the properties or characteristics used to judge the quality of the assessment task.
- ▶ **Standards** define the levels of achievement or performance.
- ▶ **Descriptors** describe the qualities required to demonstrate achievement of each standard for each criterion.

A good marking rubric should:

- ▶ Communicate criteria and standards simply, concisely and clearly.
- ▶ Provide sufficient detail to guide students, assist assessors and facilitate feedback.

WRITING MARKING SCHEMES (RUBRICS)

Tips on writing good marking schemes (rubrics)

Criteria

When we start to think about the assessment criteria, we should focus on identifying what criteria will show evidence of students' achievement of the aligned learning outcomes. Criteria are the key characteristics of student performance in an assessment task. The assessment criteria that you identify will guide students' efforts, informing them what is important and what they must do in the assessment task. Tips on how to formulate clear criteria are:

- ▶ Try to keep descriptions of criteria as concise and neutral as possible.
- ▶ Use concrete verbs that refer to observable behaviours which will signal more clearly to students what they should do.
- ▶ If possible, separate criteria so that each deals with only one behaviour.
- ▶ Remove unnecessary detail (detail will be added in the standards).
- ▶ Use the terminology from learning outcomes.
- ▶ If you intend to assess prose, style, layout and structure of students' written work, specify these criteria.
- ▶ Limit the number of criteria to a manageable number. Be realistic about how many behaviours students can competently demonstrate in an assessment task and how many criteria assessors can juggle when grading.

Standards and standards descriptors

Standards describe the levels of student performance in the assessment task. They should be described with sufficient detail to inform students how to perform at different levels. Tips on developing and describing assessment standards include:

- ▶ Identify an appropriate threshold level of performance for the task.
- ▶ Select the appropriate number of levels to discriminate performance in the task.
- ▶ Describe performance in clear, positive language.
- ▶ Pitch descriptors at a reasonable level (not unachievable but not too easy).
- ▶ Aim to be precise and specific.

Strategies to refine rubrics

Designing and refining rubrics is often a more iterative and cyclical process. Here are some strategies

- ▶ (If appropriate) Benchmark your rubrics' standards against comparable disciplinary and/or professional standards, within the University and beyond.
- ▶ Moderate or review your marking scheme (rubrics) with tutors or markers to develop shared understandings of the expected standards and facilitate consistent application.
- ▶ Explain and exemplify the marking scheme (rubrics) to students prior to the task and use it to provide targeted feedback following grading.
- ▶ Use rubric analysis results to inform rubrics' revision or identify areas for student learning support.
- ▶ If possible, develop rubrics interactively with your students or let students negotiate and decide upon criteria for grading the assignment.

Adapted from [Assessment Guide: Implementing Criteria and Standards Based Assessment](#), Western Sydney University.

WRITING MARKING SCHEMES (RUBRICS)

Technical considerations

- ▶ vUWS Rubrics tool, Turnitin Rubrics tool, Rubric analysis

Useful Links

- ▶ [Writing Assessment Criteria](#), University of Tasmania
- ▶ [Rubrics: Useful Assessment Tools](#), University of Waterloo
- ▶ [Using Assessment Rubrics](#), University of New South Wales
- ▶ [Marking Consistently and Efficiently workshop](#), Western Sydney University