



Implementing Best Practices & Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum

Workshop  
IE

Thinking Critically about Teaching Goals Through  
Designing Effective Assessment Rubrics.

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# **Thinking Critically about Teaching Goals Through Designing Effective Assessment Rubrics**

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### **What is a rubric?<sup>2</sup>**

Rubrics are formal systems for deciding how to describe the quality of a variety of products, activities, processes, and behaviors. These descriptions may be used for formative feedback, determining a student's grade, or student self-assessment.

### **The Advantages of Using a Rubric versus a Plain Letter Grade.**

1. Gives formative/instructive feedback to students.
2. Makes grading easier and more fair.
3. Helps you to focus your classroom work.
4. Forces you to think about your teaching goals (both daily and semester goals) before the semester starts.
5. Complex products or behaviors can be examined efficiently.
6. Summaries of results can reveal patterns of student strengths and areas of concern.
7. Students can use a rubric to assess their own work.

### **Suggestions for Using Scoring Rubrics<sup>3</sup>**

1. Use a rubric for grading student work, including essay questions on exams, and return the rubric with the grading on it. Faculty members save time writing extensive comments, which are often repetitive; they just circle or highlight relevant segments of the rubric.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://uwf.edu/cutla/rubricdevelopment.cfm>

<sup>3</sup> From an Assessment Workshop presented at Honolulu Community College on August 31, 2004, by Dr. Mary Allen, The California State University System

Each row in the rubric could have a different array of possible points, reflecting its relative importance for determining the overall grade. Points (or point ranges) possible for each cell in the rubric could be printed on the rubric, and a column for points for each row and comments section(s) could be added.

2. Hand out the grading rubric with an assignment so students will know the expectations and how they will be graded. This should help students master the learning objectives by guiding their work in appropriate directions.
3. Develop a rubric with the students for an assignment or group project. Students can then monitor themselves and their peers using agreed-upon criteria that they helped develop. (Many faculty members find that students will create higher standards for themselves than faculty would impose on them.)
4. Have students apply your rubric to some sample products (e.g., sample exam answer or sample paper) before they create their own. Faculty report that students are quite accurate when doing this, and this process should help them evaluate their own products as they develop them.
5. Have students exchange paper drafts and give peer feedback using the rubric, then give students a few days before the final drafts are turned in to you. (You might also require that they turn in the draft and scored rubric with their final paper.)
6. Have students self-assess their products using the grading rubric and hand in the self-assessment with the product; then faculty and students can compare self- and faculty-generated evaluations.

#### Rubric Development<sup>4</sup>

1. Use the class syllabus from the past year
  - a. For each day, think about what skills/information you wanted mastered in that day.
  - b. Will these skills be tested? If so, jot down that skill/information. (These should correspond with your classroom daily goals.)
  - c. Take the created list and group the skills/information into categories.
  - d. Those categories become the stated objective on the rubric. (you may need to pair them down to the most important ones)
    1. How many is good? If this is a diagnostic/formative assessment—err on the side of more objectives. If this is a final assessment—less is OK and might be better/easier to grade.
  - e. Then list the category/objectives and the subpoints underneath.

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that rubrics come in many forms. The materials include an outline form of a rubric and a grid form of a rubric. The important part of creating a rubric is to consider the specific teaching goal and the discrete information/skill which is being assessed. It is also critically important to convey to the students what each level of performance looks like. This tells the students what is expected of them.

2. Cooperative Exercise:
  - a. Suggest some skills and/or information taught in doctrinal classes
  - b. Group them into categories/objectives
  - c. Put categories and skills/information on the rubric
  
3. Group Work: form groups of three and look at the objectives and the skills/information; write down what qualities you would look for to fill in the assessment portion of the rubric. Use the following guidelines:
  - a. *Descriptors of the criteria used for classifying work or assigning points for an element*
    1. Describe the characteristics of the performance or work that must be present for the work to be assigned to a given level of achievement. These descriptions may include the following types of information:
      - A. Descriptions of the general characteristics of work assigned to each level of quality.
      - B. Specific, concrete examples or telltale signs of what to look for at each level of performance. These examples are useful for providing specific feedback to students without writing marginal notes. Examples may include characteristics that contribute to a higher rating (*e.g., assertions are always supported with empirical evidence or a cited work*) or common errors that lead to a lower rating (*e.g., frequent errors in spelling or grammar*).
  - b. Now assign points to each of the objectives.

**Remember—Rubrics are very fluid. It is expected and common to change the rubric each time it is used.**

**Contact me if you need any assistance—I would even be happy to preview your rubrics.**

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## Helpful Websites

<http://uwf.edu/cutla/rubricdevelopment.cfm>

### **AACSB Web site**

[http://www.aacsb.edu/Resource\\_Centers/Assessment/rubric.asp](http://www.aacsb.edu/Resource_Centers/Assessment/rubric.asp)

### **The California State University**

[http://www.calstate.edu/itl/sloa/links/using\\_rubrics.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/itl/sloa/links/using_rubrics.shtml)

### **Honolulu Community College**

Site based on a workshop provided by Dr. Mary Allen (The California State University System)

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/rubric.htm>

### **Kennesaw State University**

<http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.htm>

### **Seattle University CETL**

<http://www.seattleu.edu/cetl/cetlresources/online.html#Evals>

### **Texas Center for Educational Technology**

<http://www.tcet.unt.edu/START/instruct/general/rubrics.htm>

## **Collections of Rubric Links**

California State University

<http://www.calstate.edu/itl/sloa/links/rubrics.shtml>

Georgia State University

Includes rubrics for essay questions, logs and journal writing, lab write-ups

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~mstnrhx/457/rubric.htm>

Marquette University

Research, writing, and oral presentation rubrics

<http://marquette.edu/library/training/rubriccollection.html>

North Carolina State University link to an extensive collection of rubrics hosted by MindLink

<http://www.ncsu.edu/midlink/ho.html>

Winona State University

<http://www.winona.edu/AIR/rubrics.htm>

Rubric Template<sup>5</sup>

(Describe here the task or performance that this rubric is designed to evaluate.)

	<b>Beginning</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Developing</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Accomplished</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Exemplary</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Score</b>
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
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Written by Your Name. Last updated mm/dd/yy.

<sup>5</sup> [http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/Rubric\\_Template.html](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/Rubric_Template.html)

**Example of Outline Rubric**  
**Rubric for Office Memorandum Second Semester—Statutory Memo**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Assessment \_\_\_\_\_

1.     **Heading** \_\_\_\_\_/0  
Proper form as laid out in the book

2.     **Question(s) Presented** \_\_\_\_\_/10

**Very Good (A)**—Student uses roman numerals, block indents on the left, and uses single space. Student also states this as a question, uses significant facts to support the claim (and give the reader a clear picture of what is going on), cites the law and what the statute means, writes in the active voice, and puts the questions in logical order and in the order they are presented in the paper. The questions are also stated generally—meaning the names of the parties are not used, for example. Question is very readable on the first read.

**Good (B)**—Student uses roman numerals, block indents on the left, and uses single space. Student also states this as a question, uses some facts to support the claim (but not enough to fully describe the situation), cites the law, writes in the active voice, and puts the questions in logical order and in the order they are presented in the paper. The questions are also stated generally—meaning the names of the parties are not used, for example. Question is not readable on the first read.

**Fair (C)**—Student uses roman numerals, block indents on the left, and uses single space. Student also states this as a question, student does not use facts to support the claim; student does cite the law but not specific enough; student writes in the active voice; and student puts the questions in logical order and in the order they are presented in the paper. The questions are not stated generally—meaning the names of the parties are used, for example. Question is not readable on the first read.

**Significant Improvement Needed (D)**—Student does not follow instructions on how to physically present a question presented (i.e. student does not block indent). It is not presented as a question; there are no facts used to support the claim; the law is not cited; the law is not described; student struggles with the active voice; the questions are not in logical order and are not stated generally.

3.     **Short Answer** \_\_\_\_\_/10

**Very Good (A)**—Student directly answers the question with a Yes or No. Student follows the direct answer with a two or three sentence explanation that really gets to the heart of why the court will decide one way or another. No authority is discussed here.

**Good (B)**—Student directly answers the question. Student follows the direct answer with a two or three sentence explanation. That explanation, however, does not adequately get to why the court will decide one way or another. Student does not discuss authority.

**Fair (C)**—Student does not directly answer the question. Student does have two or three sentences which answer the question. Student does not demonstrate that he/she really understands why the court will decide one way or another. Student does not discuss authority

**Significant Improvement Needed (D)**—Student does not follow instructions on how to give a short answer: student does not answer the question; student is not clear as to the reason why this is the answer; student discusses authority here.

4.     **Facts** \_\_\_\_\_/20

**Very Good (A)**—Student starts with a paragraph that tells who the client is and what the client wants or what the problem is, and the student provides a framework for the problem. Student then introduces the legal problem by telling what happened. It is clear from the fact pattern’s organization what the elements of the rule are. Further, the student only includes relevant facts and facts that are necessary to paint the picture and tell the story. Student cites to the source of the facts after every sentence. Facts are objectively presented. Lastly, the last paragraph includes what relief the client wants or what the student was asked to analyze. The reader is left with a clear picture of what happened.

**Good (B)**-- Student starts with a paragraph that tells who the client is and what the client wants or what the problem is, and the student provides a framework for the problem. Student then introduces the legal problem by telling what happened. It is only somewhat clear from the fact pattern's organization what the elements of the rule are. Further, the student does include relevant facts and facts that are necessary to paint the picture and tell the story, but the student also includes some irrelevant facts. Student does not consistently cite to the source of the facts after every sentence. Facts are objectively presented. The last paragraph includes what relief the client wants or what the student was asked to analyze. The reader is left with a clear picture of what happened.

**Fair (C)**—Student does not start with a paragraph that tells who the client is and what the client wants or what the problem is. The student does provides a framework for the problem. Student then introduces the legal problem by telling what happened, but it is not organized well. It is only somewhat clear from the fact pattern's organization what the elements of the rule are or it is not clear from the fact pattern's organization what the elements of the rule are. Further, the student does include relevant facts and facts that are necessary to paint the picture and tell the story, but the student also includes some irrelevant facts. Student does not cite to the source of the facts after any sentence. Facts are not always objectively presented. The last paragraph does not include what relief the client wants or what the student was asked to analyze. The reader is left with an unclear picture of what happened.

**Significant Improvement Needed (D)**—Student does not start with a paragraph that tells who the client is and what the client wants or what the problem is. The student does not provide a framework for the problem. Student does tell what happened but it is not organized in a way to help the reader understand what happened. It is not clear from the fact pattern's organization what the elements of the rule are. Student needs to rethink the importance of the fact pattern's organization. Further, the student does not include enough relevant facts that are necessary to paint the picture and tell the story. Student does not cite to the source of the facts after any sentence. Facts are not objectively presented. The last paragraph does not include what relief the client wants or what the student was asked to analyze. The reader is left with an unclear picture of what happened.

5. Applicable Statutes Section: \_\_\_\_\_/5  
a. Students lists sections **and text** of the major statutes

6. Discussion Section \_\_\_\_\_/100

**Very Good (A)**—Student's first paragraph is in the thesis paragraph form and lays out the general rules and any necessary the sub rules and lays out how each will be discussed in the paper. Student then starts his/her first StREAC following the same order laid out in the thesis paragraph. It is clear from the student's organization and words where each StREAC starts and ends. Each paragraph contains a topic sentence that signals the reader as to its purpose, direction, and point in the analysis; introduces the legal issue/sub issue to be addressed in the paragraph; summarizes the basic idea in the paragraph; provides a roadmap for the reader. Also present in the topic sentences is the thread which ties all the paragraphs in that StREAC together. Each paragraph ends with a conclusory sentence which ties the paragraph together and ties it to the other paragraphs.

Student analyzes the questions by applying the applicable statutes. Student breaks down the statutes into elements and analyzes them separately (with its own StREAC); and where appropriate, the student uses plain meaning, court interpretation, cannons of construction, and legislative history. Student uses the most persuasive authority to support his/her points. Both sides are presented where appropriate.

**Good (B)**-- Student's first paragraph is in the thesis paragraph form and lays out the general rules and any necessary the sub rules and lays out how each will be discussed in the paper. Student then starts his/her first StREAC following the same order laid out in the thesis paragraph. It is sometimes unclear from the student's organization and words where each StREAC starts and ends. Most paragraphs contains a topic sentence that signals the reader as to its purpose, direction, and point in the analysis; introduces the legal issue/sub issue to be addressed in the paragraph; summarizes the basic idea in the paragraph; provides a roadmap for the reader. The thread which ties all the paragraphs in that StREAC together is not always present. Most paragraphs ends with a conclusory sentence which ties the paragraph together and ties it to the other paragraphs.

Student analyzes the questions by applying the applicable statute(s). Student breaks down the statutes into elements and analyzes them separately (with its own StREAC); and where appropriate, the student uses plain meaning, court interpretation, cannons of construction, and legislative history. Student uses the most persuasive authority to support his/her points. Both sides are presented where appropriate.

**Fair (C)**—Student's first paragraph is in the thesis paragraph form and lays out the general rules and any necessary the sub rules, but the student does not lay out how each will be discussed in the paper. Student then starts his/her first StREAC following the same order laid out in the thesis paragraph. It is generally unclear from the student's organization and words where each StREAC starts and ends. StREAC form is confused. A few

paragraphs contains a topic sentence that signals the reader as to its purpose, direction, and point in the analysis; introduces the legal issue/sub issue to be addressed in the paragraph; summarizes the basic idea in the paragraph; provides a roadmap for the reader. The thread which ties all the paragraphs in that StREAC together is not present in most paragraphs. Student's paragraphs do not end with a conclusory sentence which ties the paragraph together and ties it to the other paragraphs.

Student analyzes the questions by applying the applicable statute(s). Student breaks down the statutes into elements, but does not analyze them separately (with its own StREAC); and where appropriate, the student uses plain meaning, court interpretation, canons of construction, and legislative history. Student does not use the most persuasive authority to support his/her points. Both sides are not presented.

**Significant Improvement Needed (D)**—Student's first paragraph is not in the thesis paragraph form. It is generally unclear from the student's organization and words where each StREAC starts and ends. StREAC form is confused. Student's paragraphs do not contain topic sentences that signal the reader as to its purpose, direction, and point in the analysis; introduces the legal issue/sub issue to be addressed in the paragraph; summarizes the basic idea in the paragraph; provides a roadmap for the reader. The thread which ties all the paragraphs in that StREAC together is not present in the topic sentence. Student's paragraphs do not end with a conclusory sentence which ties the paragraph together and ties it to the other paragraphs.

Student analyzes the questions by applying the applicable statute(s). Student does not break down the statutes into elements, and does not analyze them separately (with its own StREAC); and where appropriate, the student does not use plain meaning, court interpretation, canons of construction, and legislative history. Student does not use the most persuasive authority to support his/her points. Both sides are not presented

7. Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Very Good (A)**--It is clear what the rules are, what the issues are, and what the sub issues are. The student's conclusions are clear. The student's reasons for his/her conclusions are clear.

**Good (B)**--It is mostly clear what the rules are, what the issues are, and what the sub issues are. The student's conclusions are mostly clear. The student's reasons for his/her conclusions are mostly clear. More reasons are needed to support the student's conclusions.

**Fair (C)**—It is somewhat clear what the rules are, what the issues are, and what the sub issues are. The student's conclusions are somewhat clear. The student's reasons for his/her conclusions are not clear. More reasons are needed to support the student's conclusions.

**Significant Improvement Needed (D)**—It is not clear what the rules are, what the issues are, and what the sub issues are. The student's conclusions are not clear. The student's reasons for his/her conclusions are not clear. More reasons are needed to support the student's conclusions.

8. Format \_\_\_\_\_/30

Student uses 1 inch margins, 12 point New Times Roman type, proper citation form, and no plagiarism problems. Students get 30 points on a graded assignment for format issues. Once 30 problems are noted, the student loses all the points and the grader stops commenting on the formatting issues-including citation problems.

9. Paper is free of editing problems \_\_\_\_\_/20

Students can have up to 20 editing errors. Once 20 editing errors are noted, the grader stops noting the errors and student lose 20 points on a graded assignment.