

Marking guides and rubrics

Marking Guides and Rubrics contain criteria that describe the standards you are looking for in an assessment. They guide students around what you expect them to do and can also ensure consistency in marking processes. There are some differences between the two:

- **Marking guides** include somewhat vague criteria to enable more flexibility for the marker to judge the quality of the assessment.
- **Rubrics** are pre-set scoring sheets that specify the precise standards required to meet each grade.

Marking guides

Marking guides are useful when the assessment has no single correct answer or where creativity, translation, or other less precise, pre-determined ability is required. Marking guides allow the marker to evaluate and provide individualised comments on the particular learner's interpretation of the task.

Example

Assessment criteria

Entries demonstrate:

- evidence of analytical and critical thinking
- evidence of reflective thinking about own understanding of the role of a teacher
- ability to relate and synthesise course content in relation to own practice, values and beliefs
- ability to write concisely, precisely and coherently
- references to the literature in accordance with APA style.

Marking guide

	D range 0-15	C range 15-19	B range 20-23	A range 24- 30
Interprets theory accurately	Limited understanding Many errors	Some understanding Several errors	Accurate understanding Some errors	Accurate understanding Few/no errors
Presents critique of the article and its relationship to theory	Limited or at superficial level	Some ideas raised and explored	Several ideas raised and explored	Many ideas raised and explored
Addresses ideas concerning diversity of students	Limited or at superficial level	Some ideas raised and explored	Several ideas raised and explored	Many ideas raised and explored
Uses APA referencing conventions	Inadequate/minimal use of references Inadequate/minimal use of APA conventions	Some use of references Uses correct conventions – many refinements needed	A range of references Uses correct conventions – some refinements needed	Acknowledges a wide range of references Uses conventions consistently with few/no errors

Advantages

- Marking guides offer more flexibility and allow markers to reward creative and unpredicted responses.

Disadvantages

- A marking guide is open to subjective judgement and so assessment can be much more variable/contestable.
- May result in inconsistencies across marking teams.

Rubrics

There are many different types of rubrics for marking. The more detailed a rubric is in terms of allocated grade and description, the more precise it is. The use of rubrics can improve consistency amongst multiple markers. Pre-defined grades with specific criteria can also speed up marking, as there is little subjective judgement required.

Example

Assignment 3 – Use of self reflection in practice /20

Grade	Mark Allocation	Descriptor
A +	19 – 20	Response demonstrates an in-depth reflection on the specified learning event. Clear linkages are made to the reflective practice model, relevant group work processes/dynamics/concepts and awareness skills used in the course. Interpretations are insightful and all observations made are well supported by relevantly selected sources. Clear, detailed examples of the event are provided, and their impact on the personal/professional use of self explained. Writing is soundly structured, sequenced and easy to follow. The annotation is free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. APA 6 is correctly applied.
A	17 – 18	
A -	16 – 16.5	
B +	15 – 15.5	Response demonstrates a general reflection on the specified learning event. Linkages, in the main are made to the reflective practice model, relevant group work processes/dynamics/concepts and awareness skills used in the course. Interpretations are supported. Appropriate examples are provided, as relevant. Implications of these insights for the personal/professional use of self are presented. Writing is mostly clear, concise and well structured. Mistakes in spelling, grammar and APA 6 referencing style are rare.
B	14 – 14.5	
B -	13 – 13.5	
C +	12 – 12.5	Response demonstrates minimal reflection on the specified learning event. Linkages to the reflective practice model, relevant group work processes/dynamics/concepts and awareness skills used in the course are sparse. Interpretations are insufficiently supported. Examples are rarely used. Insights are minimal and their implication for the personal/professional use of self is patchy. Established academic writing protocols are not well met, e.g. writing is unclear; content is not well synthesised; thoughts are not logically expressed; high rate of grammar and spelling mistakes. APA 6 incorrectly applied.
C	11 – 11.5	
C -	10 – 10.5	
D +	9 – 9.5	Response demonstrates absence of reflection on the specified learning event. Scant linkage is made to the reflective practice model, relevant group work
D	8 – 8.5	

D -	0 -7	processes/dynamics/concepts and awareness skills used in the course. Interpretations are not supported. Examples aren't used, when applicable. No insights are offered and no connection to the personal/professional use of self is offered. Academic writing protocols are not observed. Writing is unclear and disorganised. Numerous errors in spelling and grammar are present and APA 6 is incorrectly applied, if used.
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Advantages

- In general, the more specific and clear the rubric the less contestable / variable / subjective the assessment will be.
- Rubrics enable more consistency across a range of markers.
- Rubrics are considered by some to be fairer and more transparent for the learner with a clearly visible grading structure for the student to follow.

Disadvantages

- Rubrics may limit creativity and divergent thinking as criteria are pre-set. For example, a wonderful, innovative idea might easily score 0% if it had not been predicted and accounted for in the criteria.

Types of rubrics

Holistic rubrics

Holistic rubrics describe standards that students are expected to progressively achieve over an entire programme. Holistic rubrics provide a means of evaluation that can be consistently applied across entire student cohorts to assess and grade multiple skills and tasks students may be required to demonstrate, such as critical thinking and collaborative teamwork.

The Business School created holistic rubrics which include standards that can be easily adapted to meet the needs of any student cohort.

<https://tinyurl.com/yxhdq74l>

Analytical rubrics

An analytical rubric is a more specific multi-layered type of rubric used to assess complex learning based on several criteria, each of which is described at several levels of performance.

<https://tinyurl.com/yxj58qak>

Rubrics for assessing participation / peer participation in groups

Using rubrics for self and peer assessment in group work can be a useful way of ensuring students have a means of evaluating their own work and the contribution of their peers.

Example

Assessment guidelines for Participation in Discussion Forums 10%

Category	4	3	2	1
Contribution to the Learning Community	Consistently presents creative reflections on topic; frequently prompts further discussion of topic.	Often presents reflections that become central to the group's discussion; interacts freely and encourages others.	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group.	Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent.
Relevance of Post	Posts consistently are related to discussion topic; brings readings into discussion.	Posts are related to discussion topic; makes some connections with readings.	Occasionally posts off topic; most posts offer no further insight into the topic.	Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes irrelevant remarks.
Promptness and Initiative	Responds promptly to postings; demonstrates good self-initiative; participates at least twice for each topic.	Responds promptly to most postings; requires occasional prompting to post; participates at least once for each topic.	Responds to most postings several days after initial discussion; limited initiative; participates once for each topic.	Does not respond to most postings; rarely participates freely; infrequent participation.

Other ways to communicate assessment requirements

Examples and exemplars can provide a clearer idea of requirements without limiting creative options. Samples from previous students' work on a similar assessment could be provided. Annotated examples can be useful to draw attention to good and poor qualities of an assessment.

Other resources

University of Auckland Grading schemes

<https://tinyurl.com/y4wvzr8x>

Assessment and feedback: the Essentials (Sheffield University)

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/elevate/essentials/assessment-feedback-2>

What, why and when to use rubrics (University of Auckland Business School)

<https://tinyurl.com/y3266pht>

The advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics (The Chronicle of Higher Education)

<https://community.chronicle.com/news/742-why-i-don-t-like-rubrics>