

Liaison Lunch  
*Rubrics*

Mon, February 11, 2013

12:00-1:00

Scheuer Room, Kohlberg

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Swarthmore College Assessment \* <http://www.swarthmore.edu/assessment.xml>

## Goals for Lunch

### Participants will know:

- What the different kinds of rubrics are
- How to create and refine a rubric
- How to use a rubric to summarize students' learning => provide insight to teaching, curriculum.
  
- What colleagues are doing

## Agenda

- Assessment projects – VERY brief overview
- Tutorial on Rubrics
- General Q & A
- Small Group Discussions
- Large Group Wrap-up
  - Highlights or questions from discussions
  - Suggestions for next Liaison Lunch: March 4

## Summary of Department Assessment Projects

- Identified goal/objective of focus = 22
- Identified artifacts/evidence they'll use = 12
  - Capstone paper, project, experience
  - Seminar Paper *(In order of frequency)*
  - Performance or Presentation
  - Exam, or part of exam
- Identified approach to evaluating evidence = 11
- Will use a rubric = 9

## What is a Rubric?

## What is a "Rubric"?

- A rubric is a TOOL for evaluating an assignment that provides a mechanism for JUDGMENT guided by CRITERIA.

| HOLISTIC          | ANALYTIC   |
|-------------------|--|
| Single Impression | Breaks the work into component dimensions (which reflect goals/objectives) |

"Rubric" does not equal goals/objectives; it is the tool that operationalizes your goals/objectives.

## Holistic Rubric Example – Description for each grade

A grade of 3.3 for the first semester reflects a good to very good paper that needs improvement in one or more areas. The literature review may need to be more thorough, or the literature better summarized or integrated. The writing may be choppy or difficult to follow in some areas.

SOURCE: Haverford College Department of Psychology Senior Thesis Grading Rubric.

This rubric has additional detail for the 3.3 level, and each grade level (4.0, 3.7, 3.3, 3.0) has its own full description. The standards are very helpful in making a judgment about where a paper falls, but a holistic rubric does not break out the evidence into its component parts.

## Analytic Rubrics (different types)

The rubric provides a list of objectives/  
dimensions and a space for evaluating each  
(at a minimum) or a detailed description  
(ideally) of gradations of good or bad  
performance on each component part.



### Rating Scale Rubric

|   | 1-<br>Poor | 2 | 3 | 4-<br>Distin-<br>guished |
|---|------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| Conceptualization of Research                 | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Primary Sources                               | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Engagement with relevant secondary literature | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Original Ideas / Content                      | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Organization - Writing                        | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Organization - Thought                        | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Writing Within Professional Disciplinary      | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Personal Responsibility/ Professional Conduct | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |
| Oral Defense                                  | ●          | ● | ● | ●                        |

The next examples will use Haverford's History Department's Senior Thesis Rubric as a basis to demonstrate different types of rubrics. The actual rubric was a "Descriptive" rubric, which will be shown last.

A "Rating Scale Rubric" uses dimensions (based on goals), and has an abstract rating scale, anchored by quality descriptions.

## “Scoring” Rubric

| DIMENSIONS or OBJECTIVES  | DESCRIPTION OF AN EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE  | COMMENTS | Pts |
|---|--|----------|-----|
| <b>Conceptualization of Research Question/Historical Argument</b> | Thesis is concise, complex and stated clearly at the very beginning<br>- Full implications of Thesis are acknowledged and explored. Subsidiary, embedded, or implicit questions and assumptions are made explicit and relations among them are specified<br>- Importance of question and what is at stake in answering it is demonstrated with extraordinary depth and precision |          |     |
| <b>Primary Sources</b>  | Primary source evidence is well organized, exhaustive, and seamlessly presented in terms of its relationship to the research question<br>- Creativity in research finds new evidence   |          |     |
| <b>Engagement with relevant secondary literature</b>              | Comprehensive mastery of scholarly literature as pertains to the thesis topic.<br>-Bibliography is extensive, appropriately selected and innovative<br>-Original synthesis of and contribution to relevant literature  |          |     |
| <b>Original Ideas / Content</b>                                   | Presents original research of the highest quality extending existing knowledge in significant ways.<br>- Imaginative, creative and unique ideas energetically expressed  |          |     |

A “Scoring Rubric” list goals or dimensions, and provides space to assign points, and to make comments. This one describes the ideal for each dimension. (Could also do that with a rating rubric.) This is a good starting point – you can review comments to learn what criteria you found helpful in differentiating.

## "Descriptive" Rubric

An ideal to work towards...

## Descriptive Rubric

Instead of checkboxes,  
*descriptions* of work that merit each rating.

### Advantages

- Criterion-based rather than norm-based
- Explicit standards provide clear guidance to both students and instructors
- Promotes consistency over time, classes, and across multiple raters

### Disadvantage

- Takes time to develop

| Conceptualization of Research Question–<br>Description of “Poor” Rating |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Less Specific</b><br>Thesis presentation is weak.                    | <b>More Specific</b><br>Thesis is never clearly stated, or is stated but is utterly simplistic ; No case is made for why the question is interesting or worth asking |

If multiple members of your department will be using a rubric, and there is high agreement about quality levels on each dimension, a less specific description may be fine. Otherwise, a more specific description will help ensure consistency across raters and time.

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 "Scoring Guides and Rubrics" (2/11/13)

|   | Poor   | Emergent  | Strong   | Distinguished   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Conceptualization of Research Question/Historical Argument</b> | Thesis is never clearly stated, or is stated but is utterly simplistic ; No case is made for why the question is interesting or worth asking | Thesis is eventually made clear, but only after significant reading or after significant effort on the part of the reader; Thesis is fleshed out somewhat, but lacks nuance and depth           | Thesis is stated clearly at the very beginning; Full implications of thesis are acknowledged and explored; Importance of question and what is at stake is demonstrated | Thesis is concise, complex and stated clearly at the very beginning; Full implications of thesis are acknowledged and explored.               |
| <b>Primary Sources</b>  | Demonstrates poor grasp of primary sources relevant to the topic; coverage is very slight  | Documentation/Interpretation of the evidence, but merely a collection of loosely related summaries of primary sources rather than a well organized synthesis directly tied to research question | Primary source evidence is well organized, displays substantial depth, and is clearly presented in terms of its relationship to the research question                  | Primary source evidence is well organized, exhaustive, and seamlessly presented in terms of its relationship to the research question         |
| <b>Engagement with relevant secondary literature</b>              | Minimal knowledge of existing scholarship. Bibliography ignores important and easily available materials                                     | Engagement with existing scholarship but bibliography lacks depth; Has a familiarity with central scholarly debates though understanding is superficial in some ways                            | Deep engagement with scholarly literature as pertains to this topic, with sharp analysis   | Comprehensive mastery of scholarly literature as pertains to the thesis topic.; Original synthesis of and contribution to relevant literature |

Here is (part of) the actual rubric used by the History Department at Haverford College to evaluate the Senior Thesis. This slide shows only some of the dimensions, and only partial descriptions – please see the actual rubric (shared as an example and also available on website), which is very rich in detail.

## Ideal Steps in Developing an Ideal Rubric (in a perfect world)

- Sort *examples* (yes, it's a circular process!) into piles reflecting levels of quality.
- What key distinctions would you use to describe each pile? What are the model characteristics of each level (standard)?
- Calibrate among multiple raters – Read, score, discuss, adjust.
- Use, adjust some more, repeat.

## Try...

What standards/ criteria/ examples would this group assign to "Excellent" versus "Good" ratings for the dimension:

***Effectively uses information and evidence  
to support argument***

in a rubric for an essay in a first-year seminar?

| Good | Excellent |
|------|-----------|
|      |           |



## Recording Rubric Scores

|   | Student<br>1 | Student<br>2 | Student<br>3 | Student<br>3 | Student<br>4 | Student<br>5 | TOTAL FOR<br>DIMENSION |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Conceptualization of<br>Research Question |              |              |              |              |              |              | <b>Assessment</b>      |
| Primary Sources                           |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Engagement with<br>relevant secondary     |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Original Ideas /<br>Content               |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Organization                              |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Writing Within<br>Professional            |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Personal<br>Responsibility/               |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| Oral Defense                              |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |
| TOTAL FOR STUDENT                         |              |              |              |              |              |              |                        |

## Advice

- Start where you're comfortable and plan to revise and build toward the tool that works for you.
- If it feels too rigid, or that something is missing, be sure you've included dimensions to reflect creativity or imagination.  
(Middlebury rubric for first-year writing "Voice and Style" dimension.)
- See if your grades are consistent with rubric ratings – why or why not?

## Questions?

Sara will describe a rubric used in Biology.

## Small Group Discussion

- Where are you with your rubric/ project?  
What feedback from your colleagues would be helpful?
- See discussion questions if you need help getting started.

## Wrap up

- Insights or questions from small group discussions
- What topics or suggestions for next Liaison Lunch(es)?
  - Monday, March 4, Noon-1, Scheuer
  - April 1
  - April 29