**What is a rubric?**

The UWA Assessment Policy requires instructors to use a marking scheme for criterion-based marking. [Read the full UWA assessment policy online.](#)

A **marking scheme**, according to our policy, is “a scoring tool that provides information about how a student’s work is judged for each individual assessed item/task.” This means we write down, in detail, what level of performance is required for students to earn their marks.

**Criterion-based marking** means that we judge students’ performance based on pre-determined standards, not by comparing students to one another. We must decide the standard **before** we mark students. In other words, we do not scale marks, nor do we rank students to assess.

### Anatomy of a rubric

A rubric is a type of marking scheme which very clearly outlines three important ideas:

1) **Criteria**

The different elements of how a piece of work will be judged. For example, a scientific report might include criteria on the abstract, the methods/results, the conclusion section, and the references. A criterion also includes a statement of the principles by which the element will be judged.

2) **Levels of achievement**

Also called levels of performance, standards, grade bands, or many other names, these categorise the differences in quality of a piece of work. For example, you could have three simple levels of achievement such as *basic*, *proficient*, and *advanced*. You are welcome to use the UWA grade codes (Fail, Pass, Credit, Distinction, and High Distinction) if they are appropriate for your task.

3) **Descriptors**

As the name implies, these are descriptions of each criteria for each level of achievement. They clearly outline what students need to demonstrate for each criteria in order to earn each level of achievement.

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The best way to organise criteria, levels of achievement, and descriptors is in a table or matrix with criteria in the left column, levels of achievement in the top row, and descriptors filling the rest of the cells, like the example below:

**Levels of achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>3-4 scholarly references</td>
<td>4-5 scholarly references</td>
<td>6+ scholarly references</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rubrics are tools**

We should think of rubrics as tools for both:

1) **Ourselves** to help all markers assess according to criterion-based marking

Marking stacks of assessments in a short timeframe is a difficult task, but thoughtfully designed rubrics can make marking and moderating both faster and easier.

2) **Our students** to help them understand and achieve the standards.

Rubrics are a great way to communicate standards and feedback to students, but only if you use clear and understandable language.

*Remember: Rubrics should be tailored not just to the assignment task, but also to the standards you expect of the students – you probably won’t be able to use the exact same rubric for both first year undergraduates and masters students!*

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