

TALK & TECH

Grading to
Communicate:
Using Rubrics

WHY DO WE GRADE?

■ Tradition

- First grades assigned by Yale in 1783
- 1800 – Yale institutes the 0-4 scale (GPA)
- 1883 – Harvard institutes letter grades

- *Teaching at It's Best*, Linda Nilson (2010)

WHY DO WE GRADE?

■ Communication

- To the university
- To society at large
- To students

HOW TO SAVE TIME?

Accept that grading is going to be time-consuming

... and therefore only grade what is worthwhile to grade

- “Effective Grading,” Walvoord & Anderson (1998)

USE RUBRICS!

- Rubrics are a relatively recent development in higher education (Walvoord calls them “Primary-Trait Scales” – 1998)
- Useful in responding to two phenomena:
 - Dissolution of a “canon” or “canonical thought”
 - Increased class size

HOLISTIC RUBRIC

- Rubric provides description of grades
- Quick & efficient
- **Students don't get as much targeted feedback**

SAMPLE HOLISTIC RUBRIC FOR ESSAYS

Grade	Score	Criteria
A (90-100)		The "A" argument essay is exceptional in every way. The essay is well organized and all claims are supported. It begins with a solid introduction that contains a clear thesis, is followed by body paragraphs that contain clear topic sentences with clear and detailed support, and ends with an effective conclusion. Content is thorough and lacking in no area. There are no (or few) errors in tone, format, mechanics, grammar, and content.
B (80-89)		The "B" essay is above adequate in most areas. In the areas where it is not above adequate, it is still entirely acceptable. The majority of the essay is clear, focused, and well detailed, but there may be a few areas requiring further development. While it may contain a few errors with tone, mechanics, grammar, and/or content, these errors are not egregious enough to detract from the overall point being made.
C (70-79)		The "C" essay is adequate in most areas, but exceptional in none. The thesis is clear although probably lacking in both control and command. Organization may be a slight problem but can be fixed. The paragraphs provide support but are generally underdeveloped. There may be multiple errors in tone, format, mechanics, grammar, and content, but these errors do not, for the most part, detract from the overall writing.
D (60-69)		The "D" essay is lacking in a majority of areas. It is generally unorganized and unfocused. The thesis is neither clear nor controls the entire essay. Most of the essay is underdeveloped. There are frequent errors in tone, format, mechanics, grammar, and/or content that distract from the content being provided. Its only saving grace is that, despite all of the errors, there appears to be a legitimate effort put forth by the writer.
F (0-59)		The "F" essay generally needs little explanation. There are significant problems throughout. The thesis is often lacking, and the argument, if there is one, wanders and is unorganized. The essay shows no understanding of basic essay structure, and there are significant errors in tone, format, mechanics, grammar, and/or content. The effort on the part of the writer is questionable, at best.

Comments:

ATOMISTIC RUBRIC

- Content-focused
- Useful for clear standards of right and wrong
- **Hairsplitting distinctions**

SAMPLE ATOMISTIC RUBRIC

CRITERIA	Possible # of Points	Actual Points	COMMENTS
Main Idea: Clearly states what will be proved or shown	10		
Correlation: Are all points related to the main point?	10		
Evidence: Sufficient detail to prove main point	10		
Logic: Is the evidence arranged in a logical way to prove the main idea?	10		
Transitions: Are there transitions that contribute to the flow?	10		
Surface correctness: no to few errors in punctuation, syntax, grammar, usage	10		
Format: Is the format appropriate / does it follow the prescribed format?	10		
Tone: Is the tone appropriate for the given audience?	10		
Conclusion: Is the conclusion clear and artful?	10		
Purpose: is the purpose of the piece accomplished?	10		

TOTAL / GRADE: _____

ANALYTICAL RUBRIC

- The best of both worlds and now the most common
- Provides students with detailed feedback
- **More labor-intensive set up**

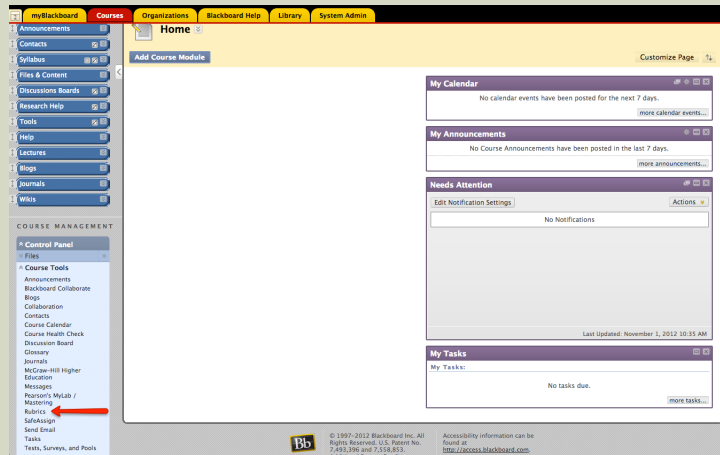
RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING LAB REPORTS (adapted from North Carolina State)

	1 Beginning or incomplete	2 Developing	3 Accomplished	4 Exemplary	Score
Abstract/ Summary	Several major aspects of the experiment are missing, student displays a lack of understanding about how to write an abstract	Abstract misses one or more major aspects of carrying out the experiment or the results	Abstract references most of the major aspects of the experiment, some minor details are missing	Abstract contains reference to all major aspects of carrying out the experiment and the results, well-written	
Introduction	Very little background information provided or information is incorrect	Some introductory information, but still missing some major points	Introduction is nearly complete, missing some minor points	Introduction complete and well-written; provides all necessary background principles for the experiment	
Experimental procedure	Missing several important experimental details or not written in paragraph format	Written in paragraph format, still missing some important experimental details	Written in paragraph format, important experimental details are covered, some minor details missing	Well-written in paragraph format, all experimental details are covered	
Results: data, figures, graphs, tables, etc.	Figures, graphs, tables contain errors or are poorly constructed, have missing titles, captions or numbers, units missing or incorrect, etc.	Most figures, graphs, tables OK, some still missing some important or required features	All figures, graphs, tables are correctly drawn, but some have minor problems or could still be improved	All figures, graphs, tables are correctly drawn, are numbered and contain titles/captions.	
Discussion	Very incomplete or incorrect interpretation of trends and comparison of data indicating a lack of understanding of results	Some of the results have been correctly interpreted and discussed; partial but incomplete understanding of results is still evident	Almost all of the results have been correctly interpreted and discussed, only minor improvements are needed	All important trends and data comparisons have been interpreted correctly and discussed, good understanding of results is conveyed	
Conclusions	Conclusions missing or missing the important points	Conclusions regarding major points are drawn, but many are misstated, indicating a lack of understanding	All important conclusions have been drawn, could be better stated	All important conclusions have been clearly made, student shows good understanding	
Spelling, grammar, sentence structure	Frequent grammar and/or spelling errors, writing style is rough and immature	Occasional grammar/spelling errors, generally readable with some rough spots in writing style	Less than 3 grammar/spelling errors, mature, readable style	All grammar/spelling correct and very well-written	
Appearance and formatting	Sections out of order, too much handwritten copy, sloppy formatting	Sections in order, contains the minimum allowable amount of handwritten copy, formatting is rough but readable	All sections in order, formatting generally good but could still be improved	All sections in order, well-formatted, very readable	

HOW CAN BLACKBOARD HELP?

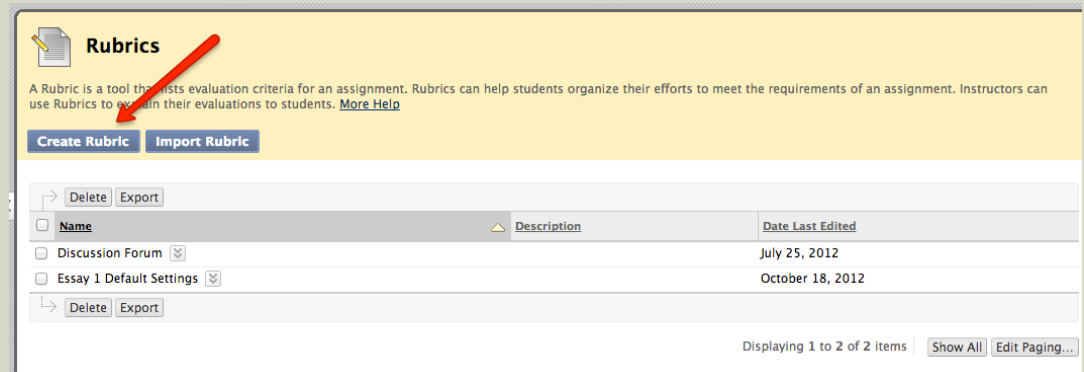
The Rubric Tool

Step 1



The screenshot shows the Blackboard Home page. On the left is a navigation menu with categories: Home, COURSE MANAGEMENT, and COURSE TOOLS. Under COURSE TOOLS, the 'Rubrics' option is highlighted with a red arrow. The main content area shows 'Home' with an 'Add Course Module' button and several informational widgets: My Calendar, My Announcements, Needs Attention, and My Tasks.

Step 2



The screenshot shows the 'Rubrics' tool interface. At the top, there is a header with a document icon and the word 'Rubrics'. Below the header is a paragraph explaining the tool. Two buttons, 'Create Rubric' and 'Import Rubric', are visible. Below these buttons is a table with columns for 'Name', 'Description', and 'Date Last Edited'. A red arrow points to the 'Create Rubric' button.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Name	Description	Date Last Edited
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion Forum		July 25, 2012
<input type="checkbox"/>	Essay 1 Default Settings		October 18, 2012

Step 3

1. Rubric Information

Name

Description

abc

2. Rubric Detail

The Rubric Grid lists **Criteria** (rows) for measuring **Levels of Achievement** (columns)

Add Row Add Column Rubric Type: Percent Show Criteria Weight

Levels of Achievement ↕

Criteria ↕

Novice

Competent

Proficient

Formatting

Weight 33.00 %

Percent 0

abc

Percent 50

abc

Percent 100

abc

Organization

Weight 34.00 %

Percent 0

abc

Percent 50

abc

Percent 100

abc

Grammar

Weight 33.00 %

Percent 0

abc

Percent 50

abc

Percent 100

abc

The Finished Product – ready to attach to an assignment!



Rubric

Name Essay 1 Default Settings

Description

Rubric Detail

Criteria	Levels of Achievement		
	Novice	Competent	Proficient
Formatting Weight 33.00%	0.00 % Paper does not follow the specified format. Most citations are incorrect in style or execution.	50.00 % Paper generally follows the correct format with a couple of errors. Citation information is generally correct but there are more than a few errors.	100.00 % Paper is formatted correctly and citation information is done completely and correctly. A few minor errors may exist but can be considered typos.
Organization Weight 34.00%	0.00 % Paper is difficult to follow for some reason; it may jump from topic to topic, the sentences may not flow well, it may lack transitions.	50.00 % Paper is somewhat easy to follow, but transitions are in-artful (obvious, heavy-handed, inorganic). Paragraphs are generally in the correct places to serve the logic of the argument.	100.00 % Paper glides easily from the introduction (with the thesis) to the conclusion (where a solution is proposed or new question is broached).
Grammar Weight 33.00%	0.00 % Many and / or repeated errors in grammar, punctuation, syntax or usage. Errors interrupt the flow and / or meaning of the paper.	50.00 % Several small errors or a couple of repeated errors made continuously. The paper is still generally readable.	100.00 % Mechanics are generally correct and are therefore invisible. One or 2 typos are acceptable.

[View Associated Items](#)

Print

Close Window

WHERE THE BB RUBRIC BECOMES POWERFUL...

- It can be attached to an assignment so students know expectations as they are completing the work.
- Instructors can grade within Blackboard. Grades go into the grading center.
- In addition to providing specific expectations, instructors can give feedback on each element within the rubric.
- Once created, it can be exported to several courses easily