

# How to Create Your Written Communications Scoring Rubrics

A Step by Step Approach



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## **Introduction**

This document is designed to help faculty construct analytic written communications scoring rubrics. The easiest way to construct a good scoring rubric is to work from examples. We have seen however that full rubrics are time consuming to read and may not offer criterion descriptors that fit the needs of a given discipline. So instead of offering hundreds of one-page rubrics for faculty to peruse, we instead offer specific examples of types of descriptors each discipline might use to address their needs.

## **Benefits of Analytic Scoring Rubrics**

Many English teachers prefer to use holistic scoring (an overall score the entire work) rather than analytic scoring where each specific type of score is split out for separate consideration. However, recent research (and experience) supports the use of analytic scoring rubrics.

### ***Definitions***

***Holistic Scoring:*** Grade the entire work as a whole.

***Analytic Scoring:*** Distinct aspects of the work's quality are scored separately. Thus, a scoring rubric might contain several rows each containing a different aspect of quality.

***Analytic Scoring Rubric:*** A table that outlines the criteria for scoring a student's work. Each row lists a specific criterion. Columns to the right of each criterion list what constitutes each level of quality. In our rubrics, we will use four scoring columns ranging from "Well Below Expectations" to "Exceeds Expectations" (see Appendix A).

Analytic scoring has some unique benefits that are useful in education including:

1. Graders can score written submissions faster when using analytic scoring. The scoring activity itself is faster. In addition, because graders don't have to continually write the same sorts of feedback comments on every paper, they save even more time.
2. The feedback a student receives is more detailed than with holistically scored works.
3. When analytic rubrics are given to the student before writing, they are able to evaluate their own writing. Research has shown that using analytic rubrics in this way has a positive effect on student learning and the quality of their written submissions.

## **Limitations of Using Analytic Scoring Criteria for Scoring Writing**

Those familiar with the complexities of the written word know that good writing is based on many interrelated and highly interdependent aspects of quality (e.g., organization, flow, content development, etc.). These aspects of quality can be categorized in many ways which leads to two major challenges. First, there is little agreement on the categories of quality in good writing. One need only peruse writing scoring rubrics found on the Internet to find many different ways to categorize good writing. Therefore, any method we might use to separate the various aspects of quality in students' writing will be familiar to some instructors and alien to others. Second, it is

nearly impossible to create mutually exclusive categories of quality—regardless of the type of categories used. For example, what constitutes good “Content Development” overlaps with making good “Claims” and with using “Credible Evidence.” When scoring “Credible Evidence” we might look to see if the writer *clarifies/defends/persuades by using precise and credible evidence*. It should be obvious that success with this criterion descriptor looks similar to “Content Development.”

**Solution**

The American Association of Colleges and Universities and the SLCC Dean of Developmental and General Education have defined eight categories of quality that we expect to see in students’ writing. As expected, what fits into each of these eight categories is interdependent and overlaps with other categories. Therefore, each faculty member must determine what constitutes evidence of each category. Taking the example previously mentioned, faculty might agree to score “Credible Evidence” by determining whether a writer *clarifies/defends/persuades by using precise and credible evidence*. We agree that this sounds much like “Developing Content.” However, the main thrust of this descriptor could be the use of good evidence rather than the overall development of content. To differentiate this score from “Content Development” the faculty might agree to see how well the writer offers *clear explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding*. Thus, while these two aspects certainly overlap, selecting these particular aspects of each category will allow the grader to focus on different elements of quality.

**Common Rules for Building Good Scoring Rubrics**

There are a few key rules that faculty should be aware of when developing the descriptors (what goes in each empty cell) in their rubrics.

1. Each row must form a **single unidimensional scale**. One easy way to check for this is to see if the descriptors use somewhat parallel construction across the entire row.

**1a. Example of a Unidimensional Scale** – This criterion (row) measures only the student’s ability to plausibly evaluate answers.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1 Below Expectations</b>	<b>2 Developing</b>	<b>3 Acceptable</b>	<b>4 Exemplary</b>
Plausibility of Evaluations	Makes no effort to evaluate answers.	Evaluations of answers are confusing.	Evaluations of answers are clear but implausible.	Evaluations of answers are thoughtful and convincing.

**1b. Example of a Multidimensional Scale (Don't do this!)** – Here the scale considers several issues including how far along the learning curve the student is in cell 2 but then adds how to do a better job (relevant quotes and summaries) in cell 4.

Criteria	1 Below Expectations	2 Developing	3 Acceptable	4 Exemplary
Thesis	The speaker did not present a thesis.	The speaker is still learning how to define a thesis.	The speaker is beginning to define a thesis.	The speaker clearly defines the thesis with relevant quotes and summaries.

- Each row must measure *degrees* of the criterion from highest to lowest.
- Each cell in the scale contains descriptions a grader could see in the student's presentation. That is, the descriptions *depict attributes of the performance* rather than express comparative language about the performance.

**3a. Example of Comparative Language (Don't do this!)** – This criterion (row) uses descriptors (the words in each cell) that can only be understood in comparison to each other. This method leads to less reliable scoring because one persons "seldom" may be another person's "occasionally."

Criteria	1 Below Expectations	2 Developing	3 Acceptable	4 Exemplary
Originality	Student's artwork is typical.	Student <i>seldom</i> takes daring chances to make artwork original.	Student <i>occasionally</i> takes daring chances to make artwork original.	Student <i>frequently</i> takes daring chances to make artwork original.

**3b. Example of Descriptive Language** – This criterion uses descriptive language about the attributes of the student's submission. Each description can stand alone.

Criteria	1 Below Expectations	2 Developing	3 Acceptable	4 Exemplary
Quality of Methodology Section	Methodology is not described.	Methodology is partially described OR details are confusing.	Steps in the methodology are listed but have limited detail.	Methodology is described in sufficient detail to enable replication of the experiment.

- There are *clear differences between each of the score levels* across each row. Pay special attention to the differences between a "2" and a "3."
- If the rubric is available to students (a practice we highly recommend) the level of detail in each cell *sufficiently conveys expectation parameters, yet allows for creativity and unique performances*. That is, you want to write a guide for the student rather than a detailed prescription for the student to follow.
- Ensure that the descriptors are *positive, informative, or clinical* rather than negative or critical.
- Ensure that *all terms and expectations are unambiguously defined*.

**Common Errors That Lead to Poor Scoring Rubrics**

Here are a few examples of errors that novice rubric developers often make. In column one, we have listed some examples of descriptors (the words placed in each scoring level cell). In column two, we have described why the example represents a bad rubric development practice.

<b>Examples of Poor Descriptors (Don't use these!)</b>	<b>What makes this a bad example?</b>
<p>The amount of effort put into making the product is clearly apparent.</p> <p>Volume of writing shows evidence that student made excellent use of time, and/or used extra time outside of class to contribute to journal entries.</p>	<p>With these descriptors the grader would need to make leaping inferences about the student instead of making judgments about an attribute of the submission.</p>
<p>On a separate sheet the student will list each room with the drawn dimensions and give the area of that room in square feet.</p> <p>There is one brief paragraph summarizing ONLY the pertinent findings in the History and Physical Exam that are critical for the discussion of this case – i.e., it is NOT a rewritten H&amp;P.</p>	<p>Here the descriptors are detailed prescriptions for completing an assignment. Recall that we strongly advocate giving our students the scoring rubric when the writing assignment is made. Providing students with descriptors like these would yield formulaic writing.</p>
<p>Balanced presentation of relevant and legitimate information that clearly supports a central purpose or argument and shows a thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a significant topic.</p>	<p>There are too many different things being measured in this single descriptor. Look for what I call “the dreaded <i>and</i>” in your descriptors. Ensure that you are not trying to score two very different things on a single row.</p>
<p>Meets or exceeds all expectations of a well crafted paper.</p>	<p>What does “well crafted” mean?</p>
<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a “3,” writing flows smoothly from one idea to another.</p>	<p>Each descriptor should stand alone and not rely on what is written in other cells.</p>
<p>Topics of the cited articles are specific to the task.</p> <p>Cited works are among the best sources available.</p>	<p>Unless the grader knows/reviews each source, it would not be possible to accurately score based on this approach.</p>
<p>Effectively uses a variety of complex reasoning strategies.</p> <p>Demonstrates mastery of a variety of complex thinking processes and consistently applies the processes effectively.</p>	<p>These are standards that have been copied into a rubric. Using these would require grading a series of student submissions to be able to see a variety of strategies or thinking processes.</p>

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## **How to Use This Document**

You will need to create a scoring rubric. At present, the “Starting Point” template (Appendix A) has eight criteria—one per row. Your job is to determine how you want to go about scoring each criterion (row) by selecting a method and then create definitions of each scoring level (placed in each empty cell). We offer the following as a straightforward approach to completing this task.

1. **Print a copy of the Starting Point Rubric for Written Communication** (see Appendix A).
2. **Review the section of this document that corresponds to each row in the rubric template.** The sections of this document are in the same order as the rows in the template.
3. **Select ONE approach for measuring that criterion (row) from the “Descriptor Categories” in column one of the examples tables** (see “Good Examples of Content Development” table below). For example, for measuring the criterion “Content Development” you could decide to focus your scoring on the whether the student exhibited a “grasp of content” (second row of the table). You could instead decide to focus on “Central Idea Development and Using Details” (third row of the table). Either of these approaches would be acceptable. Each faculty member/committee/department simply needs to decide what aspects best represent what they value as it relates to each criterion found on each row of the scoring rubric table.
4. **Select an approach to measuring “grasp of content” by selecting one of the examples of descriptors found in column two** of each of the examples tables (see below). For example, you might want to use “Provides *clear* explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.”  
Note – If you don’t see a descriptor you like, you are free to write one of your own.
5. **Place the descriptor you select into the “Exceeds Expectations” cell** on that row.
6. **Write a descriptor for the worst performance for that criterion and place that in the first cell on that row** (“Well Below Expectations”).
7. **Write/place descriptors for each of the other two cells along that row.** Be sure to build a unidimensional scale by not changing the nature of the quality you are looking for across the entire row. The only thing that should change across the row is the degree of the quality you are interested in. Note the italicized words in the criterion example below. In this case, we have listed “Provides understandable explanations...” in the next cell and then “Provides *unclear or confusing* explanations...” in the “Below Expectations” cell. Finally, you could then write “Provides *no or nonsensical* explanations...” in the lowest score cell.

	<b>Well Below Expectations 1</b>	<b>Below Expectations 2</b>	<b>Below Expectations 3</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations 4</b>
<b><i>Content Development</i></b> <i>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.</i>	Provides <i>no, or nonsensical</i> explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.	Provides <i>unclear or confusing</i> explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.	Provides <i>understandable</i> explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.	Provides <i>clear</i> explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.

8. **Repeat the process (steps 2-7) for the other criteria.**

9. **Optional: Add additional criteria** by adding rows to the bottom of the rubric.

### **How to Get Help with Building Your Communications Rubrics**

I am available to consult with faculty to develop each scoring rubric. I prefer to come to your location. I generally try to reserve mornings for visits here on the Redwood campus and the afternoons for visiting other locations.

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### **Please Help Improve This Document**

This guide is a work in progress. Please contact the author with suggestions and additional examples.

## **Context and Purpose for Writing**

**Definition:** Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).

This criterion is only used for a subjective judgment about how well the student shaped her/his writing to fit a given context or purpose. For example, a cover letter for a resume should be written *to* an employer describing how the applicant meets the employer’s needs. A research paper should use a clinical approach to describe exactly what was done and what happened. Each of these examples clearly addresses a different situation.

Graders must see evidence of these differences in the writing. In many cases, it helps if the grader understands the needs of each context and purpose. For example, knowing what an employer versus another research scientist expects to see in the writing will certainly help the grader score the work appropriately.

### **Good Examples of “Context and Purpose” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b><i>Audience</i></b>	<p>The tone is consistently professional and appropriate for an academic research paper.</p> <p>The letter is formal and appropriate for the audience.</p> <p>Uses the correct writing style for reaching the intended audience. (e.g., persuasive, informative, clinical, descriptive, scientific, professional, apologetic, argumentative, comparative, emotional, urgent, humorous, etc.)</p> <p>Clearly meets audience expectations at a professional conference. (This would require creating a definition of <i>professional expectations</i> and placing that into the graders notes.)</p> <p>The reader’s questions are anticipated and answered. (This may also fit under “Content Development.”)</p> <p>Word choice is appropriate for the intended audience. (This may also fit under “Genre and Discipline-specific Conventions.”)</p> <p>The writer speaks directly to the audience.</p> <p>The author consistently demonstrates insight concerning the feelings and levels of knowledge of readers.</p> <p>Demonstrates and/or encourages a deep respect for individual differences and sensitivities.</p> <p>The various parts of the document are accessible to the reader.</p>

<p><b>Purpose</b> Meets all requirements of the assignment.</p>	<p>Provides an objective/clinical description of the situation (e.g., problem, costs, and solutions.)</p> <p>Offers an emotional argument for supporting the cause.</p> <p>The written work meets assignment requirements deliberately and appropriately.</p> <p>The purpose of the writing is completely clear to the reader.</p> <p>There is clear and complete identification of design goals and their associated objectives.</p> <p>It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.</p> <p>The writer provides definitions when appropriate to the audience. (This would require a list of audience members and examples of “appropriate.”)</p> <p>The text contains substantial content that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose.</p>
<p><b>Context</b> (May include both audience and purpose.)</p>	<p>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of job context by linking the discussion in the text to specifics found in the job announcement.</p> <p>Responsive to the elements of the complaints/problems expressed by the patient.</p> <p>Addresses the critical circumstances of the situation. {Would require providing the grader with examples or a list of the “critical circumstances.”}</p> <p>Employed superior rhetorical strategies suited to the purpose(s) and audience(s) for the writing.</p> <p>The essay is written in a style and tone appropriate to the audience, topic and purpose.</p> <p>The student is highly responsive to the demands of the writing situation.</p> <p>The contract is fair to both parties.</p>

**Bad Examples of “Context and Purpose” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
Demonstrates an understanding of context, audience, purpose, and the assigned task.	This lists three different attributes of the text. What happens if the student is good at context but lousy at audience?
The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic matches the audience and purpose.	This descriptor is confusing.
The purpose is clearly defined.	This is a checklist item at present. An exception might be made in this case if “clearly” were contrasted with other descriptors on the same scale.
The text will be interpreted correctly.	This addresses the behaviors of the potential audience of the work, not attributes of the text – thus raising the inference level. The grader would need to make leaping assumptions about the audience to use this descriptor
Content and purpose of the writing are clear.	Using one of these two might make sense, but as written, this addresses two very different concepts.
<p>Effectively communicates in a variety of ways or for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Demonstrates an ability to creatively and effectively use many diverse methods of communication for a wide and diverse variety of purposes.</p> <p>Demonstrates an ability to adjust tone and style to a wide and highly diverse range of audiences.</p> <p>Uses clear purpose and varied structure; sentences and paragraphing to show skill with a wide range of rhetorical conventions.</p>	While these are worthy learning goals, they are difficult to measure this with a single student submission. These sorts of goals fit a set of submissions (e.g., a full portfolio).



**Content Development**

**Definition:** Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject, conveying the writers understanding, and shaping the whole work.

“Content development” differs from “claims” (putting forth a claim, argument, or thesis) and also differs from “credible evidence” (whether the evidence of the claims is relevant and compelling). Rather, “content development” is used for measuring whether the student was able to convince the reader that she/he had a good understanding of the topic/thesis/facts/etc.

“Content development refers to the student's ability to correctly and effectively use the topics, concepts, dates, and/or names required to give an effective response to the writing prompt. For instance, if I ask students to analyze a recent contentious Supreme Court case, their paper should reflect that they understand and can use concepts like *majority opinion* and *dissenting opinion* which are highly relevant to a complete response to the assignment” (Personal Communication, Dr. David Hubert, SLCC Dean of Developmental and General Education, 2011).

**Good Examples of “Content Development” Descriptors**

Descriptor Categories	Examples
<i>Focus</i>	<p>Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing.</p> <p>Main idea is clear throughout the text.</p> <p>Establishes the focus of the letter very well.</p> <p>Stayed on topic throughout the entire piece (e.g., Essay does not digress from central point).</p> <p>The ideas are clearly communicated with focus and specificity.</p>
<i>Grasp of Content</i>	<p>Provides clear explanations to demonstrate a depth of understanding.</p> <p>Writing is insightful showing a deep understanding of ideas.</p> <p>Content is thorough, highly comprehensive, and informative.</p> <p>The content shows an understanding of what motivated St. Paul, and some of his experiences and accomplishments.</p> <p>The essay reflects knowledge and judgment about the strengths, challenges, and uniqueness of the country.</p> <p>The ideas presented illustrate an excellent understanding of the events, themes, and point of view in the novel as well as all characters' roles in the novel.</p>
<i>Central Idea Development and Using Details</i>	<p>The central idea is developed in the essay through well-chosen, appropriate/relevant, concrete details.</p> <p>The topic or meaning of the document is clear and well supported by detailed information.</p> <p>The details paint a picture in the readers head.</p>

	<p>The writing provides concise logical details that meet the reader's informational needs.</p> <p>Supporting, relevant details give the reader important information that he or she could not personally bring to the text.</p> <p>Relevant and telling details give readers important information beyond the obvious or predictable.</p> <p>There are many interesting facts and there are few questions left unanswered about the topic.</p> <p>All key points are addressed and are well covered.</p> <p>The student uses well-chosen examples.</p>
<p><b><i>Inclusion and Qualities of Specific Types of Details</i></b></p>	<p>Student used visuals that explained, reinforced, and/or complemented the meaning in the text.</p> <p>Values are stated in the mission statement.</p> <p>The work included all the essential facts found in the case.</p> <p>The plan has an appropriate and insightful procedure and a detailed rationale for why it would help students.</p> <p>The student provides detailed, appropriate and timely entries. (Logbooks)</p> <p>The student includes detailed descriptions of the diseases and their symptoms.</p> <p>Uses relevant anecdotes and details to enrich the central theme or storyline.</p> <p>The solution addresses all the required elements of a valid contract under Ontario law.</p> <p>Proper notes were used to identify the important parts of the design. (For a technical blueprint.)</p> <p>Offered both a full explanation of photosynthesis and why it's important.</p> <p>The model includes extensive information about the body system.</p> <p>The correct equation was presented and described.</p> <p>Every appropriate system is addressed that coincides with chief complaint. (For a medical case study.)</p> <p>The student provided supportive discussion for all of the philosophical principles and the points of application.</p> <p>Student uses their own words to make a brief statement about the main points of the movie.</p>

**Bad Examples of “Content Development” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
<p>The author goes beyond simply stating facts, figures, and details by formulating meaningful claims.</p> <p>The author makes claims that are debatable or arguable.</p> <p>The arguments made are logical.</p>	<p>These descriptors have to do with claims (the student’s ability to put forth an argument, thesis, or central theme) rather than with content development (a student’s ability to use compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject).</p>
<p>The writer clarifies/defends/persuades using precise and relevant evidence.</p> <p>The reader can easily see how the evidence presented connects to the issues presented in the paper.</p> <p>The author’s position is extremely well supported with evidence or example.</p> <p>Compelling evidence is given to support claims.</p> <p>Uses appropriate examples/evidence/data to support arguments.</p>	<p>These descriptors deal with using credible evidence (the nature of the evidence used and whether the evidence supported the claims made). Content development is about a student’s ability to use compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject.</p>
<p>The essay presents a central idea about the topic.</p>	<p>Presence of a central theme is nice but is simply a prerequisite to the quality of the content development.</p>
<p>Meets the 1000 word minimum.</p> <p>More than 5 paragraphs and/or more than 6 sentences per paragraph</p> <p>Incorporates 5+ ideas that enrich and develop the theme.</p> <p>It provides at least three examples of ways in which the learner could apply the research to their personal and/or professional life.</p> <p>The student provided 20 philosophical principles that correlate with the 10 ethical principles.</p>	<p>Size or sheer volume of the work is not a measure of the quality of content development</p>
<p>The student shows exemplary understanding of the presented issue(s) by thoroughly and correctly (1) addressing the relevant content, (2) identifying and addressing the key concepts or main ideas, (3) substantiating points with several accurate examples and (4) extensively using correct terminology.</p>	<p>These descriptors have two flaws. First, too many different things are being measured at the same time. Second, if this were to appear on a rubric, students might create formulaic submissions.</p>

<p>Presentation includes information about the country's history, demographics, cultural geography, unique characteristics, and other interesting information.</p> <p>Consistently communicates information by providing a clear main idea or theme with support that contains rich, vivid, and powerful detail.</p>	
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## **Genre and Discipline-specific Conventions**

**Definition:** Uses formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.

This criterion is used strictly for the rules for writing dictated by a given discipline. This criterion is not used for rules or conventions of Standard English writing such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Only issues that differ from Standard English rules or rules/conventions that are in addition to regular English rules should be used in this criterion.

### **Good Examples of “Genre and Discipline-specific Conventions” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b><i>Genre and Discipline-specific Rules</i></b>	<p>Correctly followed the format for the research paper (e.g., abstract, Subjects, etc.).</p> <p>Submitted a clear, persuasive, and accurate literature review that was addressed to other scientists in the discipline.</p> <p>Formatted the graphics in the document consistent with civil engineering measurement methods.</p> <p>Students used active voice throughout the report.</p> <p>All comments are appropriate and acceptable for posting on a social network.</p> <p>The document is made up of small, independent sections (a rule of writing in some disciplines).</p> <p>The prose clearly reflects the chronological sequencing required of all after-action reports.</p> <p>The history of present illness (HPI) is approached in logical format utilizing the OLDCARTS or OPQRST methods.</p> <p>{These two acronyms are mnemonics for remembering the parts of patient’s report.}</p> <p>All four walls of the house and all interior partitions are accurately labeled to scale.</p> <p>The methods section of the report is detailed enough to allow the reader to replicate the study.</p> <p>Tables and graphics are drawn appropriately.</p>
<b><i>Mechanics of Citations and References</i></b>	<p>Attribution is clear and fairly represented.</p> <p>Differentiates between personal ideas and the ideas of others.</p> <p>All passages, quotes, data tables, visuals, and paraphrased materials are cited.</p>

	<p>Each source in bibliography is cited at least once in paper.</p> <p>Evidence/sources, including data tables or other visuals, are clearly and accurately represented.</p> <p>The entire paper follows APA guidelines for publication.</p> <p>All references are presented in APA format.</p>
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**Bad Examples of “Genre and Discipline-specific Conventions” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
<p>Student uses good syntax and grammar throughout the document.</p> <p>The document adheres to the conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, and usage.</p> <p>Grammar, usage, and paragraphing enhance overall readability and purpose.</p> <p>Words are appropriate and well chosen.</p> <p>Sentences display consistently strong, varied structure.</p> <p>Uses conventional punctuation correctly (comma use, semi-colon, colon, possessive).</p>	<p>These descriptors fit under “Control of Syntax &amp; Mechanics” because they deal with standard (general) rules for writing in English rather than discipline-specific aspects of writing.</p>

## **Claims**

**Definition:** Puts forth a claim, thesis, or argument.

**Claim:** a statement that conveys the author’s positions, beliefs, etc. Claims are not simple facts. Instead, claims are conclusions an author might make based on facts (or on beliefs alone). For example, a claim might read “My dog is very smart” or “The change in government in Ebonia will create negative consequences for the people of that country.”

Use this criterion for scoring how well the writer presented his/her ideas. Good writing requires that writers offer a solid position, a clear thesis, a logical argument, etc. so that the writing is not merely a clinical list of facts or a lifeless description. The author must make a stand, say something solid, and then, support what he/she has to say (that support is scored in the Credible Evidence” criterion.

### **Good Examples of “Claims” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b><i>Claim</i></b>	<p>The author goes beyond simply stating facts, figures, and details by formulating meaningful claims.</p> <p>Formulates a clear and precise personal point of view.</p> <p>Uses a central idea/topic/claim that is debatable.</p> <p>The author makes claims that are debatable or arguable.</p> <p>The claims are clear and of manageable size/complexity.</p>
<b><i>Thesis</i></b>	<p>The submission has and explores a thesis—a single, central point.</p> <p>The student establishes and reinforces a thesis.</p> <p>Topic/thesis is narrow enough to be manageable.</p> <p>Development of the main purpose/thesis is effectively organized in paragraphs or sections.</p> <p>The student uses persuasive reasoning to develop and support the thesis.</p>
<b><i>Arguments</i></b>	<p>Thoroughly elaborates an argument that includes a clear position.</p> <p>Rhetorical (persuasive) strategies are evident.</p> <p>The arguments made are logical.</p>

**Bad Examples of “Claims” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
<p>Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing.</p> <p>Writing is insightful showing a deep understanding of ideas.</p> <p>The writing provides concise logical details that meet the reader’s informational needs.</p>	<p>These descriptors deal with content development rather than putting forth a claim, argument, or thesis.</p>
<p>The writer clarifies/defends/persuades with precise and relevant evidence.</p> <p>The reader can easily see how the evidence presented connects to the issues presented in the paper.</p> <p>The author’s position is extremely well supported.</p> <p>Compelling evidence is given to support claims.</p> <p>Uses appropriate examples/evidence/data to support arguments.</p>	<p>These descriptors deal with using credible evidence (the nature of the evidence used and whether the evidence supported the claims made). Content development is about a student’s ability to use compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject.</p>

**Credible Evidence**

**Definition:** Supports claims/arguments/ideas/thesis.

This criterion directly follows “Claims” in that once a writer makes a claim, it is essential to back it up. Making unsubstantiated generalizations or saying “just because” is not good writing. The write must provide evidence, examples, etc. that make sense to the intended audience.

**Good Examples of “Credible Evidence” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Relates to the Claims</i>	<p>The evidence presented relates directly to the claims.</p> <p>The reader can easily see how the evidence presented connects to the issues presented in the paper.</p> <p>The evidence clearly relates to the main topic.</p>
<i>Supports the Claims Made</i>	<p>The author’s position is extremely well supported.</p> <p>All claims/arguments/generalizations/assertions are defended by using credible evidence.</p> <p>The work is strongly supported with evidence from the information provided.</p> <p>The student consistently supports claims with precise and relevant evidence.</p> <p>Source material is used to extend the writers' ideas in the text.</p> <p>Evidence that writers draw upon are used to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas.</p>
<i>Offers Compelling Evidence</i>	<p>Compelling evidence is given to support claims.</p> <p>The writer clarifies/defends/persuades by using precise and relevant evidence.</p> <p>Uses appropriate evidence, sources, and support.</p> <p>All sources are relevant.</p> <p>Use credible primary and/or secondary sources.</p> <p>Data are selected from valid resources.</p> <p>Articles selected are current (&lt;5 years old).</p> <p>Articles are published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals.</p>
<i>Uses Examples</i>	<p>Mentions several relevant legal concepts, details, and examples.</p> <p>Student uses an example from the film to help make each point.</p> <p>Uses appropriate examples/evidence/data to support arguments.</p>

<p><b><i>Integrates the Evidence</i></b></p>	<p>References and other evidence are smoothly integrated into the writer’s argument /purpose.</p> <p>Appropriately integrates information from sources.</p> <p>Applies previous knowledge to clarify the current problem.</p> <p>Explores a broad sampling of previous knowledge generated within the discipline (e.g., literature).</p> <p>Effectively uses specific quotations, statistics, aesthetic details, or citations of scholarly sources to inform the reader.</p>
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**Bad Examples of “Credible Evidence” Descriptors**

<p><b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b></p>	<p><b>Why?</b></p>
<p>The author goes beyond simply stating facts, figures, and details by formulating meaningful claims.</p> <p>The author makes claims that are debatable or arguable.</p> <p>The arguments made are logical.</p>	<p>These descriptors have to do with claims (the student’s ability to put forth an argument, thesis, or central theme) rather than with content development (a student’s ability to use compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject).</p>
<p>Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing.</p> <p>Writing is insightful showing a deep understanding of ideas.</p> <p>The writing provides concise logical details that meet the reader’s informational needs.</p>	<p>These descriptors deal with content development rather than putting forth a claim, argument, or thesis.</p>
<p>Uses a wide range of information-gathering techniques.</p> <p>Includes several supporting details and/or examples.</p> <p>Identifies several sources of information and individuals for support.</p> <p>Demonstrates an extensive knowledge of basic information resources.</p> <p>There is evidence of extensive research using a variety of Internet, print, and other electronic media.</p>	<p>While commendable, using or knowing multiple methods or high volumes of evidence is not a measure of using evidence to support the topic of the submission.</p>
<p>Specific references are included.</p>	<p>Inclusion of references is not the same as providing credible evidence.</p>

## **Analysis**

**Definition:** Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.

This is a very broad criterion because each discipline looks at “Analysis” differently. In addition, the nature and evidence of good analysis can differ substantially across audiences and/or purposes for writing. Therefore, we have offered examples that view analysis in very different ways. For example, if the purpose of the writing is to offer solutions to an ethical dilemma, good analysis must pick apart the various perspectives different groups might have toward the issues at hand. In the sciences, it may be more important for the author to examine the underlying factors influencing the results by picking them apart piece—by-piece.

We recommend that each communications rubric contain only one approach to scoring analysis if possible. If more than one is needed, create a second analysis row for the second approach to scoring this aspect of writing quality.

### **Good Examples of “Analysis” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b><i>Identifies Multiple Alternatives</i></b>	<p>The student explored multiple alternatives.</p> <p>Brainstorms many strategies, decides on appropriate solution to each strategy.</p> <p>Explores new ways to approach problem.</p> <p>Student discusses any/all alternative medications and/or treatments that may be used based on their cited literature.</p> <p>Integrates new information to assist problem solving process.</p>
<b><i>Uses Multiple Perspectives</i></b>	<p>Consistently reviews actions thoroughly and from many points of view.</p> <p>The problem is considered/addressed from several facets or perspectives</p> <p>Consistently seeks out different and opposing points of view.</p> <p>Effectively uses a variety of information-gathering techniques and information resources.</p> <p>Recognizes stakeholders and contexts (i.e. cultural/ social, educational, political, economic, ethical, personal experience).</p>
<b><i>Analysis Methods Used</i></b>	<p>Uses correct methods to analyze data/information/arguments.</p> <p>Analysis and interpretation is provided in support of the main findings.</p> <p>Breaks the complex issue down into the component elements.</p>

<b><i>Analysis Quality</i></b>	<p>Presents insightful analysis of the important concepts or theories.</p> <p>Sophisticated ability to analyze and weigh differing facts and ideas.</p> <p>The student demonstrates comprehension in the analysis.</p> <p>Provided exceptional thought provoking analysis.</p>
<b><i>Specific Traits of the Analysis</i></b>	<p>The student identifies the main (super ordinate) pattern running through the information along with all minor (subordinate) patterns.</p> <p>The student includes all important characteristics on which the items should be compared or contrasted.</p> <p>Presents an accurate &amp; concise case summary before discussing the alternatives.</p> <p>The writer handled each of the issues separately prior to discussing a solution.</p> <p>The student accounts for un-explained results.</p> <p>Clearly defines the problem and outlines necessary objectives in an efficient manner.</p>
<b><i>Task-specific Examples of Analysis</i></b>	<p>Identifies &amp; explains almost all of the main issues in the case study.</p> <p>Identifies, demonstrates and/or understands all of laws and legal precedents for the case study.</p> <p>The student offers a very thorough and insightful analysis of each of the issues using applicable laws and precedents.</p> <p>The analysis summarizes the work to the extent needed to clarify main points but does not retell the work.</p> <p>There is a full explanation of the course of the disease, treated and untreated, including morbidities and prognosis.</p> <p>There is a complete discussion of the actual treatment of this patient vs. best treatment as supported by the cited literature.</p> <p>The student thoroughly and accurately identifies what is known about the subject of the investigation.</p> <p>The reviewed journal article is clearly but succinctly summarized - only the key points of the article are touched upon.</p> <p>Paper discusses the culture of the country including history, present, and future.</p>
<b><i>Synthesis</i></b>	<p>Provides highly creative and unique syntheses of the information.</p> <p>Synthesizes information/data from multiple sources.</p> <p>Clearly identifies and summarizes main issues and successfully explains why/ how they are problems or questions.</p>

	<p>Student uses her/his own words to make a brief statement about the main points of the movie.</p> <p>The student provides a well-articulated and detailed argument containing no errors in logic.</p> <p>The student constructs a valid generalization and clearly articulates the logic of this generalization based on the specifics that have been identified.</p> <p>The student organizes the items into meaningful categories and describes the defining characteristics of each category.</p> <p>Identifies and thoroughly discusses implications, conclusions, and consequences, considering all relevant assumptions, contexts, data, and evidence.</p>
<b><i>Interpretation</i></b>	<p>Effectively makes meaning of the existing issues and situations.</p> <p>Consistently interprets the information gathered for tasks in accurate and highly insightful ways.</p> <p>Effectively interprets information.</p>
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>	<p>Identifies and rigorously evaluates all important evidence offered; provides new data or information for consideration</p> <p>Evaluates actions for both immediate and long-term impact.</p> <p>Judiciously considers potential resolutions to the ethical dilemma.</p> <p>Determines how the identified alternatives will affect outcomes.</p>
<b><i>Decision Making</i></b>	<p>The student uses relevant criteria to select the most appropriate option.</p> <p>The student presents a well-articulated solution to the confusions or contradictions associated with the situation.</p> <p>The student selects the solution that is the most effective for overcoming the obstacle or constraint and accurately explains why it is the most effective of the possible solutions.</p> <p>Student must explain why they choose the juror they did, and why the jurors exemplifies their specified characteristics.</p> <p>The student explains why the option selected is the most appropriate.</p> <p>Student discusses if and how he/she would treat this patient differently based on these findings.</p>

<p><b><i>Prediction &amp; Recommendations</i></b></p>	<p>The student generates a valid prediction or conclusion.</p> <p>Anticipates and articulates steps or tasks that might require additional demands on resources.</p> <p>Recommends further action based on the status of the project.</p> <p>Recognizes limitations of current hypothesis and proposes alternative interpretations.</p>
<p><b><i>Connections</i></b></p>	<p>Relates the results to the hypothesis and to currently accepted theory.</p> <p>Makes connections between ideas in the text and a broader context.</p> <p>The work establishes the relationship between the specific focus of the document and more general issues.</p> <p>The student accurately articulates the relationship between the prediction or conclusion and the principle or premise that was used.</p> <p>Understands the problem and relates it to other situations in the working world.</p> <p>There is evidence of thoughtful and insightful links to challenges found when working with real patients in the field.</p> <p>Includes meaningful links to the limitations imposed by the society at the time.</p> <p>The student provided meaningful applications for each of the philosophical principles.</p> <p>Generalizes solution, describes how solution can be used in other situations.</p> <p>Explains the significance of the case for all parties and society.</p> <p>When the experiment is completed, the student fully and accurately explains the results in light of the hypothesis.</p>

**Bad Examples of “Analysis” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
Consistently demonstrates strong determination in the pursuit of solutions monitors his or her level of involvement, and develops and uses a number of strategies to keep self on task	While a useful goal, this is a description of a student’s affective behavior patterns rather than a measure of analysis.
Arrives at a resolution based on sound moral principles and values or ideals.	This is a measure of a student’s foundational beliefs and use of those beliefs rather than a measure of analysis.
<p>Clearly and concisely articulates the problem-solving process and describes how well it was applied to the current problem.</p> <p>Consistently sets precise goals, considers and carries out all necessary sub-goals, and creates and adheres to detailed time lines.</p>	These are measures of a student’s knowledge of analysis and problem-solving steps rather than their ability to use them.



## **Control of Syntax and Mechanics**

**Definition:** Follows conventions of standard edited English or other language suitable to the assignment.

Use this criterion for general rules that would apply to writing across all disciplines. Do not use this criterion for discipline-specific rules, including methods for citations and references.

We recommend that faculty select an approach to measuring this criterion that is well within the grader's experience. For example, if a grader is unfamiliar with all the rules of English grammar, or does not know the difference between active and passive voice, it makes no sense to include these in the rubric. Instead, use descriptors that are within the experience level of the grader.

Faculty who are generally inexperienced with English writing rules should also review the "Bad Examples" table to guard against several common errors.

### **Good Examples of "Control of Syntax and Mechanics" Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b><i>Holistic</i></b>	<p>The document adheres to the conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, and usage.</p> <p>No grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors.</p> <p>Paper contains less than 1-2 errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling.</p> <p>Observes professional conventions of written English and manuscript format.</p> <p>Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed.</p>
<b><i>Clarity of Language</i></b>	<p>Language is clear and precise.</p> <p>Grammar, usage, and paragraphing enhance overall readability and purpose.</p>
<b><i>Word Choice</i></b>	<p>Words are appropriate and well chosen.</p> <p>Writer avoids jargon and sexist language.</p> <p>Used appropriate vocabulary, voice, tone, and level of formality.</p> <p>Excellent word choice.</p> <p>Draws from a strong and complex vocabulary.</p> <p>Chooses words for their precise meanings.</p> <p>Sophisticated word choice and masters accurate use of vocabulary in field.</p>

<p><b><i>Sentences and Paragraphs</i></b></p>	<p>Sentences are mature and parallel.</p> <p>Sentences show a wide variety of patterns.</p> <p>Sentences display consistently strong, varied structure.</p> <p>Varied sentence length and structure invites expressive reading.</p> <p>Uses sophisticated sentences effectively.</p> <p>Structure of the paragraphs is clear and easy to follow.</p>
<p><b><i>Specific Rules</i></b></p>	<p>Writer avoids modifier problems.</p> <p>Spells correctly.</p> <p>Accurate punctuation.</p> <p>Demonstrates understanding of grammatical conventions (sentence fragments, tense).</p> <p>Uses conventional punctuation correctly (comma use, semi-colon, colon, possessive).</p> <p>Acronyms are correctly introduced in parentheses after use of the full term on first reference.</p>
<p><b><i>Specific Parts</i></b></p>	<p>Bulleted, numbered lists, and captions are concise and use parallel structure.</p> <p>Tables and graphics are correctly labeled and well placed.</p> <p>Captions describe the figure succinctly.</p> <p>Equations and formulas are correctly presented (spacing, numbering, etc.).</p> <p>Uses headings and subheadings.</p>

### Bad Examples of “Control of Syntax and Mechanics” Descriptors

Bad examples – do not use these!	Why?
<p>Turned in on time online and in class.</p> <p>Used recycled paper.</p> <p>Printed on both sides of each page.</p> <p>Standard font size (11 or 12) used</p> <p>Used proper margins.</p> <p>Appropriate length for the assignment.</p>	<p>These are not measures of mechanics.</p>
<p>Language flows with rhythm and patterns and is appealing to the ear as well as the eye.</p>	<p>This descriptor is not measurable as written.</p>
<p>The language itself is a strong component of the essay.</p>	<p>The point of comparison is unclear so this descriptor is not measurable as written.</p>
<p>Shows evidence of proof-reading.</p> <p>The submission shows evidence of careful editing and proofreading.</p>	<p>These descriptors have two problems. First, they require the grader to make leaping assumptions. Second, these are not direct measures of “control of syntax and mechanics.”</p>
<p>Correctly followed the format for the research paper (e.g., abstract, Subjects, etc.).</p> <p>Submitted a clear, persuasive, and accurate literature review that was addressed to other scientists in the discipline.</p> <p>Formatted the graphics in the document consistent with civil engineering measurement methods.</p> <p>Attribution is clear and fairly represented.</p> <p>The entire paper follows APA guidelines for publication.</p>	<p>These descriptors fit under the “Genre and Discipline-specific Conventions” criterion because they are unique to only a subset of disciplines. The “Control of Syntax...” criterion is only used for general English rules for writing that would apply across all disciplines.</p>



## **Overall Impact**

**Definition:** A holistic judgment of the piece’s impact or quality. Write these descriptors with a personal reaction in mind.

Many graders use this criterion to offer a holistic (analysis of the whole work) score that can be used to bump a score above or below the passing score. For example, if a student’s work contains some specific errors in “claims” or “credible evidence,” but the whole work holds together well enough to pass, then that fact should be reflected in the “Overall Impact” criterion. Also, if faculty members encounter a written work from a student whose first language is not English, they may want to use this “Overall Impact” criterion to express their desire to overlook substantial spelling and grammar issues. Similarly, if the writing met most of the criteria found in the rubric, but just didn’t hold together well enough to communicate the intended message or had some other fatal flaw, then that should be noted in this criterion.

### **Good Examples of “Overall Impact” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
	<p>Your cover letter is thoughtful and engaging.</p> <p>I was convinced you were qualified for the job.</p> <p>Your submission is easy for me to understand.</p> <p>Your paper exceeds my expectations.</p> <p>Your paper was interesting to read.</p> <p>Your topic is well researched and comprehensive and is developed in an orderly fashion.</p> <p>I found your paper a pleasure to read.</p> <p>I gained some insights from reading your paper.</p> <p>You are showing an aptitude for science.</p> <p>Although you have some areas worth revising, your assignment should pass.</p> <p>I would like to use your submission as an exemplar assignment.</p>

### **Bad Examples of “Overall Impact” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
<p>Do not use this criterion for any specific measures. This criterion is ONLY for providing an overall holistic measure of the entire work.</p>	



## Other Criteria

### Organization

**Definition:** The submission contains a specific and recognizable method for arranging and connecting the components of the work.

### Good Examples of “Organization” Descriptors

Descriptor Categories	Examples
<i>Organization (Holistic)</i>	<p>Paper shows excellent organizational skills.</p> <p>The organization is apparent, coherent, and contributes to the overall goals of the work.</p> <p>There is an overwhelming logic to the order in which it is written.</p> <p>Material is well organized.</p>
<i>Structure</i>	<p>The overall structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow.</p> <p>The essay is organized and well structured (there is a beginning, a body, and a conclusion).</p> <p>The essay exhibits a clear strategy for persuasion and pattern of development (chronological order, spatial order, comparison/contrast, etc.).</p> <p>Most sentences and paragraphs follow old-to-new and general-to-specific principles, contributing to coherence.</p> <p>Information is deftly organized by importance.</p> <p>The ideas are arranged logically to support the purpose or argument.</p> <p>Information is arranged in an order that is logical for the topic, genre, and audience.</p> <p>The text is divided into appropriate sections, identified by structural elements (topic sentences, subheadings, numbers, etc.).</p> <p>The writer works to help the reader follow the logic of the ideas expressed.</p> <p>Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.</p> <p>Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion.</p>
<i>Flow</i>	<p>The author demonstrates a logical “flow” of ideas/arguments.</p> <p>Paragraphs are well defined and flow smoothly.</p> <p>Ideas flow smoothly from one to another and are clearly linked to each other.</p>

	<p>Steps in the process are described in order of execution.</p> <p>Essay is ordered logically from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, idea to idea.</p> <p>Moves deftly (skillfully) from idea to evidence to discussion to conclusion.</p> <p>Creative pacing and topics are related and grouped together in an organized way.</p> <p>Rhythm and flow feel natural.</p> <p>Flow of ideas is fluid and logical.</p> <p>Well organized and smooth flowing.</p> <p>The writing is styled and eloquent, with an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence; sentences.</p> <p>Presents ideas with clear order and assignment-specific logic.</p> <p>Logical connections between ideas are evident.</p>
<b><i>Line of Reasoning</i></b>	<p>The reader can follow the line of reasoning.</p> <p>The reader is effortlessly guided through the writer’s chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.</p> <p>The organizational structure cues the reader as to the document’s genre and function.</p> <p>The overall structure makes it easy for readers to locate information.</p> <p>Ideas are sequenced and logical so that the content is easy to understand.</p>
<b><i>Paragraphs</i></b>	<p>Builds orderly, developed paragraphs.</p> <p>Paragraphs are organized, unified and coherent.</p> <p>Each supporting paragraph has a controlling idea (which may be expressed in a topic sentence).</p> <p>Paragraphing (and/or other elements of text design) shows appropriate divisions of information.</p>
<b><i>Transitions</i></b>	<p>Good Transitions are used between paragraphs and ideas.</p> <p>Transitions help the paper flow smoothly.</p> <p>Sophisticated transitional devices help to develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations.</p> <p>Paragraph transitions are logical and maintain the flow of thought throughout the paper.</p> <p>Transitions and connections among major points are present and</p>

	<p>effective.</p> <p>Uses appropriate headings and sub-headings.</p> <p>Uses appropriate transitions while keeping within topic.</p> <p>Uses mature transitions that keep reader engaged in article.</p>
<b><i>Introductions</i></b>	<p>Introductory paragraph(s) is (are) interesting and appropriate.</p> <p>The introduction provides sufficient background on the topic and previews major points.</p> <p>The introduction identifies the precise topic and provides a statement of the problem to be addressed.</p> <p>The introduction previews the overall organization of the paper.</p> <p>Clear statement explaining topic and why chosen.</p> <p>The author states the question/topic, position, and plan for the essay clearly and strongly, so that the reader is not confused about the topic and the author's position on the topic.</p>
<b><i>Conclusions</i></b>	<p>Conclusion is logical and flows from the body of the paper.</p> <p>Concludes with a sense of focus and meaning.</p> <p>Concluding paragraph is satisfying.</p> <p>The conclusion is logical and flows from the body of the paper.</p> <p>The conclusion reviews the major points.</p> <p>The conclusion, summary, or ending of the document conveys the significance of the information in the context of the objectives for writing.</p> <p>A strong concluding paragraph summarizes and restates the opinion(s) in an interesting way that captures the reader's attention.</p> <p>Conclusion discusses how the research has had an impact on the learner's view of the topic, supported by references.</p> <p>The conclusion contains original thinking, depth, and insight.</p> <p>The conclusion is well crafted and provides a sense of closure.</p> <p>The conclusion leads the reader to further thinking about the central idea.</p> <p>Clear statement of conclusions (what was learned).</p> <p>Creates satisfying ending summarizing main points; investigative report, ends with global question.</p>

**Bad Examples of “Organization” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
Information is very organized and in 2 column or outline format.	What does “very organized” mean. Also, “2 column or outline format” is a prescription for, rather than a measure of the organization.
The organization works with the thesis so that the thesis and the organization contribute to serving the purpose of the essay.	This measure mentions organization, but success is based more on a combination of factors.
There is evidence of extensive planning and organization.	The grader would need to make a leap in inference to respond to this statement.
Students will use a frame to organize their ideas.	I’m sure the teacher that wrote this knows what she meant, but I don’t.

**Accuracy**

*Definition:* Presents material that is correct, accurate, or conforms to a given standard.

**Good Examples of “Accuracy” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Accuracy</i>	All information is included and is correct. No factual errors were made. Complete accuracy is evident. The student has accurately calculated the expense of flooring and wall covering of one room. All the facts and/or concepts in the document are valid. The student blueprint contains accurate blueprint symbols on all design elements. Draws correct conclusions from results.

**Bad Examples of “Accuracy” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
The entire project is turned in early or on the required completion date.	This is not a measure of accuracy.

## **Creativity**

**Definition:** Submissions contain original, new, different, insightful, unique, or novel elements.

Faculty should carefully consider the relative difficulty of using this criterion because “creativity” is a difficult construct to teach, learn, and measure. Creativity may be born of a logical mental process, may surface from a fleeting thought, or may even erupt from an unconscious inspiration. If faculty members insist on using creativity, great care must be taken to fully define and justify the construct and measures used.

### **Good Examples of “Creativity” Descriptors**

<b>Descriptor Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Creativity</i>	<p>Student process and final product reflect a thorough and insightful understanding of the aim of this creative process</p> <p>Process and product are rich in uniqueness/novelty; striking originality in or product</p> <p>The alternatives illustrate extremely diverse but highly useful ways of looking at situations. (Solutions to problems assignment.)</p> <p>The central ideas show original thinking and are well woven throughout the letter.</p>

### **Bad Examples of “Creativity” Descriptors**

<b>Bad examples – do not use these!</b>	<b>Why?</b>
Conscientious, enthusiastic and productive engagement in the creative process, independent of teacher intervention.	Wow, what is really being measured with this descriptor? Conscientiousness? Enthusiasm? Productivity? Ability to work independently? Where is creativity actually being measured?
Full creativity put into work.	This descriptor speaks to the intentions of the student rather than the attributes of the submission – thus requiring a leap in inference.



**Appendix A: Written Communications Starting Point – A Rubric Template**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Well Below Expectations 1</b>	<b>Below Expectations 2</b>	<b>Meets Expectations 3</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations 4</b>
<b>Context and Purpose for Writing</b> <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s)</i>				
<b>Content Development</b> <i>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject, conveying the writer’s understanding, and shaping the whole work.</i>				
<b>Genre and Discipline-Specific Conventions</b> <i>Uses formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.</i>				
<b>Claims</b> <i>Puts forth a claim, thesis or argument.</i>				
<b>Credible Evidence</b> <i>Supports claims.</i>				
<b>Analysis</b> <i>Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.</i>				
<b>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</b> <i>Follows the conventions of standard edited English or other language suitable to the assignment.</i>				
<b>Overall Impact</b> <i>A holistic judgment of the piece’s impact or quality.</i>				
<b>Other Criterion added by Department</b>				



### Appendix B: Examples of Completed Descriptor Rows

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Well Below Expectations 1</b>	<b>Below Expectations 2</b>	<b>Meets Expectations 3</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations 4</b>
<b><i>Context and Purpose for Writing</i></b> <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s)</i>	The student did NOT respond to the demands of the writing situation.	The student attempted to respond to some the demands of the writing situation.	The student adequately responds to the demands of the writing situation.	The student is highly responsive to the demands of the writing situation.
<b><i>Content Development</i></b> <i>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate an excellent grasp of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.</i>	Supporting, details are not included or are confusing.	Some supporting, details are included but do not go beyond common knowledge or the obvious and leave the reader with questions.	Supporting, details give the reader some information needed to help the reader understand the content.	Supporting, details give the reader important information that fully illustrates the content with material the reader could not personally bring to the text.
<b><i>Genre and Discipline-Specific Conventions</i></b> <i>Uses formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.</i>	The methods section contains an incomplete list of the steps for performing the study.	The methods section contains the steps for completing the study but does not provide enough detail to help the reader understand and/or replicate them.	The methods section contains all of the steps performed taken to complete the study.	The methods section is detailed enough to allow the reader to replicate the study.
<b><i>Claims</i></b> <i>Puts forth a claim, thesis or argument.</i>	The author does not present a claim or argument.	The author does implies a claim or argument which leaves the reader unsure of the writer's position or point of view.	The author goes beyond simply stating facts, figures, and details by formulating claims and disclosing his/her point of view.	The author presents and elaborates a claim or argument clearly enough to allow the reader to understand the writer's position or point of view.
<b><i>Credible Evidence</i></b> <i>Supports claims.</i>	The student does not include evidence for his/her claims.	The student provides minimal but insufficient evidence of his/her claims.	The student supports his/her claims with evidence.	The student consistently supports all claims with precise and relevant evidence.
<b><i>Analysis</i></b> <i>Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.</i>	The student includes irrelevant points of comparison resulting in a confusing or incorrect analysis of the similarities and differences.	The student includes basic or obvious points of comparison resulting in an incomplete analysis of the similarities and differences.	The student includes meaningful points of comparison resulting in an informative analysis of the similarities and differences.	The student includes multiple points of comparison resulting in a compelling analysis of the similarities and differences.
<b><i>Control of Syntax and</i></b>	The document does	The student attempts	The student	The student adheres

<b><i>Mechanics</i></b> <i>Follows the conventions of standard edited English or other language suitable to the assignment.</i>	not the conventions of English writing and presents several errors that make the work difficult to read.	to follow the conventions of English writing but presents multiple distracting errors.	generally follows the conventions of English writing but may have a few noticeable errors.	to the conventions of English writing well enough that the reader is not distracted by any errors.
<b><i>Overall Impact</i></b> <i>A holistic judgment of the piece's impact or quality.</i>	Your document needs major revision and/or rewrite before resubmission.	Your document has a few significant challenges (see other parts of this rubric) that require revision.	Although you have some parts of your document that are worth revising, your assignment passes.	Your document was very well done and could be placed as-is into your portfolio
<b>Other Criterion added by Department</b>				
<b><i>Organization</i></b> <i>A specific and recognizable method for arranging and connecting the components of the work.</i>	The ideas are presented randomly and/or are not logically linked to each other thus making it almost impossible for the reader to follow.	The ideas are present within the paper but are not connected to each other in a logical way thus making it difficult for the reader to follow.	The ideas are arranged logically and support each other making it possible for the reader to follow.	The ideas flow smoothly from one to another and are clearly linked to each other making it very easy for the reader to follow.

## Appendix C: Selected References

Where possible, I have included links to these documents. All links were tested before publishing this paper. If a link is dead, please contact me at my SLCC e-mail address.

**Andrade, H. G. (2000). Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. *Educational Leadership*. 57(5), 13-18. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from [http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/PDFS/coho103/using\\_rubrics.pdf](http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/PDFS/coho103/using_rubrics.pdf) {Journal Article}**

The author describes what rubrics are, what they are good for, and points out that rubrics need to be very clear to all stakeholders to be effective. She argues that students could be involved with building the rubrics or at least be included in a classroom discussion about the rubric before using it. Of particular note is the author's contention that rubrics can be a strong component of learning and assessment. This contention is supported in other literature in that students who receive rubrics tend to do better on assignments and teachers who pay the price to build rubrics seem to do a better job of conceptualizing what they expect from their students.

The audience for this article is educators, teachers, and academic leaders – that is, practitioners who might need to use rubrics in their classrooms. The article offers a good basic—albeit brief—introduction to rubrics.

Examples – reports, general writing, oral presentation.

**Andrade, H. G. (2005). Teaching with rubrics: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *College Teaching*, 53(1), 27-30. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=JRNZ1JHXSTZgFmcqNmOPGTVHdmv1cT2NQO0vnYFjKHww42gLNgZ2!1340788512?docId=5008277924> {Journal Article}**

Like the previous article, Andrade does a good job of covering what rubrics are, what they are good for, and how you might use them. But in this article, she spends more time discussing validity, reliability, and fairness.

The audience in this article is higher education teachers. She admits that this article is based on reflections about her use of rubrics in the classroom. Heidi does a better job (than in her previous articles) of outlining exactly what makes for good (and bad) rubrics – which gives the reader a fuller view of rubrics than her two previous articles. She also does a better job of making a case for aligning rubrics to standards.

Examples – reports, general writing, oral presentation.

**Arter, J., & McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. {Book}**

This work is one of the most detailed documents available on building rubrics. The authors “show how to use clear criteria and rubrics to make fair, consistent judgments and how rubrics can improve student work.” I won't go into detail reviewing this lengthy book here. Suffice it to say this is one of the better “textbooks” on rubrics and rubric development.

The audience for this text is any faculty member interested in building good scoring rubrics.

Rubric Examples: Several – however I caution the reader that many exhibit fundamental errors.

**Bolton, F. C. (2006). Rubrics and adult learners: Andragogy and assessment. *Assessment Update*, 18(3), 5-6. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from [http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Bolton\\_2006\\_Rubrics-and-Adult-Learners\\_Andragogy-and-Assessment.pdf](http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Bolton_2006_Rubrics-and-Adult-Learners_Andragogy-and-Assessment.pdf) {Journal Article}**

This article contains the results of a self-report survey of adult learners who used rubrics that had been handed out when the assignments were made. Students reported that they liked using the rubrics because they clarified expectations and helped them develop their assignments. This article is in the review because it focuses on adult learners. This article provides some evidence that adults see some similar benefits to using rubrics during the learning process.

The audience for this document could be anyone interested in rubrics.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Clauser, B. E. (2000). Recurrent issues and recent advances in scoring performance assessments. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 24(4), 310-324. {Journal Article}**

The author does a good job of providing another way of looking at developing rubrics. His article is really about the broader issue of scoring performance assessments, but the concepts apply to rubric development. He organized his article around four questions:

- 1) What aspects are being scored?
- 2) What standards determine the score?
- 3) How are standards developed?
- 4) How are standards applied?

The authors are clearly writing to measurement experts rather than to teachers. A novice in rubric development may not get much out of this article.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Condon, W., & Kelly-Riley, D. (2004). Assessing and teaching what we value: The relationship between college-level writing and critical thinking abilities. *Assessing Writing*, 9(2004), 56-75. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from [http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Condon\\_2004\\_Assessing-and-Teaching.pdf](http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Condon_2004_Assessing-and-Teaching.pdf) {Journal Article}**

The authors do an excellent job of describing the difficulties of measuring the two nebulous and interconnected constructs of critical thinking and writing. They point out that a major problem we face is the lack of agreement about what either construct really means. They also point to a major disconnect in common practice. They found that high scores in writing were negatively correlated to scores in critical thinking. The reason seems to be in how each of these constructs are defined and measured. The writing scores tended to value standard writing abilities based on common prompts. These sorts of measures and these sorts of tests make it nearly impossible for the writer to use or exhibit critical thinking.

The audience for this article is higher education educators and academic leaders. I suspect however that this was also aimed at accreditation evaluators. Regardless, this is one of the most useful articles I have reviewed.

Rubric Examples: Not a rubric per se, rather a framework for building a critical thinking rubric.

**Dunbar, N. E., Brooks, C. F., & Kubicka-Miller, T. (2006). Oral communication skills in higher education: Using a performance-based evaluation rubric to assess communication skills. *Innovative Higher Education*, 31(2), 115-128. {Journal Article}**

The study the authors reported in this article is somewhat useful in that it covered verbal communications. Relatively few rubric-related articles cover this skill. The authors adapted a rubric from one used by the National Communication Association to evaluate student performance in general public-speaking courses. I found the article quite useful because they make a case for several issues related to rubric use. Some of their points seemed to be for the benefit of accreditation team readers. For example, they point to the need for data to provide utility for “closing the loop” on improvement in student learning and instructional effectiveness at the classroom, program, and institutional levels in the body and then again in the discussion. While true in the larger arena of educational improvement and accreditation, building an instrument that addresses multiple levels of accountability should not be a primary goal when designing and building rubrics. They also highlight their use of external standards to ensure that “good” on their rubrics fit professional level work. This is excellent practice. They highlighted the two-edged sword related to the number of scoring points across the rubric table. Fewer points (they used a three-point scale) made grading easier and improved inter-rater reliability – but reduced the precision of feedback for instruction. Finally, they also brought up the need for significant grader training.

The audience for this paper is unclear. While it seems to have been written for higher education practitioners, it had a significant political undertone.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Gorin, J. S. (2006). Test design with cognition in mind. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 25(4), 21–35. {Journal Article}**

The author does a good job of outlining the need for meaningful cognitive models if we want to build better ways to teach and test thinking “cognitive activity.” The key ingredient is to find ways to deconstruct thinking into component parts. The author outlines how difficulty plays a critical role in how the construct is manifested in life, and therefore in learning and assessment. The audience for this document is well beyond the average practitioner. It seemed to be aimed at those with a good background in educational and measurement theory.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Halonen, J.S., Bosack, T., Clay, S., McCarthy, M., Dunn, D. S., Hill, G. W., IV, et al. (2003). A rubric for learning, teaching, and assessing scientific inquiry in psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*, 30(3), 196–208. {Journal Article}**

The authors link accountability pressures to building a rubric. They were pressed by external forces to build assessments to cover the standards for their discipline. The resulting rubric covers broad skills that reflect their standards:

- Description
- Conceptualization
- Problem Solving
- Ethical Reasoning
- Scientific Values
- Communication
- Collaboration

- Self Assessment

The article is quite good for a couple of reasons. First, it contains an excellent and very detailed set of rubrics for the previously listed skills. Second, it details very specific benefits and shortcomings of using rubrics.

The audience for this article is meant to be science teachers. However, I believe it would be a good article for any teacher who has some background in curriculum development and rubrics.

Rubric Examples: General Rubric for several skills – see bullet list above.

**Herman, J. L., Aschbacher, P. R., & Winters, L. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 (Stock Number 611-92140). Retrieved May 11, 2011 from**

**<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED352389.pdf> {Book}**

The authors provide a good look into their thinking as they developed a rubric. Important concepts included such things as how criteria ought to come about, how to brainstorm and define the criteria, and then how to use the criteria in scoring and grading. They are quite specific throughout. They even outline what constitutes good criteria (e.g., should communicate to all stakeholders, help the educational process, support reliable grading, focus on valid issues, etc.). They went into greater detail on stakeholders than most of the other authors I've read. For example, they have complete (separate) sections discussing how rubrics should connect with instructional developers, parents, and students.

The audience for this article is anyone who actually has to build criteria for a rubric. As such, I found this a very useful article.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Jonassen, D. H. (1997). Instructional design models for well-structured and ill-structured problem-solving learning outcomes. *Educational Technology: Research and Development*, 45(1), 65–94. Retrieved May 11, 2011, from**

**[http://kimhuett.wikispaces.com/file/view/jonassen\\_problem\\_solving\\_id\\_models.pdf](http://kimhuett.wikispaces.com/file/view/jonassen_problem_solving_id_models.pdf) {Journal Article}**

This was a very difficult article to read. It was clearly written to well-informed instructional designers. It used high-level jargon (e.g., *amplitive* skills) and it assumed a significant background in educational theory. I remember some of what they discussed from my review of educational theory literature. What I did find useful was how the author broke out broad constructs like problem solving into various sorts of elements (e.g., concepts, rules, mental models, applying arguments, and inferencing). The point he makes is that any broad construct must be defined before it can be used.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Jonsson, A., & Svingby, G. (2007). The use of scoring rubrics: Reliability, validity and educational consequences. *Educational Research Review*, 2(2), 130-144. Retrieved May 11, 2011, from <http://www.uncw.edu/cas/documents/JonssonandSvingby2007.pdf> {Journal Article}**

This article is one of the most useful I've found because it reviews 75 other research studies that each offer evidence for the various benefits of using rubrics including:

1. “The reliable scoring of performance assessments can be enhanced by the use of rubrics, especially if they are analytic, topic-specific, and complemented with exemplars and/or rater training.
2. Rubrics do not facilitate valid judgment of performance assessments per se.
3. Rubrics seem to have the potential of promoting learning and/or improve constructivist instruction. The main reason for this potential lies in the fact that rubrics make expectations and criteria explicit, which also facilitates feedback and self assessment” (p. 130).

The article is written above the practitioner level. It is aimed more at instructional designers and those who are experienced with rubrics and education. However, I found this to be a critical article for me because it added evidence to some key points about rubric development.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Landis, M., Swain, K. D., Friehe, M. J., & Coufal, K. L. (2007). Evaluating critical thinking in class and online: Comparison of the Newman method and the Facione rubric. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 28(3), 135-143. Retrieved April 26, 2011, from <http://cdq.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/28/3/135> {Journal Article}**

The authors compare two very different types of rubrics. Although both rubrics measure a similar conception of critical thinking, the Facione method is fairly general and holistic. The Newman rubric is extremely detailed and specific. Also, the Facione rubric uses a four point scale whereas the Newman uses positive and negative indicators that look very much like traditional text content analysis tabulation. The study found that the Newman rubric was too detailed, too complex in actual use, and took an inordinate amount of time to complete. On the other hand, the Facione rubric turned out to be too general and holistic to provide meaningful feedback. The point to the whole document is that a good rubric has to balance between overly analytic and detailed criteria and holistic criteria.

The audience for this article is practitioners.

Rubric Examples: Newman Team Indicators of Crucial (Critical) Thinking.

**Lunsford, E., & Melear, C. T. (2004). Using scoring rubrics to evaluate inquiry. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 34(1), 34-38. Retrieved April 26, 2011, from [http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Lunsford-Melear\\_2004\\_Using-Rubrics-to-Evalute-Inquiry.pdf](http://uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/files/staff/articles/rubrics/Lunsford-Melear_2004_Using-Rubrics-to-Evalute-Inquiry.pdf) {Journal Article}**

The authors set out to show a good method for building a scoring rubric for measuring inquiry. They present their three step method and show what they built. Unfortunately, their example rubrics fail to do that. Instead, most of the rubric is focused on neatness, accuracy, position of the title, and other formatting-related measures. Thus, this would be a great *non-example* for teaching others what *not to do*.

The audience for this article is supposed to be other science teachers. But because of the very poor rubric, I would only suggest that those charged with finding bad examples for training others in rubric development seriously look at this article.

Rubric Examples: Research Report, Portfolio, Concept Map.

**Mabry, L. (1999). Writing to the rubric: Lingering effects of traditional standardized testing on direct writing assessment. Phi Delta Kappan, 80(9), 673-79. {Journal Article}**

When I first saw this article, I thought it might be another piece that simply argued against measurement and standardization (see Kohn, 2006). Instead, the author does a good job of outlining what can go wrong with rubrics. He successfully argues that over-standardization is just as bad as not having defined criteria because it fosters formulaic writing. He points out that using good standards as a starting point is fine – as long as developers take care to operationalize the standards with that they value in good writing. He points out that careful consideration about what students should know and be able to do should be considered a positive rather than a negative. The author does a good job of showing the relationship between validity and reliability. If rubrics are too standardized and too detailed, they may lack validity. The job then is to balance the needs careful selection and definition of the criteria. It provides not only cautionary comments about bad rubrics, but offers solutions for building good ones. The downside of this piece is the lack of citation of the research in defense of many of her points.

The author is clearly writing to teachers.

Rubric Examples: None.

**Quellmalz, E. S. (1991). Developing criteria for performance assessments: The missing link. Applied Measurement In Education, 4(4), 319-331. {Journal Article}**

The author outlines six rules for building good rubrics. But more importantly, he outlines the reasoning behind each rule and some examples.

Although the reading level seems to be slightly above practitioners, I think the content makes this a must read. This is one of the best articles available on rubric development. It outlines some key aspects of a good rubric. The criteria in this article are similar to Samuel Messick's chapter on validity (see: Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In R.L. Linn (Ed.), Educational measurement (3rd ed., pp. 13-103). New York: Macmillan).

Rubric Examples: None.

**Relearning by Design, Inc. (2000). Rubric sampler. Ewing, NJ: Author. Retrieved May 16, 2011 from [http://research.mathmeister.com/Documents/rubric\\_sampler.pdf](http://research.mathmeister.com/Documents/rubric_sampler.pdf) {Online Article}**

This article goes into deep detail about rubrics and exactly how to build them. I especially liked the discussion about the thinking behind each step and what a good outcome looked like. The article also outlines very specific rules for general and technical rules for good rubrics.

The audience is any educator interested in building a rubric. This article was very readable and outlined in very specific ways exactly how to build a great rubric.

Rubric Examples: Several. However the reader should be aware that many of the rubrics are non-examples that they use to illustrate rubric errors. Narrative Scoring Guide, Advanced Placement U.S. History Essay, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Inquiry: Oral Presentation; Open-ended Math Problems, Argumentative Composition, High School History Senior Essay, Virginia Literacy Passport, Socratic Seminar Performance Assessment, Mathematics (Problem Solving, Reasoning, Effectiveness of Work, Accuracy of Written Work, Quality of Presentation, Clarity); New York Writing Handbook, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Project, Spanish Proficiencies, Upper Arlington Development Reading Scale, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Reading, UK Writing Rubric, NAEP Mathematics Proficiency.

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**Rhodes, T. L. (2010). *Assessing outcomes and improving achievement: Tips and tools for using rubrics*. Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington: D.C. The book is not available online. The rubrics and rubric descriptions were retrieved June 2, 2011 from <http://www.aacu.org/resources/faculty/index.cfm> {Book}**

This brief book offers a detailed a multi-year (and ongoing) effort to build 15 rubrics that cover most of the key enduring skills that educators value. I will offer an extended review (below) because we are using the AAC&U rubrics as our starting point for measuring our College Wide Student Learning Outcomes.

The “VALUE” rubrics themselves were conceived as broad institution-level descriptions of performances (see p. 2). The rubrics have an interesting metric. The lowest end of each scale [a score of “1”] represents entry level performance for freshmen and but the top end reflects the most complex performances rather than a senior level performance (p. 3). The AAC&U cautions us not to read too much into the scales. The four-point scales don’t correspond to years in college nor do the entry-level scores represent college readiness (page 3). The resulting AAC&U VALUE rubrics “reflect faculty shared expectations for essential learning across the nation regardless of type of institution, mission, size, or location” (p. 21).

The authors suggest that rubrics can become a vehicle for faculty members from across a campus to help them dig into the details of what they teach, what they value, and how they can articulate all of this in ways that will help the educational process. The language about the benefits of using rubrics is more mature and definitive in this work because the author speaks from experience. Having worked with literally hundreds of educators from across the country, and then testing the use of the rubrics with hundreds more puts the author in a position of strength. Thus, the benefits the author lists include:

1. Rubrics can be built on a foundation of what is already happening in the classroom. The authors argue (successfully in my opinion) that given the right tools, it is possible to make minor adjustments to what faculty members are already doing in their classrooms to come up with tools that institutions can use for addressing large-scale assessment. The key ingredient in their minds (and again I agree) are the rubrics themselves (pp. 3-5).
2. Developing rubrics strengthens faculty and courses. Faculty members report that working on the rubrics helped them articulate what they valued. Getting down to the nitty-gritty of what they mean when they say things like “I want students to learn to think critically” is a vital exercise. Having this sort of articulation was “empowering and enlightening” (p. 6). Also, having the final definitions forms a precise articulation of what should be learned (p. 19) and forms a compact between faculty and student in that the rubrics define “what we promise to teach” (p. 10). Evidently the vast majority of faculty members who worked on the rubrics reported that their participation had positively affected “their teaching and scholarship” (p. 13). Finally, using rubrics has helped institutions build “roadmaps” for “shared learning across the curriculum” (p. 19).
3. Developing rubrics yields a better and shared understanding of enduring skills such as critical thinking, analysis, good written communication, etc.
4. Building these rubrics and implementing them at a national level may improve our chances of avoiding “inappropriate assessment techniques foisted upon [us] (p. 6). That is, putting the focus on these sorts of things helps faculty move beyond simple knowledge exams.
5. Carefully constructed rubrics can improve student understanding and learning – especially for ESL and other at-risk students. The rubrics create a pathway for clarifying

the goals of an assignment, course, etc. When used correctly, rubrics can aid formative assessment “for learning” and summative assessment “of learning” (p. 10). Rubrics make it possible for students to self-assess their progress toward their goals and therefore take more control of their own education.

In chapter three the authors summarize the multi-year process of developing their rubrics. I found it interesting that they admitted they had false starts and had to learn the best ways to do this. Also in chapter four, the authors begin by saying that few faculty have any experience with building or using rubrics (p. 15). This is interesting because my review of the rubric development literature suggests that there is relatively little in the way of good training in actual rubric development out there. The authors show that they had to come up with the best ways to build their rubrics. But the chapter holds together nicely as a guide because it fully summarizes what they did, how, and why. With that preamble here are the steps they used:

- Research other rubrics to get ideas.
- Use other sources for difficult constructs where very few examples of good rubrics exist.
- Use a faculty committee of 5-10 to build the rubric.
- Use templates to limit the work to a certain type and size of rubric.
- Force the issue by having the academics stop talking and start putting ideas down on paper early in the process.
- Field test the rubrics by using (not just reviewing) the draft rubrics.

In chapter five the authors present a protocol for using the rubrics in their own teaching. I won't repeat it here but I will mention some highlights that I didn't find in other authors' works. First, maintaining a glossary of terms used in the rubric would help grading. I have used this same methodology with my graders (900 of them from across the country) when I was at another college. Second, the protocol stresses how faculty can remain true to the intent of the rubric. The audience for this book is just about any teacher who is interested in using rubrics in their classrooms or across their institutions. The text is very readable and straightforward. (Although chapter two shows a level of crafting by a writing instructor who uses phrases like “a rubric is a series of choices...unfortunately, like a phone booth, it can be stuffed with only so many bodies” (p. 9). Note that this is not a problem; I actually found her expressive (perhaps even lyrical) writing about a technical subject refreshing. The concepts presented in this book are consistent with other authors comments on the value of rubrics to the educational process (see most of the other books and articles in this section of my bibliography).

One of the most valuable things in the book is the lengthy appendix that contains each of the fifteen VALUE rubrics. I highly recommend this book to any teacher who needs to build or use rubrics in their classroom.

**Stutzman, R. Y., & Race, K. H. (2004). EMRF: Everyday rubric grading. *Mathematics Teacher*, 97(1), 34-40. Retrieved April 26, 2011, from <http://pages.central.edu/emp/weberw/Fall2006/Educ451/EMRFRubric.pdf> {Journal Article}**

The authors offer a very straightforward description of a classroom need and their process for developing a scoring rubric to address their need. They suggest that their methodology gives teachers a better understanding of what they expect of their students and gives them a way to communicate that to their students. In an afterthought they mention that using the rubric improved grading and reduced grading time.

The audience for this article is teachers. The discussion the authors provide is quite good because it outlines a solid process for defining what student should know and be able to do in mathematics.

Rubric Examples: A very interesting graphic formatted rubric.

**Tierney, R., & Simon, M. (2004). What's still wrong with rubrics: Focusing on the consistency of performance criteria across scale levels. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 9(2), [Electronic Document]. Retrieved April 26, 2011, from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=2> {Journal Article}**

This article covers exactly what the title implies. The authors successfully argue that inconsistency in rubrics is a common error that must be overcome to make the rubrics more useful and fair. They provide a very detailed description of what good/bad looks like and how to fix or avoid making errors. They do an excellent job of describing scales (rows on a table) that measure just one thing. They also provide a good list of potential attributes for good rubrics:

- Breadth
- Accuracy
- Relevance
- Clarity
- Importance
- Impact

The audience for this article is just about any teacher. However, the reader should note that the authors focus heavily on building parallel wording across each row (for each criterion) rather than focusing on defining degrees of the attribute on each row. Also, they focus on relatively abstract attributes rather than pressing for concrete ones. In fairness, perhaps this is a place for novice rubric developers to begin? I highly recommend this article to anyone learning to write rubrics.

Rubric Examples: Metarubric and many non-examples with suggested corrections.