**January 2020**

*Please share with your faculty:*

**The importance of revising and refining rubrics**

Rubrics serve important functions in the student learning assessment process. They not only help support the validity and reliability of grading students’ work, but also help students’ and educators reflect upon areas of strength and weakness in both student learning and instruction. It is important, however, to keep in mind that rubrics are not set in stone. In fact, just like with other aspects of the assessment process (e.g., student learning goals and objectives, instructional methodologies, and assessments) that should be periodically reviewed and revised when needed, so should rubrics. For example, after reading a sample of students’ work, you may realize that you need to revise your initial descriptions of the various performance levels for criteria on a given assignment. In addition, it is important to review rubrics to ensure that the performance descriptions for ratings such as excellent, satisfactory and poor are written using specific, measurable, and consistent language. When vague words like “sometimes”, or “often” are used to describe performance levels this can create ambiguity and inconsistency in the grading process. Thus, it is important to operationally define such terms on the rubric. In addition, it is also important that the grading scales do not have too many values or too few values because this can also create subjectivity in grading. More specifically, a scale that has too few values, such as a pass/fail scale, is often too general to provide specific information about students’ performance. A scale with too many values (e.g., a scale with five or more values) can make it hard to distinguish between different performance levels. In sum, revising and refining rubrics is important for ensuring that they are effective. Some ways that can help you reflect upon draft rubrics and identify areas in need of improvement include: grading examples of students’ work with draft rubrics; sharing draft rubrics with colleagues; and going over rubrics with students, and asking them to identify aspects that are ambiguous.

**Check out!** Advantage and disadvantages of rubrics (2018). *The Graide Network.* Retrieved December 21, 2019 from <https://www.thegraidenetwork.com/blog-all/2018/8/1/rubrics-friend-or-foe>

**Please share examples** of how your program as revised and refined rubrics over time, and I will feature those examples on [YU’s Learning Assessment Website](http://yu.edu/provost/assessment/).

**Important reminder:** Please remember to submit to me an end-of-semester Assessment Activity Report by **January 17**. Please contact me if you need any assistance with completing your report.