



Cool Tools

Using Rubrics in Blackboard

A rubric is defined by Heidi Goodrich Andrade as “a one–or two–page document that describes varying levels of quality, from excellent to poor, for a specific assignment. It is usually used with a relatively complex assignment, such as a long-term project, an essay, or a research paper. Its purposes are to give students informative feedback about their works in progress and to give detailed evaluations of their final products.”¹ Using rubrics in your class are a wonderful idea because they set the parameters of your expectations and also help to justify the grade in the minds of your students. Because our new core curriculum assessments use institutional rubrics, I thought I would dedicate this edition of Cool Tools to creating and using rubrics in Blackboard.

In Blackboard rubrics are made up of rows and columns. The rows represent the various benchmarks of an assignment. The columns correspond to the performance level of the benchmarks. Each cell in the rubric has space for a description for defining each level of performance and its corresponding point value.

To create a rubric, please follow the following instructions:

1. Access **Course Tools** and select **Rubrics**.
2. On the **Rubrics** page, click **Create Rubric**.
3. Type a **Name** for the rubric. I suggest you use a meaningful one so it will be easy to find later.
4. Edit the rubric grid so it corresponds to the type of feedback and scoring desired:
 - A. Click **Add Row** to add a new criterion at the bottom of the grid.
 - B. Click **Add Column** to add a new level of achievement to the grid.
 - C. Select a **Rubric Type** from the drop-down list:
 - **No Points** (feedback only)
 - **Points** (single point value for each Level of Achievement)
 - **Point Range** (range of values for each Level of Achievement)
 - **Percent** (flexible depending on each assessment's possible points)

¹ Andrade, Heidi Goodrich. "Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning." *Educational Leadership* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) 57, no. 5 (February 2000): 13-18.

- D. Click **Edit** from the contextual menu of the labels identifying rows and columns to change their names.
 - E. Type a point or percentage value for each row.
 - F. Type a description defining the criteria and the associated level of achievement.
 - G. Click **Submit** to finish editing the rubric.
6. Click **Submit** when finished designing the rubric.

Please note that a rubric's rows and columns can be reordered by clicking the reordering icon. Also note that once a rubric has been used for grading, it cannot be edited.

Once you create a rubric, it must be "associated" with an assignment in order to use it. To do this, associated rubrics are visible under the grading and rubrics settings for assignments, essay, short answer, and file response test questions, blogs, journals, wikis and discussion board. To associate a rubric during the editing or creation process, point to **Add Rubric** and choose to either add an existing rubric or create a new rubric from scratch. Blackboard also gives an instructor many options on how rubric information is shared with his or her students. I highly suggest that you select **Show Rubric to Students** and also choose **Yes (With Rubric Scores)**. This will allow students to view the rubric when the item is made available, including the point or percentage values you set-up when you created the rubric. These options will help your students understand your expectations before they begin work on the assignment.

Rubrics also help to make the grading process easier. To use a rubric when grading access the assignment you wish to grade which has an associated rubric and follow the following steps:

1. Click **View Rubric** to review or begin grading with the associated rubric.
2. In **Grid View**, click a cell to apply that point value to the grade. If a rubric with point ranges has been used, select the desired value from the drop-down list. To change the selection, click another cell in the same row. Optionally, type **Feedback** to the student in the text box that appears when a cell is selected.
3. Optionally, click **List View** to switch displays, and select a radio button for each criterion to apply that point value to the grade. Optionally, select the boxes to **Show Descriptions** for criteria and to **Show Feedback** text boxes.
4. When grading is complete, click **Exit** to leave the rubric without saving any selections, or **Save** to save the score and feedback and return to the attempt. Click **Save and Next** to use another associated rubric for evaluation another student's work.

Rubrics are wonderful tools because they communicate instructor expectations to students and speed up the grading process. I highly suggest that you use rubrics in your class even if it is a face-to-face one for those two reasons.

If you have any questions on these or any other of Blackboard's cool tools, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Tom McKinney at extension 4522.