

# Building Better Rubrics (BBR) Module 1: Purpose and Design

**An AAC Professional Learning Module  
to accompany the AAC Publication**

# BBR Professional Learning Modules at a Glance

• Support student learning • Enhance classroom assessment practices • Evaluate student performance • Provide specific feedback

*Better*  
**Building Rubrics**

Describe levels of quality

Sherry Bennett, Anne Mulgrew

An AAC Publication

Provide specific feedback

• Support consistency of scoring • Provide a springboard for conversation • Articulate and clarify criteria •

**What kind of brick is a rubric?**

**Module 1: Purpose & Design**

**The What, When, Why and How of Rubrics**

**Recognizing Quality Rubrics**

**Module 2: Not all Rubrics are Created Equal!**

**Module 3: Shortcuts for Successful Rubrics**

**Tools for Novices and Pros**

**Module 4: Supporting Student Learning**

**Lingering Thoughts**

# BBR Professional Learning Modules at a Glance



Module 1: Purpose & Design

Describe levels of quality

Support student learning • Enhance classroom assessment practices • Evaluate student performance • Provide specific feedback

*Better*  
**Building Rubrics**

Sherry Bennett, Anne Mulgrew

An AAC Publication

Support consistency of scoring • Provide a springboard for conversation • Articulate and clarify criteria

Provide specific feedback

**What kind of brick is a rubric?**

**The What, When, Why and How of Rubrics**

**Recognizing Quality Rubrics**

**Tools for Novices and Pros**

**Lingering Thoughts**

pp. 2-5

# Lots to Talk about Here...

BBR pp. 2-5

**What** is a rubric?

**When** should I use a rubric?

**Why** should I use a rubric?

**How** should rubrics be used?

# A Rubric Is...

BBR pp. 2-3

- a tool to evaluate student performance
- consists of
  - criteria
  - fixed measurement scale
  - detailed descriptions of student performance

# A Rubric Is...

BBR pp. 2-3

- a tool to evaluate student performance
- consists of
  - criteria
  - fixed measurement scale
  - detailed descriptions of student performance

**The above three characteristics are *essential* in order for rubrics to fulfil their intended purposes:**

1. help *students* become more thoughtful judges of their own work
2. help *teachers* make consistent judgments about the quality of student performance

# 'Rubrics' ...and Not!

Remember... a rubric consists of:

- criteria
- fixed measurement scale
- detailed description of student performance

## Samples

**Samples for Rubrics... and Not!**  
 Not every tool that is labeled a rubric is actually a rubric! Use the accompanying organizer to jot your observations about each of the tools, based on the AAC definition of a rubric (see *Building Better Rubrics* p. 2).

| Paragraph 'Rubric' – Orange Sample   | Paragraph 'Rubric' – Blue Sample  |
|--|---|
| 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• topic sentence relates to the topic</li> <li>• all supporting ideas relate to the topic</li> <li>• uses 4 or more supporting ideas</li> <li>• concluding sentence is creative</li> <li>• makes the paragraph interesting for the reader</li> </ul>                            | Name /1<br>Title /1<br>Indent /1<br>Topic Sentence /2<br>Supporting Ideas /3<br>Concluding Sentence /2<br>Handwriting /2<br>Neatness /2<br>Effort /1<br>Total /15 |
| 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all words are spelled correctly</li> <li>• topic sentence relates to the topic</li> <li>• all supporting ideas relate to the topic</li> <li>• has 3 supporting ideas</li> <li>• concluding sentence restates the topic sentence</li> <li>• up to 3 spelling errors</li> </ul> | Paragraph 'Rubric' – Pink Sample<br>Content /10<br>Organization /10<br>Effort /5<br>Total /25<br>NOTE: Marks are also awarded for neatness and creativity.        |
| 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• topic sentence introduces new information</li> <li>• some supporting ideas relate to the topic</li> <li>• concluding sentence is ordinary and not very interesting</li> <li>• up to 5 spelling errors</li> </ul>  | Paragraph 'Rubric' – Green Sample<br>Content 4 3 2 1<br>Organization 4 3 2 1<br>Vocabulary 4 3 2 1<br>Sentences 4 3 2 1<br>Conventions 4 3 2 1<br>TOTAL /20       |
| 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no topic sentence</li> <li>• supporting ideas are not very well connected to the topic</li> <li>• no concluding sentence</li> <li>• more than 5 spelling errors</li> <li>• paragraph is hard to understand</li> </ul>   |   |

| Paragraph 'Rubric' – Yellow Sample   |  |  |  |  |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|---------|-----------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Level</th> <th>Excellent</th> <th>Proficient</th> <th>Adequate</th> <th>Limited</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Criteria</b></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Creates topic and concluding sentences</b> (4.3.2)</td> <td>Creates compelling topic and concluding sentences.</td> <td>Creates interesting topic and concluding sentences.</td> <td>Creates straightforward topic and concluding sentences.</td> <td>Creates ineffective topic and concluding sentences.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Organizes supporting details</b> (3.3.2, 4.3.1)</td> <td>Organizes pertinent supporting details in a skillful manner.</td> <td>Organizes relevant supporting details in a logical manner.</td> <td>Organizes basic supporting details in a simplistic manner.</td> <td>Little or no attention given to organization; supporting details are unrelated to topic.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Selects vocabulary and varies sentence format</b> (4.1.9)</td> <td>Selects vivid vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in a purposeful manner.</td> <td>Selects interesting vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an effective manner.</td> <td>Selects routine vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an appropriate manner.</td> <td>Selects weak vocabulary. Little or no attempt is made to vary sentence format.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Level  | Excellent  | Proficient   | Adequate   | Limited | <b>Criteria</b> |  |  |  |  | <b>Creates topic and concluding sentences</b> (4.3.2) | Creates compelling topic and concluding sentences. | Creates interesting topic and concluding sentences. | Creates straightforward topic and concluding sentences. | Creates ineffective topic and concluding sentences. | <b>Organizes supporting details</b> (3.3.2, 4.3.1) | Organizes pertinent supporting details in a skillful manner. | Organizes relevant supporting details in a logical manner. | Organizes basic supporting details in a simplistic manner. | Little or no attention given to organization; supporting details are unrelated to topic. | <b>Selects vocabulary and varies sentence format</b> (4.1.9) | Selects vivid vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in a purposeful manner. | Selects interesting vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an effective manner. | Selects routine vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an appropriate manner. | Selects weak vocabulary. Little or no attempt is made to vary sentence format. |
| Level  | Excellent  | Proficient   | Adequate   | Limited  |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Criteria</b>  |  |  |  |  |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Creates topic and concluding sentences</b> (4.3.2)  | Creates compelling topic and concluding sentences.                                   | Creates interesting topic and concluding sentences.  | Creates straightforward topic and concluding sentences.                                  | Creates ineffective topic and concluding sentences.                                      |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Organizes supporting details</b> (3.3.2, 4.3.1)   | Organizes pertinent supporting details in a skillful manner.                         | Organizes relevant supporting details in a logical manner.                                 | Organizes basic supporting details in a simplistic manner.                               | Little or no attention given to organization; supporting details are unrelated to topic. |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Selects vocabulary and varies sentence format</b> (4.1.9)   | Selects vivid vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in a purposeful manner. | Selects interesting vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an effective manner. | Selects routine vocabulary. Uses a variety of sentence formats in an appropriate manner. | Selects weak vocabulary. Little or no attempt is made to vary sentence format.           |         |                 |  |  |  |  |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Use the 'rubric' samples (pdf) and the organizer (pdf) to examine the characteristics of the various tools.

## Organizer

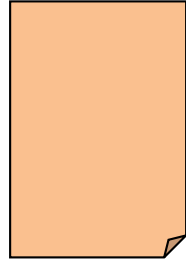
**Organizer for Rubrics... and Not!**  
 Examine the sample 'rubrics' to determine which characteristics each sample exhibits. *Building Better Rubrics* (p. 2) may be a useful reference. Record observations, questions, or comments you have about the sample 'rubrics'.

| 'Rubric' Sample | Characteristics (check all that apply)   | Observations/Questions/Comments About This Sample 'Rubric' |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Orange 'Rubric' | <input type="checkbox"/> criteria<br><input type="checkbox"/> fixed measurement scale<br><input type="checkbox"/> detailed description |  |
| Blue 'Rubric'   | <input type="checkbox"/> criteria<br><input type="checkbox"/> fixed measurement scale<br><input type="checkbox"/> detailed description |  |
| Pink 'Rubric'   | <input type="checkbox"/> criteria<br><input type="checkbox"/> fixed measurement scale<br><input type="checkbox"/> detailed description |  |
| Green 'Rubric'  | <input type="checkbox"/> criteria<br><input type="checkbox"/> fixed measurement scale<br><input type="checkbox"/> detailed description |  |
| Yellow 'Rubric' | <input type="checkbox"/> criteria<br><input type="checkbox"/> fixed measurement scale<br><input type="checkbox"/> detailed description |  |

# And the Rubrics Are...

# And the Rubrics Are...

BBR pp. 2; 4-5



| <b>Holistic</b>                | <b>Analytic*</b>  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| allows for an overall judgment | allows for judgment/feedback to be directed towards discrete criteria |

**The choice of holistic or analytic format depends on the assessment purpose.**

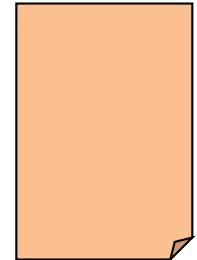
\*AAC generally prefers analytic rubrics.

# The Conversation Continues...

BBR pp. 2; 4-5

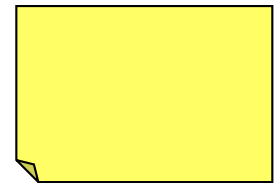
## Holistic Rubric

- The **orange rubric** has some flaws embedded within its design. Recognizing common rubric flaws is the focus of BBR Module 2.



## Analytic Rubric

- The complex language of the **yellow rubric** needs to be unpacked with students. This is the focus of BBR Module 4.



# We've Made a Good Start...

BBR pp. 2-5

**What** is a rubric? ✓

**When** should I use a rubric?

**Why** should I use a rubric? ✓



**How** should rubrics be used?

# A Rubric is *Not Always* the Best Tool

- Rubrics should only be used when it is possible to delineate various levels of quality.
- **In the following examples, consider why a rubric is appropriate for one task and not for the other.**



# When should I use a rubric?

- Rubrics should only be used when it is possible to delineate various levels of quality.

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  <b>Rubric</b> |  <b>Rubric</b> |
| • <b>support opinion/hypothesis</b>   | • <b>state opinion/hypothesis</b>   |



# When should I use a rubric?

- Rubrics should only be used when it is possible to delineate various levels of quality.

|  Rubric |  Rubric |
|--|--|
| • support opinion/hypothesis   | • state opinion/hypothesis   |
| • explain problem solving process  | • obtain correct answer to a math problem  |



# When should I use a rubric?

- Rubrics should only be used when it is possible to delineate various levels of quality.

|  Rubric |  Rubric |
|--|--|
| • support opinion/hypothesis   | • state opinion/hypothesis   |
| • explain problem solving process  | • obtain correct answer to a math problem  |
| • describe trouble shooting processes  | • meet design specifications (i.e. Does the device work?)                                  |

# When should I use a rubric?

- Rubrics should only be used when it is possible to delineate various levels of quality.
- **Create your own list of tasks for which a rubric would be appropriate, and a companion task which a rubric is not the best choice.**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  Rubric |  Rubric |
|  |  |

# Still Lots to Talk about Here...

BBR pp. 2-5

**What** is a rubric? ✓

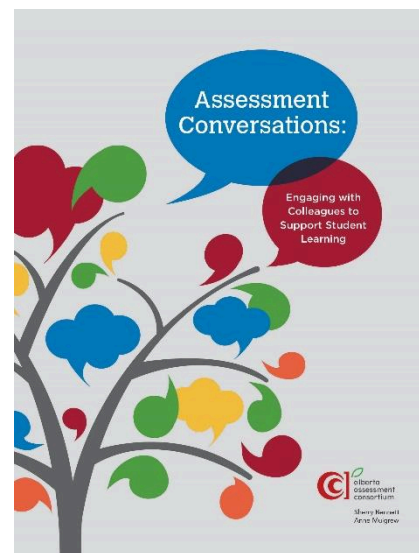
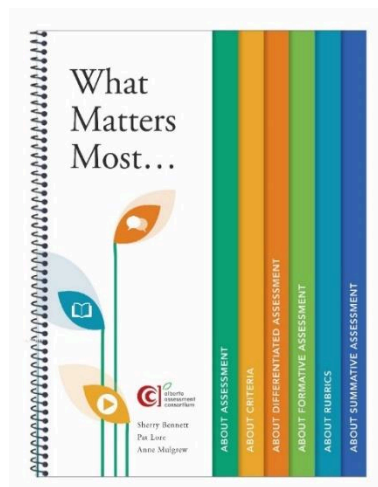
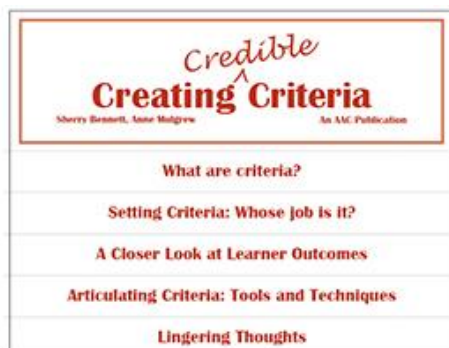
**When** should I use a rubric? ✓

**Why** should I use a rubric? ✓

**How** should rubrics be used?

# How should rubrics be used?

- Learning to use – and helping your students learn to use rubrics effectively is an ongoing process.
- The bulleted list on p. 3 of *Building Better Rubrics* provides a focus for ongoing professional learning. The remaining BBR modules will address these topics.
- AAC print and website resources [www.aac.ab.ca](http://www.aac.ab.ca) are also available to support this work.



# Next Steps Prior to Module 2

- **Take a closer look at the rubrics you've been using.**
  - Are they holistic or analytic?
  - Are distinct levels of quality possible?
- **What do students think the purpose is for the rubric?**
  - Do they see value in the rubric in helping them produce quality work?
- **Think of a rubric that you've used that doesn't seem to 'work' for the assignment.**
  - What's not working? What are your thoughts about how to improve it?