

# **GRADING STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS USING THE GRADING RUBRIC**

By Justine Clegg, MS, LM, CPM

Students who choose to study midwifery are typically dedicated, committed and determined to learn what they need to achieve their ultimate end, to become certified/licensed to provide midwifery care. Knowing that midwives take the lives of mothers and babies in their hands, students take their studies seriously. They want to succeed. Getting good grades is a priority for them. Our job as faculty is to support them, to give them the tools and guidance they need to earn good grades.

## **What is a grading rubric**

A grading rubric is an assessment tool, used to grade a student's assignment, written paper, oral presentation, or required performance. It is usually in the form of a table or grid, which contains both the stated objectives, specific skills or accomplishments being assessed, and the criteria for determining how well the student has met each objective.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of a grading rubric is to allocate a grade to an assignment based on objective, quantifiable criteria that are readily understood by both student and instructor. Students should be able to know ahead of time what they need to do to earn an A. Instructors need to be able to defend the grade assigned to the student's work, to be able to explain the student's strengths and weaknesses clearly and show that they have applied the same assessment standards to all students without partiality.

## **Contents**

A grading rubric should contain:

1. A list of the objectives, skills, or what content areas to cover. The objectives should describe in concrete terms and in detail exactly what you want the student to cover.  
Example 1: "culture-specific information specific to maternity care" is too general. Add specific areas you want the student to cover such as diet, communication styles, male-female roles, beliefs and behavior taboos in pregnancy, relationship with extended family, typical support systems for the new family, etc.  
Example 2: "displays professional behavior" is too general to provide guidance or explain the earned grade. The rubric needs to define what "professional behavior" is, and what they student needs to do to behave professionally: reliable attendance, answers pager/cell phone within 10 minutes, protects client confidentiality. "Dresses appropriately" needs to be explained clearly (OSHA compliant shoes, no rings or dangling jewelry, hair pulled back, no provocative or controversial dress) and specific to the requirements of each clinical site (scrubs, lab coat, street clothes, casual business attire, etc).
2. A description of how to present the content.  
Example 1, criteria for a written paper: approximately 2000 words/4 typewritten pages plus a cover page, APA style, reference section citing at least 3 references maximum 5 years old. These instructions should be accompanied by a handout explaining APA style or a website

where the student can get specific information about APA style (margin sizes, double spacing, type face and point size, etc).

Example 2, criteria for an oral presentation: stand straight, make eye contact, refer to notes but don't read from them directly, speak smoothly without "well.....um.....", answer questions demonstrating knowledge of subject, etc.

3. The criteria for assessing the quality of the work using a numerical rating scale such as a Likert scale (example: 5=excellent; 4=very good; 3=good; 2=fair, 1=poor; 0=not done). The student needs to know what you mean by these descriptors.

Example 1: Content:

5 = excellent, thorough, comprehensive, complete, detailed

4 = very good, covered all major information

3 = good, covered most important content areas

2 = fair, missing much of the important content areas

1 = poor, inadequate, omitted major important information

0 = not done

Example 2: Presentation:

5 = excellent, superior presentation

4 = very good, above average

3 = good, met but not exceeded

2 = fair, partially met

1 = poor, inadequate, deficient

0 = not done

4. How each section is weighted relative to the total grade  
Example: 80% for content, 20% for presentation
5. How the final grade translates into a percentage grade  
Example: 50 total possible points = 100%
6. How the final grade translates into a letter grade  
Example: A = 90% - 100%; B = 80% - 89%; C = 70% - 79%; and F = below 70%
7. A comments section where instructors can add relevant comments not captured in the grading rubric such as "Student's work is much improved".

### **Using the rubric**

The listed objectives, the content area to be covered, may be listed vertically down the side of the table. The numerical rating scale may be listed horizontally across the top of the table. The instructor assigns a numerical value to each objective which describes how well the student met that objective. The score is then totaled. The total points are converted to a percentage grade. The School's standard percent to letter grade conversion will determine the student's letter grade.

### **For oral reports and presentations**

To engage the class and encourage the other students to pay attention, the instructor can have:

- the student who is presenting an oral report turn in a written report to share with classmates to follow along and make notes, and which will be graded, along with the student's oral presentation
- classmates write a brief summary of each student's oral report including a critique, for which the other students will receive a grade or bonus points
- students grade their classmates' presentations using the same rubric the instructor will use
- part of the student's grade be determined by the sum of the grades assigned by the other students

References:

1. **Scoring Guides:** Rubric Builders and Generators; Already Made, Subject Specific Rubrics; Rubric Construction. Lee's Summit R7 School District. On the web at: [http://its.leesummit.k12.mo.us/scoringuides.htm#Rubric\\_Construction\\_Kit](http://its.leesummit.k12.mo.us/scoringuides.htm#Rubric_Construction_Kit)
2. Teacher Planet: Rubrics for Teachers on the web at: <http://rubrics4teachers.com/>
3. Understanding Rubrics by [Heidi Goodrich Andrade](#). On the web at: <http://www.middleweb.com/rubricsHG.html>