

Rules for Writing Quality Criteria

Good quality criteria should:

1. Enable an inference to be made about developmental learning - there should be no counts of things right and wrong or pseudo-counts (e.g. some, many, etc.)
2. Avoid language that is ambiguous or contains comparative terms (e.g. appropriate, suitable, adequate) to define quality of performance
3. Discriminate between performances of increasing quality – there should be no procedural steps in a sequence of operations

Good quality criteria should also:

4. Describe performances such that each successive description implies a progressively higher level of performance quality
5. Contain one central idea that can be recognised
6. Be directly observable (do, say, make, write) and avoid negatives
7. Reflect typical behaviours that cover a diverse range of quality, including a stretch for the most proficient
8. Self-weight based on their capacity to separate by performance quality, i.e. no weightings are to be used
9. Have four or fewer criteria for any indicator (to support consistency of judgements)
10. Be transparent so persons assessed can verify their assessment – no jargon.

Rules 1 to 3 (in **bold**) are the core rules. Rubrics that do not follow these rules require learners to guess what the assessor is looking for. This is like asking learners to jump but providing no answer to the question “How high?” Rules 4 to 10 are additional rules that increase the usefulness of rubrics. Intriguingly, rules 1 to 3 are the easiest to use when evaluating existing rubrics, but are the hardest to apply when learning to write rubrics. You will find that rubric writing is a challenge that rewards persistent effort.