A Guide to Designing a Killer Rubric

Why bother?

- Can enhance teaching and learning
- Particular potential for non-traditional, underprepared, first generation students (Wolf, et, al)
- Great for assessment and accreditation
- Marvelous for grade petitions

Steps to designing a rubric:

1. Identify performance criteria
2. Set performance levels
3. Create descriptions of performances for each criterion at each level

FAQ's

How many criteria? 3-6 (more than 6 and it's hard to keep them all in mind, fewer than 3 and it doesn't really need a rubric because it's not complex).

Can I use the rubric to grade? Absolutely, it helps minimize grading time.

Should I show my students the rubric ahead of time? No, keep it hidden and spring it on them afterwards so they can't optimally perform. It also keeps them guessing.

Isn't the rubric replacing my professional judgment? Nope. A rubric is your professional judgment and it isn't necessarily judging all the factors that go into the grade for a class and you can always add/delete/reweight factors. What it is doing is making your professional judgment more evident.

Won't the rubric result in uncreative work? Not a good rubric. If you have been grading a tangible product for creativity all along, then it means helping students understand what you expect (unless you grade by mysticism). Once defined, clearly formulated but not overly prescriptive creativity learning outcomes can help "focus students' attention on qualities of performance that are otherwise easily neglected; they give instruments with which to reflect on and communicate about their learning" ("Creativity: What Is it? Can You Assess It? Can It Be Taught?").