



## Module 6: Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Guidance material	6.4. An introduction to rubrics
What is the purpose of this material?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This material introduces the current research and thinking about rubrics and their use in classrooms.</li> <li>It is a discussion starter for school leaders and teachers before they design or use rubrics to assess student against the competences within the <i>Abu Dhabi Education Council Student Competence Framework (SCF) for Private Schools - Competences for Abu Dhabi's 21st Century Learners (2014)</i>.</li> </ul>
When to use this material?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For use by the school SCF implementation group before they make decisions on how the competences/values will be assessed in their school.</li> <li>For use during staff meetings when assessment of the SCF competences are discussed.</li> </ul>
With whom to use this material?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leaders</li> <li>Heads of Faculty</li> <li>All teaching staff</li> </ul>
When using this guidance material with teachers you are practising the competences of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> <li>Critical Thinking</li> <li>Collaboration/Teamwork</li> </ul>
Have you considered these materials first?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before introducing this material for discussion ensure that the following have been covered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.6 Close reading of ADEC SCF –Requirements &amp; Exemplifications.</li> <li>6.1 What is monitoring, assessment and evaluation</li> <li>6.2 A guide to assessing competences</li> <li>6.3 The SCF Performance Indicators</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
How to use this material?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present this paper at a team or staff meeting</li> <li>Ask the staff to work in groups</li> <li>Have each group read the document and highlight aspects they wish to discuss further</li> <li>Each group record their comments and reflections and hand the reflection sheets to the implementation group for consideration.</li> </ul>
What resources or equipment are needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of this document</li> <li>Large sheets of paper to record reflection comments</li> </ul>
What next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SCF implementation group discusses the teacher reflection sheets and uses this information to plan next steps.</li> </ul>



### 6.4 An introduction to rubrics

#### What is a rubric?

Rubrics are widely used in classrooms all over the world but often educators have different understandings of what a rubric is. A rubric is an assessment tool that both teachers and students can use. Most rubrics have descriptions of the criteria needed to achieve each level (e.g. from poor to excellent) and shows students, and teachers, what progression can look like.

Heidi Andrade's (2000) commonly accepted definition for a rubric is:

*“a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria, or what counts, and describing levels of quality from poor to excellent”.*

Popham (1997) suggests that a rubric has three essential features.

1. It must make clear the **criteria that are being assessed**.  
For example, a rubric for assessing self-confidence might focus on the key ideas of communicating feelings, managing emotions, and willingness to tackle tasks (see Self-confidence performance indicators in the *Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools*, 2014, p.iii.32).
2. A rubric must have **clear descriptions** for each of the different levels achieved for each of the criteria.  
For example, a descriptor for managing emotions might be *“I can use a range of strategies to manage my emotions”*.
3. A rubric needs **scoring levels**. In most rubrics these are the headings across the top of the rubric that outline a progression of learning. Often they are grade levels or they could be other ways of describing the stages a learner will progress through.  
For example, the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* the stages suggested are *“not achieved, basic, emerging, developing, part mastery and full mastery”*.

#### Rubrics for competences

For the Student Competence Framework to be effective competences must be assessed in a meaningful way that has relevance for teachers, students and parents. Rubrics are one tool to achieve this aim. When creating and using rubrics to assess competences it is essential that schools use the performance indicators within the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)*. Two versions of performance indicators are provided:

- Performance indicators of what should be expected within each competence at each grade level<sup>1</sup> (*Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* (p.iii.17 – iii. 43)

<sup>1</sup> The *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* recognizes that not all schools are able to deliver all competences across all grades. *Table 5: A Road Map for the Delivery of the Competences across the Stages* (p.iii.9) provides schools with a ‘road-map’ to support them in making decisions on the delivery and development of the competences across the four stages of schooling.



- Performance indicators for each competence across five performance levels: basic, emerging, developing, part-mastery, full-mastery  
(*Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* (p.iii.47 – iii. 58).

These two sets of performance indicators are aligned (see the table on page iii.44 within the *Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)*), therefore either set of performance indicators are a valuable starting point when creating rubrics.

### Example rubric:

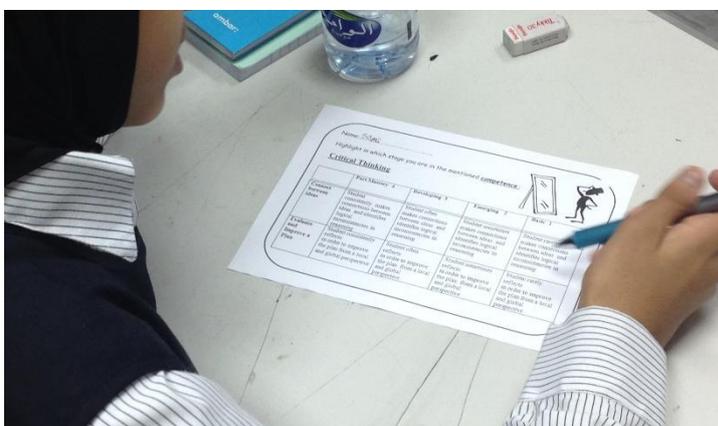
Problem Solving Rubric ( KG to G9 )				
	Grades 7-9	Grades 1-6		KG
Criteria	4 - Part Mastery	3 - Developing	2 - Emerging	1 - Basic
Use of Knowledge to find suitable solutions	I can make use of my previously acquired knowledge and skills to find a suitable solution or solutions to a posed problem, and identify potential problems within a given situation	I can solve different types of problems using appropriate methods, technologies and skills	I can solve problems	I can articulate the problem I am asked to solve in my own words
Communicate Solutions	I can solve different types of problems which may be simple to complex, pre- or ill-defined, new or established, theoretical or practical	I can communicate solutions to problems in ways appropriate for the problem solved	I can communicate solutions	I can communicate solutions



### Advantages of rubrics

Research suggests that rubrics support student learning in a range of ways.

- One way rubrics benefit students is that it informs them of how they will be assessed and what the teacher's expectations are, information that many teachers keep to themselves (Andrade, 2000).
- Rubrics can help students set clear goals for themselves (Andrade, 2000).
- When rubrics were used to guide self and peer assessment Andrade (2000) found that students became better at finding and solving problems in their own and one another's work.
- Rubrics also provide students with more specific and useful feedback, about their strengths and areas in need of improvement, than many traditional forms of assessment.



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Rubrics are also useful for planning and teaching (Popham, 1997). When a teacher has a rubric it can be an everyday reminder of what should be taught and what shouldn't. Across a group of teachers a rubric is a powerful way to ensure the teachers have a shared understanding of the content or skills that need to be taught and practiced in a unit of work.

Rubrics are also a useful tool to encourage differentiation in the classrooms because the graduation of levels within a rubric means it can be written to reflect the work of both gifted students and those with learning difficulties.



## Disadvantages of rubrics

It is important to remember that, like any assessment tool, rubrics have some flaws.

When creating rubrics some teachers write criteria or descriptors that are too general or too broad. This makes it hard for teachers or students using the rubric. One way to avoid this is to base the rubric descriptors on the learning progression that are in the relevant curriculum documents. In the case of the SCF competences teachers should use the SCF performance indicators in the *Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)* when writing rubrics.



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Many rubrics can be too long or detailed, meaning many teachers and students give up on the rubric as an assessment approach. If a rubric is going to be used by students and busy teachers it must be concise.

Most disadvantages of rubrics are related to teachers not implementing them accurately. Teachers need to be aware of the following common errors that can occur when teachers rate their students' work using rubrics (Meier, Rich, & Cady, 2006):

- *Leniency error*: when teachers place students at the upper end of the rubric because they want to avoid the lower end of the rubric (this can be lessened with very descriptive, objective and observable descriptors).
- *Severity error*: when teachers rate students more harshly with grades at the lower end of the rubric because they believe students will never achieve the highest level (this can be lessened with very descriptive, objective and observable descriptors).
- *Central tendency error*: when teachers can't make a decision and end up favouring the middle of the rubric (this can be lessened by having an even number of levels in the rubric).
- *Halo effect*: when a teacher's expectations or beliefs of a student's ability influence their assessment of that student (this can be lessened through moderation with other teachers and teachers sharing the evidence in student work that led to their decision).

## Creating and using rubrics

Before teachers use a rubric they need guidance in how to use the rubric and practice using it. If a group of teachers are using rubrics as a way to ensure consistency, then they need an opportunity to collaboratively practice the appropriate scoring of students work. Research suggests that readymade rubrics (e.g. found online or in published resources) are not as effective for students and teachers as rubrics the teachers make themselves (Andrade, 2000). Teachers have a better understanding of, and application of, rubrics if they are involved in the creation of the rubric. When teachers create a rubric,

independently or collaboratively, it helps the teacher(s) to focus on assessing what's important rather than insignificant things.

### Rubric guidelines

The following are some guidelines to help teachers when creating rubrics:

- Start with the SCF performance indicators in the *Framework Requirements and Exemplification* section of the *ADEC SCF for Private Schools (2014)*.
- Always write the highest level first, so that you build from a picture of excellence.
- Use positive language that children can understand.
- Use “I” statements (e.g. for leadership “*I can develop positive relationships*”).
- Write descriptors that are specific, observable and objective.

### Conclusion

Each school will be required to make decisions on the assessment methods and assessment tools they will use to assess the SCF competences. This discussion document is an essential starting point for the discussions and decision making needed.



*Al Ittihad National Private School, Abu Dhabi*

### References

- Andrade, H. G. (2000). Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. *Educational Leadership*, 57(5), 13-18.
- Meier, S. L., Rich, B. S., & Cady, J. (2006). Teachers' use of rubrics to score non-traditional tasks: Factors related to discrepancies in scoring. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 13(1), 69-9.
- Popham, W. J. (1997). What's wrong - and what's right - with rubrics. *Educational Leadership*, 55(2), 72-75.
- Stix, A. (1996, November 1). *Creating rubrics through negotiable contracting and assessment*. Paper presented at the National Middle School Conference, Baltimore, MD