Students sometimes miss the mark. Missing the mark is sinning according to Christian teaching. However, this is not the kind of missing the mark that we are concerned with right now. Students miss the mark in terms of our expectations of them with respect to particular assignments given and what they actually turn in to us to be marked. One approach to dealing with this problem is to use a rubric.

You can issue a rubric when an assignment is given. A rubric is a scoring guideline that measures student achievement systematically:

- Specifies university teacher’s expectations;
- Lists performance criteria or explains to students the criteria against which their work will be judged;
- Describes levels of quality;
- Makes public key criteria that students can use in developing, revising and judging their own work;

You can use a rubric to clarify for your students the expectations that you have of them in relation to the assignment you have given and ultimately impact their performance. Students will also be able to use the rubric to assess their performance and that of their peers, in the process of self-assessment, students will likely improve their performance. After doing an assignment, a student can measure his or her performance and if necessary take corrective action to improve. The rubric will allow students to identify errors or imperfections. Rubrics therefore can be used to make student work ultimately better and save university teachers' time grading.

In using rubrics in your classroom, it is best to distribute it when an assignment is given. Hence, the students have an understanding of the grading criteria that will be used. The rubric helps to make assessment more transparent and provides information that the student can utilize to determine what really counts.

When should you use a rubric?

- On assignments that require subjective grading
  - Places structure on a subjective process
  - Essays
  - Presentations/Projects
  - Multi-media

Elements to be considered in developing your rubric

One or more traits or dimensions that provide a meaningful basis for determining the quality of the student’s response:

- Definitions and examples that help to clearly explain the meaning of each trait or dimension;
- A scale with the values that will be used to determine the quality of each dimension;
- Standards which communicate the performance level and these will be accompanied by models or examples of each level;
Does your feedback feedforward?

There is growing interest in feedforward and in fact, there is much being written about feedforward in the pedagogical literature. When we talk about feedforward we are in fact concerned with providing information to our students about their work that will be helpful to them in the future or as they contemplate the course of action to pursue following our comments given as we examined their work and returned it to them.

So in a real sense, feedforward is feedback that provides meaningful guidance for refinements and revision of the assignment or the ongoing work. It presents information that has a built-in connection between diagnosis and the remedial action to be taken. The good thing about feedforward is that it lets students know what they should be doing or could be doing differently next time. For instance, if feedforward is provided on a specific assignment, the advice given will be very specific as what should be done differently next time. The advice will offer meaningful suggestions about changes that would allow the student to really improve the assignment. Feedforward sets the student on the right path to success; it provides information exclusively about what a student should do in the future to improve.

How might we provide feedforward to students, for instance final year students who might not be able to benefit from feedback from an exam? We might provide exemplars of essay question answers.

How to create a rubric?

A rubric is pretty easy to develop although it will require some investment of time. It calls for you to identify the necessary elements of the assignment and then the criteria for achievement.

In creating the rubric pay attention to the following:

- Determine what you are assessing, for instance is it critical thinking?
- Decide on the characteristics of what you are assessing (e.g., are you looking for your students to be able to determine appropriate use of evidence or should they be able to recognise the inclusion of logical fallacies?
- Provide a description of the qualities of the best work you could expect using these characteristics. This will constitute the most outstanding response and therefore the top category.
- Provide a description of the worst acceptable response. This would be a description of the lowest level of achievement.
- Provide a description of an unacceptable response. This would be a description of a response that is completely unacceptable.
- Provide descriptions for intermediate-level responses and assign them to intermediate categories.
- Develop a scale that runs from 1 to 5 (unacceptable, marginal, acceptable, good, outstanding), 1 to 3 (novice, competent, exemplary), or any other set that is meaningful.
- Review your rubric by soliciting the help of colleagues to critique it and perhaps apply it to some products or behaviours and revise as needed to eliminate ambiguities.

NB: If necessary contact the CETL for help in developing your rubric.

Use PowerPoint to Prompt Engaging Learning Activities During Class

PowerPoint presentations can be done in ways that engage your class meaningfully. Sometimes the PowerPoint slides are full of content. You can and should include slides that will cause your students to engage in learning activities. This could be a slide promoting classroom discussion, or some other learning activity and certainly offering opportunities for deep learning. Your learning activity might be a slide that poses a question to determine the level of understanding of a key or critical concept. This could be a pair-share activity. You might ask students to apply a model or a principle to a specific application. You should allow some time for students to think through the activity. In fact, you might add an interesting game or indicate that students will do a brief worksheet which you will provide as a handout. There are times when a minute paper or the muddiest point classroom activity might be appropriate.

The learning activity should be short and soon after you will want to wrap up the exercise and refocus attention on the content that triggered the learning activity. Determine whether misconceptions have emerged from the body of responses discussing or summarizing the concept and spend some time defusing the misconceptions. If you had asked for the application of a model discuss and evaluate the application proposed looking for both strengths and weaknesses. If the activity was for opinions on a controversial issue, spend some time discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the different positions at large.