Detailed Assessment Definitions

A Rubric:
1. Articulates in writing the criteria and standards that an instructor uses to evaluate student work.¹ [See footnote 2 and handout: “How to Create a Rubric”].
2. Pinpoints elements of a task that matter most and helps the instructor distinguish relative quality of student work.²
3. May lead to a grade or be part of the grading process; however, it is more specific, detailed, and disaggregated than a grade. Thus it can show strengths and weaknesses in student work. [See footnote 2].
4. Contains a scale of possible points to be assigned in scoring work on a continuum of quality. [See footnote 1].
5. Provides descriptors for each level of performance to be assigned in scoring work on a continuum of quality. High numbers usually are assigned to the best performances. [See footnote 1].
6. Describes levels of performance within each of the traits. [See footnote 2].
7. Derives from ruber, the Latin word for red. In medieval times a rubric was a set of instructions or a commentary attached to a law or liturgical service and was typically written in red. Thus rubric came to mean something that authoritatively instructs people. [See footnote 1].

Primary traits:
1. Essential or central components of the discipline³
2. Important elements of an assignment or presentation

Primary Trait Analysis:
Does not yield a single, holistic grade. Instead, it reveals parts; thus, students can understand better where they need to strengthen their work. This is learning at its best. (See handout entitled “Primary Trait Analysis.”)

Criteria:
1. The conditions that any performance must meet to be successful; define what meeting the task requirements means. [See footnote 1].
2. A standard on which a judgment or decision may be based.⁴
3. A characterizing mark or trait. [See footnote 3.]
4. Atest, principle, rule, canon, or standard, by which anything is judged or estimated.⁵
5. Distinguishing mark or characteristic attaching to a thing, by which it can be judged or estimated. [See footnote 4].

Standard:
1. Specifies how well criteria must be met. [See footnote 1].
2. Points to and describes a specific and desirable level or degree of exemplary performance—a worthwhile target irrespective of whether most people can or cannot meet it at the moment. [See footnote 1].
3. An authoritative or recognized exemplar of correctness, perfection, or some definite degree of any quality. [See footnote 4].

³ From Doug Eder’s handout, “Primary Trait Analysis,” that he shared in a workshop sponsored by the UI Center for Teaching in June 2006. See also the following website: http://www.uiuc.edu/assessment/. Used with permission from Doug Eder.