

## Detailed Assessment Definitions

### A Rubric:

1. Articulates in writing the criteria and standards that an instructor uses to evaluate student work.<sup>1</sup> [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.<sup>2</sup>
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 *rubric*, 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 discipline<sup>3</sup>
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.<sup>4</sup>
3. A characterizing mark or trait. [See footnote 3.]
4. A test, principle, rule, canon, or standard, by which anything is judged or estimated.<sup>5</sup>
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].

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<sup>1</sup> From Barbara Walvoord’s book, *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004. (19-20, 81).

<sup>2</sup> See Grant Wiggins. *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998. (104-105, 153-55).

<sup>3</sup> 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.siu.edu/assessment/>. Used with permission from Doug Eder.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster Online. 2006-2007. <<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/criteria>>. 9 January 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. 2006. <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>. 9 January 2007.