Rubrics – Criterion Referenced Assessment

What is a Rubric?
At ACU we use Criterion Referenced Assessment.

Criterion Referenced Assessment looks at the learning outcomes with their embedded graduate attributes for a particular task. Each learning outcome is assessed and various criteria are created that add up to make that learning outcome.

A rubric lists the criteria which are to be assessed in a task. These criteria can provide a guide to students and teachers as to the standards which are required for each level of attainment.

What is being assessed in the rubric, ultimately is the achievement of the learning outcome and its embedded graduate attributes. A rubric that does not assess the learning outcomes is not only worthless. It is evidence that the wrong things are being marked.

Criteria
Each task should assess a different group of learning outcomes. It should assess learning outcomes that are like each other and can be assessed by that task.

We shouldn't be marking anything other than the learning outcomes.

The assessment task itself is the vehicle which allows a student to demonstrate their mastery of the learning outcomes. That assessment task, be it an essay or a verbal presentation or a group activity is not what is being marked in itself. What is being marked are the learning outcomes and graduate attributes that are embedded in that task.

Appropriate Criteria
For example, an appropriate criterion for an essay is not the introduction, or the body, or the spelling and grammar or the written expression; unless you are teaching students how to write an essay or if graduate attribute 9 is embedded in the learning outcomes for the task. If essay writing or written expression is being taught, and how to write an essay is a learning outcome, then those kinds of criteria are appropriate.

If the learning outcomes for that task are actually more technical, or involve some critical analysis, or something that is written specifically as a disciplinary outcome, then only that can be assessed as it is presented in the essay.

The Pass Grade
The Pass grade in the rubric is the signifier that the criterion has been completely met in that task. Setting a pass grade at 50 can be confusing, particularly to sessional staff who have not had enough experience in the moderation process. Having a pass at 50 may be understood as meaning that that criterion has been only half met. For this reason, we could have problems in combining numerical marks and descriptive grades in a rubric.

The pass grade and that 50 percent point is actually the 100 percent minimal achievement, of that criterion.
Pre-moderation
The things that students are required to demonstrate in the task need to be carefully deliberated by the teaching team before the beginning of semester. This is what we would call part of the pre-moderation process. Students in criterion referenced assessment are graded against a set of standards which are pre-decided. Students are not assessed against the performance of each other.

Pre-set Standards
Criterion Referenced Assessment depends on pre-set standards. For instance, if we were using whole learning outcomes as our criteria, what we need to do is write out the learning outcomes and the embedded graduate attributes and to have all of our teaching team understand that the pass standard is equivalent to that learning outcome.

The pass standard could in fact be a reiteration of that learning outcome. The fail standard is not having achieved that learning outcome.

Credit, Distinction and High Distinction
The pass is the minimal threshold for achieving the learning outcomes and graduate attributes.

From that pass standard, the other standards are then measured.

The Markers’ Compact
Numerical marks and the ranges must be contained within the grades. There can’t be any kind of movement.

Markers need to agree to the standards before the marking and also they must agree not to ‘bump’ marks up or down if the criteria can’t be demonstrated to have been achieved. This means there can be no bumping a grade of 49 up to 50 only to take a student from a fail to a pass, unless it can be shown that the student has in fact met the learning outcomes.