

Effective, Efficient Grading of Student Learning

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How does one effectively grade students? What are the proper roles of quizzes, tests, and essays? How can faculty make the best use of their time when grading? How can effective, efficient assessment improve student learning?

Tip 1: Decide what you want students to learn

By identifying the most important learning objectives, you will make better decisions about how to teach and what to grade.

Tip 2: Design backwards (Grade what matters. Teach what you plan to grade. Grade what you've taught.)

Once you have decided what you want students to learn, select other components of the course (how you teach, what you teach, what assignments you give) based on that decision.

Tip 3: Plan how often you will assess.

- Give students many chances to try, fail, receive feedback...and try again.
- Frequent, low-stakes quizzes, tests, and exercises with prompt feedback tend to promote student learning better than infrequent long, high-stakes midterms and finals.
- Not all assignments must be graded.

Tip 4: Select an appropriate assessment

- Think beyond the exam. There are many ways to assess student learning:

-case write ups	-papers
-computer case simulations	-peer feedback and evaluation
-online interactive testing	-performance checklists
-faculty feedback during task performance	-portfolio
-formal presentations of cases	-presentations
-formalized faculty observations	-procedure logs
-journaling	-reading quiz
-laboratory report	-self-reflection
-multiple choice examinations	-short essays or reports
-observation of skills	-simulations
-oral exams	-video projects/digital storytelling
-one-minute essay	-written exams

- Match assessment type to learning outcomes.
- Use multiple choice questions for lower-order objectives.
- Use short essays, projects, papers, or higher order objectives.
- Make assignments worth grading. Design interesting and challenging assignments that will engage your students in the kind of activities you value so that they are not only learning but also presenting you with a way of seeing what they have learned.

Tip 5: Select an appropriate grading scale

- letter grades with pluses and minuses (for papers, essays, essay exams, etc.)
- 1-100 point numerical scale (for exams, certain types of projects, etc.)
- $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$ (for quizzes, homework, response papers, quick reports, presentations, etc.)
- pass-fail or credit-no-credit (for preparatory work)

Tip 6: Develop grading standards and apply them fairly.

1. Figure out what standards you will use to assess student work; write them out so they are clear, both to you and to your students (rubrics may help)
2. Remember that grading is ultimately an act of judgment by an expert in the field (you) about the extent to which students have learned something.
3. Ensure grades are not affected by student attitude, attendance, political leanings, race, gender, etc.
4. Be sure your energy level, mood, etc. don't affect grading factors.

Tip 7: Use time wisely.

- Schedule time on your calendar for grading right after the exam.
- Limit your comments to formative comments (those your students can use for further learning or improvement).
- Create a handout with common summative comments rather than re-writing the same comment repeatedly.
- Create a rubric for longer essays or papers
- Spend more time on guiding students than on grading them.
- Establish a grading schedule (time per exam) and stick to it.

Select Bibliography

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