



Grading in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Session Adapted and Facilitated by:

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Workshop Objectives

- 1) Begin to understand grading bias
- 2) Examine the dual role of assessment in courses
- 3) Learn how to establish criteria and standards



Introduction Activity

What are the challenges and concerns about grading?

Grading Bias

- Develop an ability to assess the work as distinct from the student
- Develop an awareness of cultural issues; however, try not to make assumptions about a student based on his/her cultural group.

What are some potential biases?

The Dual Role of Assessment

- Formative
- Summative

What are the formative and summative components of each of these types of assignments:

- Short Research Essay?
- Final Exam?



Establishing Criteria & Standards for Grading

- Criteria (minimum requirements)
- Standards (levels of performance)

What is a Rubric?

- What are they?
- Why are they important?
 - Scoring “rules”
 - Make public key criteria that students can use in developing, revising, and judging their own work

Undergraduate-Level Writing Rubric

	Masterful (A, A-/3.7-4.0/80-100%)	Skilled (B+, B/3.0-3.3/70-79%)	Able (B-/2.7/65-69%)	Developing (C+, C/2.0-2.3/55-64%)	Novice (D, F/0-1.0/0-54%)
Thesis (Ideas)	Engaging and full development of a clear thesis as appropriate to assignment purpose.	Competent and well-developed thesis; thesis represents sound and adequate understanding of assigned topic.	Mostly intelligible ideas; thesis is weak, unclear, too broad, or indirect.	Mostly simplistic and unfocused ideas; little or no sense of purpose to control thesis.	Ideas are extremely simplistic, showing confusion or misunderstanding of the topic; thesis is missing or indiscernible.
Content (Support/Evidence)	Consistent evidence with originality and depth of use; content works together as a unified whole; main points are supported with valid and specific evidence.	Ideas supported sufficiently; support is sound, valid, and logical.	Main points and ideas are indirectly supported; support isn't sufficient or specific, but is loosely relevant.	Insufficient; non-specific, and/or irrelevant support.	Lack of support for main points; frequent and illogical generalizations without support.
Structure (Organization)	Organization is sequential and appropriate to assignment; paragraphs are well developed and appropriately divided; ideas linked with smooth and effective transitions.	Competent organization, without sophistication. Competent paragraph structure; lacking in effective transitions.	Limited attempts to organize around a thesis; paragraphs are mostly stand-alones with weak or non-evident transitions.	Organization, while attempted, was unsuccessful. Paragraphs were simple, disconnected and formulaic. No evident transitions or planned sequence.	Organization, if evident at all, is confusing and disjointed; paragraph structure is weak; transitions are missing, inappropriate and/or illogical.
Tone (Audience/Point of View)	Clear discernment of distinct audience; tone and point-of-view appropriate to the assignment.	Effective and accurate awareness of general audience; tone and point-of-view satisfactory.	Little or inconsistent sense of audience related to assignment purpose; tone and point-of-view not refined or consistent.	Shows almost no awareness of a particular audience; reveals no grasp of appropriate tone or point-of-view for given assignment.	Lacks awareness of an audience particular to assignment; tone and point-of-view inappropriate or very inconsistent.
Sentence Structure (Grammar/Syntax)	Sentences structured powerfully; rich, well-chosen variety of sentence styles and lengths.	Effective and varied sentences; few syntactical errors or colloquialisms.	Formulaic sentence patterns; some errors in construction or use of awkward or colloquial syntax.	Sentences show structural errors; little or no variety; little grasp of sentence flow.	Simple sentences used almost exclusively; frequent errors in structure and syntax.
Mechanics (Spelling/Formatting)	Virtually free of punctuation or spelling errors; appropriate formatting and presentation for assignment.	Occasional spelling or punctuation errors; few formatting errors; most errors likely careless.	Several common spelling and punctuation errors; errors in or inconsistent formatting.	Many spelling and punctuation errors; errors impact meaning; weak/improper formatting.	Many serious spelling and punctuation errors; errors severely impact meaning; blatantly incorrect/absent formatting.
Vocabulary					



Group Activity

Describe various levels of performance (ex.A,B,C, Fail Paper) for one criteria.

How might it benefit students?

- Exposes the hidden mental processes that the learner needs to use to understand the subject or discipline
- Fosters higher level thinking
- Allows students to become more deeply involved in the writing process and therefore in their own learning
- Helps students evaluate their own work
- Helps students give each other constructive feedback

How might it benefit the teacher?

- Defines your expectations
- Provides feedback to instructor on students' strengths & weaknesses
- Saves time overall
- Fosters consistency and fairness
 - Increases the consistency in grading among multiple graders
 - Helps colleagues reach agreement on common goals
- Supports instructor if/when students question their grade

Reliability and Fairness

“Reliability is only a problem when judges operate in private and without shared criteria. In fact, multiple judges, when properly trained to assess actual student performance using agreed upon criteria, display a high degree of inter-rater reliability” (Wiggins, 1989, p. 710).

Other Tips and Tricks

- Establish common rubric
 - Share with students
 - Share with other TAs
- Give directive feedback
 - Formulate comments as questions
 - Comments reflect the rubric
- When writing comments, try to start off with what the student has done *right*.
- Consider attaching a “common mistakes” sheet

For those who have graded before, what are your tips?



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