

Assessing and Grading Student Work
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Andrade, H. G. (2005, Win). Teaching with rubrics: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *College Teaching* , 53 (1), 27-31.

This short article explains how and why to use rubrics not only for grading but also for teaching, including a discussion of peer- and self-assessment by students. The article describes the benefits and pitfalls of well-applied rubrics, and provides a sample rubric.

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, P. K. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are quick, formative evaluation methods that can provide feedback on both how well students understand course content, and how effective particular teaching methods are. Topics discussed include: how to set assessment goals, examples of successful discipline-specific assessment projects, how to choose the right type of assessment for your goals, and how to respond to assessment. The text is organized and modular enough that a user could pick it up for answers on a very specific assessment-related question.

Bean, J. C., & Peterson, D. (1998, Sum). Grading classroom participation. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (74), 33-40.

This article acknowledges the problems that lead many scholars of assessment to advise against grading classroom participation. Nonetheless, these obstacles can be overcome, and a well-structured approach to grading classroom participation can help facilitate students' active learning, critical thinking, and discussion skills. The article describes several different forms of classroom participation, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as methods to most effectively facilitate and grade these different types of participation.

Bender, T. (2003). *Discussion-based online teaching to enhance student learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

This book discusses how and why one can successfully make use of online teaching. It addresses both courses that are conducted wholly online and hybrid courses that have both a traditional and an online component. The book's three sections are: (i) "Theory: an application of learning theories to online discussion-based courses," (ii) "Practice: suggestions and techniques, illustrated by real examples, for stimulating and managing online discussion effectively, and for improving on teaching practices," and (iii) "Assessment: methods for assessing the efficacy of discussion-based online courses."

Cross, L. H., et al. (1993, Fall). College grading: Achievement, attitudes, and effort. *College Teaching*, 41 (4), 143-48.

This article briefly reviews the data from a survey of college instructors about their grading practices, noting apparent inconsistencies of the methods reflected in the data. For example, many instructors who claim to adhere to an absolute standard of grading in fact rely on comparative, non-absolute standards for their students' grades and vice versa. Following exposition of the data, there is a discussion of ways that college instructors can render their grading more consistent, effective, and reliable. The article closes with four concrete recommendations for college instructors to consider in their grading policies.

Dalziel, J. (1998, Dec). Using marks to assess student performance: Some problems and alternatives. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 23 (4), 351-66.

This article argues that standard uses of numerical grades are in fact deeply problematic. To assign a grade by way of manipulating numerical grades assumes that student performance can be quantitatively measured. It is clear that student performance is ordered – that is, student performance can be better or worse – but in order to be quantitatively measurable, being ordered is not enough. Quantitatively measurable phenomena must be both ordered and additive, and it is far from clear that student performance is appropriately additive. The author explains the notion of additivity and how instructors – typically without realizing they are doing so – make the dubious assumption that their assessment of their students is indeed additive. But, there are many equally valid ways of making the necessary assumptions, and as he shows in a series of five simulations, these competing sets of assumptions can yield very different final grades for the same work. Thus, standard numerical grading practices are arbitrary and flawed. Alternatives, such as the use of “mapping rules” are briefly discussed.

Daniel, P. A. (1991). Assessing student-led seminars through a process of negotiation. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 15 (1), 57-62.

This article discusses the author's experience in using negotiated criteria and negotiated assessments for student-led seminars. The author offers some thoughts on why he chose to begin grading his students' seminars and then explores the process and benefits of negotiating criteria and assessment. He discusses some of the difficulties of this approach but also notes that some of the problems he feared did not actually materialize. He includes an example of negotiated criteria and two examples of negotiated assessment.

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching*. In (2nd ed., p. 343-431). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This selection is part VIII in Davis' comprehensive guide to university-level teaching which includes seven brief chapters on testing and grading. Topics include academic dishonesty, student anxiety, quizzes and exams, multiple-choice test, essay tests, and tips for both the grading process and for the calculation and assigning of grades.

Eisenbach, R., Golich, V., & Curry, R. (1998, Fall). Classroom assessment across the disciplines. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (75), 59-66.

This brief article describes the results of instructors from three different fields – management, political science, and literature – each using different classroom assessment techniques (CATs) in their classes. The CATs used were (1) midsemester feedback evaluations, (2) pre/post self-confidence surveys, and (3) minute papers. Each instructor describes what she learned from each CAT. They conclude that these CATs are useful in helping instructors to better gauge their students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses, and to respond to that information. It is also argued that CATs aid students in reflecting on and actively engaging in their own learning process.

Fellenz, M. R. (2004, Dec). Using assessment to support higher level learning: the multiple choice item development assignment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29 (6), 703-719.

This paper offers a detailed description of the use of a Multiple Choice Item Development Assignment (MCIDA), in which students develop multiple choice questions that may then be chosen to appear on an exam. The author includes a thorough discussion of the benefits and the difficulties of this practice. Ultimately, he endorses it as a way to increase students' level of critical thinking about the material and increase their sense of participation in their own education.

Lewis, R., Berghoff, P., & Pheeny, P. (1999, Spr). Focusing students: Three approaches for learning through evaluation. *Innovative Higher Education*, 23 (3), 181-96.

This article describes three different case studies of instructors using different assessment techniques, each of which is designed to help students better understand learning objectives. Each case study is introduced with a description of the problems the instructor is facing, which she hopes to address through the introduction of the new assessment technique. Furthermore, each case study includes a description of how the technique was implemented, along with the benefits the instructor observes as a result. The first case study describes the use of a test specification chart; the second describes the use of a rubric for a student paper; and the third describes the use of a negotiated rubric for student presentations.

McKeachie, W. J., & Svinicki, M. (2006). *Teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (12th ed.). Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co.

Two of the chapters in this book are particularly relevant to assessment. Chapter 7 focuses on the functions of assessment aside from grading. Included is discussion of how to accurately assess what you intend to assess, how to encourage students to fruitfully assess their own learning, and how to use tests to facilitate learning (rather than merely measuring it). Chapter 11 focuses on

grading--different types of grading philosophies (such as curve-grading versus criterion-referenced grading), how to use grades in one's decision-making, and the relationship between grades and learning. Many of the book's other 24 chapters – which include discussion of diverse aspects of teaching – also touch on issues relevant to assessment.

Mezeske, R., & Mezeske, B. (Eds.). (2007). *Beyond tests and quizzes: Creative assessments in the college classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This text is a collection of short articles, each of which explores ideas for improving assessment in the classroom. The focus is not merely on improving the accuracy of learning assessment but also on using assessment to further the learning objectives of a course and help engender student engagement with the material. Most of the articles are interdisciplinary and broad in their scope; some others are intended to apply to particular domains, such as web-based instruction or courses with lab sections.

Quigley, B. L. (1998, Sum). Designing and grading oral communications assignments. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (74), 41-49.

This article covers the design of oral presentation assignments, how to clearly communicate assignments to one's students, how to help students prepare for presentations, as well as how to assess assignments and give constructive feedback. The article includes discussion of rubrics for grading, peer assessment, and time constraints for presentations.

Richlin, L. (2006). *Blueprint for learning: Constructing college courses to facilitate, assess, and document learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

This text is part explanation of research into teaching and learning and part how-to guide for implementing that research. Although substantive in its discussion of the research, the book is also organized in a very step-by-step way, to help one in designing a course, implementing an effective learning environment, and evaluating students' learning. The chapters are independent enough from one another that a reader interested primarily in, for example, syllabus design, or the use of grading rubrics, could read the sections associated with those subjects alone.

Silvestrone, J. M. (2004, Win). Performance-based assessment: Improving the value of laboratory and skills examinations. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (100), 65-71.

This brief article is intended as a guide to aid instructors in creating effective skills examinations. Such examinations range from testing students in a science or language lab to performance arts tests. The author is most concerned with helping instructors increase the transparency and authenticity of exam construction, format, and grading – where "transparency" means that the nature, format and objectives of the exam are as clear as possible to the students, and "authenticity" means that the students are given real-world

challenges.

Smith, K. A. (1998, Sum). Grading cooperative projects. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (74), 59-67.

This brief article attempts to help instructors develop and grade effective group projects. The author structures his discussion into five basic elements of group projects: (1) positive interdependence (making sure that students are given motivation to work together, rather than being pitted against one another); (2) individual and group accountability (to help prevent problems such as uneven workloads); (3) face-to-face promotive interaction (both amongst the group members and between the group and the instructor); (4) teamwork skills; and (5) group processing of the material. Sample grading rubrics are included.

Smyth, K. (2004, Jun). The benefits of students learning about critical evaluation rather than being summarily judged. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29 (3), 370-378.

The author argues that student assessment should be structured in a way that encourages the student to reflect on the assessment procedure. The paper explores ways of helping one's students approach feedback and assessment in an appropriately reflective way.

Speck, B. W. (2000). Grading students' classroom writing: Issues and strategies. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 27 (3).

The author attempts to provide a comprehensive guide to assessing students' writing; however, the focus is not purely on assessment but includes issues such as how to make one's writing assignments effective for student learning. (Furthermore, the text's treatment of assessment does not focus purely on grading; Speck argues that it is very helpful to the student's growth as a writer that some writing assignments not be graded.) The text addresses the relationship of the writing process to the grading process, ways to construct effective writing assignments, theoretical issues in grading related to fairness and professional judgment, ways to include students in the assessment of writing, and guidelines professors can use to provide effective feedback for students to revise their writing.

Walvoord, B. E., & Anderson, V. J. (1998). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The first two chapters of this text address the role of assessment and principles for effective grading. The remaining chapters are devoted to helping an instructor through the course-planning process. The text helps the reader to: identify learning goals and develop tests and projects that help achieve those goals; align one's teaching method to complement one's assessment items; develop clear standards for grading; translate individual assessments into a course grade; provide effective feedback to students; make one's grading as time-efficient as

possible; and learn from the results of a course to improve future courses. Remaining chapters discuss how grading can be used for broader assessment purposes, such as evaluating faculty, departmental, or institutional performance.