Lunch and Learn: Grading for Growth

Dr. Amber Shipherd, CMPC
09/14/2023

Traditional Grading

- Assessments use point value or percentage
- Total points earned or percentages turned into letter grade at end of semester
- Does not include:
  - Reattempts or revisions of work
  - Helpful feedback for students

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY KINGSVILLE

Problems with Traditional Grading

- Can misrepresent learning
  - False positives
  - False negatives
- Is inequitable
  - Benefits students who learn fast or who know how to 'student'
  - Prone to bias – earning points for non-academic factors
- Can lead to students arguing for points on work or "grade grubbing" at end of the semester

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY KINGSVILLE

What is Grading for Growth?

- Four key ideas:
  - Student work evaluated using clearly defined standards
  - Students given action-oriented feedback
  - Marks on student work reflect progress toward meeting a standard
  - Students can reassess work without penalty, using feedback received, until standards are met or exceeded

Alternative Grading Approaches

- Standards-based grading (SBG; sometimes called mastery grading)
  - Clear standards, each assessed multiple times with multiple attempts provided to meet standard without penalty
  - Progress towards meeting each standard reported and helpful feedback given
  - Final grades based on how many, or which, standards a student has met by the end of the semester, regardless on how many attempts it took them to get there

Alternative Grading Approaches

- Specifications (specs) grading
  - List of specifications created that describe qualities and characteristics of a successful submission for each assignment
  - Student work graded holistically based on the specs
  - Students use feedback to revise and resubmit work

Alternative Grading Approaches

- Ungrading/collaborative grading
  - Eliminates grades to focus on feedback
  - List of criteria or narrative description for final grades developed (often with students)
  - Instructors hold regular meetings with students (or have students complete reflective papers) to come to an agreement of student's current level of progress
  - Students construct final portfolio of work to show how they've grown or met key objectives

How to Begin Grading for Growth

- Consider implementing small, concrete strategies that address some of the key principles
  - Allow students to revise one or two larger assignments
  - Allow students to reassess quizzes or exams (use the LMS to make grading easier)
  - Use completion grades for some small assignments
  - Use specs grading on some assignments
  - Drop lowest quiz/exam grades (or use final to replace lowest grade)
  - Standards-based testing (SBG but just for exams)

How to Begin Grading for Growth

- Keep it simple – look at your class from the student's pov (but also consider how to simplify for your own sanity)
  - Limit number of reassessments or build in a reassessment day/time
- Make sure students engage with feedback
  - Students complete reflective cover sheet/form
- Provide multiple opportunities for class participation
  - Students self-assess participation, offer list of opportunities for students to earn participation points
- Consider your class/student demographics:
  - Lower/upper level, UG/grad, writing heavy class, class size, class modality, how much freedom you have over SLOs and assessments

Examples From My Classes

- Undergraduate courses:
  - Limited number of tokens provided to students to reassess
  - Lowest grades on quizzes dropped
  - Quizzes can be taken up to 2x each
  - Assignment weights increase throughout semester
  - Specs grading used on select larger assignments
  - Detailed actionable feedback given on areas students struggle with and students required to address feedback
  - Team tests used to give immediate feedback on exams
  - Students incentivized for completing readings but provided completion grades

Examples From My Classes

- Graduate courses: specifications grading

Creative Expression
The specific assessment specifications are:

- Project title is clearly conveyed
- Purpose or thesis is clearly conveyed
- At least four major ideas or themes from the literature are communicated or displayed
- At least three scholarly sources are included and described (at least briefly) to provide support for main ideas or themes
- All articles are outside (meaning, none of the articles your professor has already provided you for this class) and scholarly (i.e., peer reviewed)
- List of references presented in APA format and contains few errors
- Concluding statements are conveyed
- Creative expression is professional in nature
- Demonstrates comprehension of course material beyond a layman's understanding (e.g., course content or terms are used or described correctly and appropriately, examples of concepts are correct, application of concept is correct, there is clear evidence you have carefully researched and understood your topic and the research on your topic)

Examples From My Classes

ESPN 4-Tier Assessment Rubric

Does your work indicate you understand the material? Did you follow the instructions and include the required elements?			
Yes		*No*	
Is it clear you have mastered the content and communicated that mastery well? Does your work show attention to detail, editing, clarity, and overall is of high quality?		Does your work show some partial understanding of the content?	
Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
E **Exemplary (100% of points)**	**S** **Satisfactory (80% of points)**	**P** **Progressing (50% of points)**	**N** **Not Assessable (0% of points)**
The submission is exemplary. I could use it as an example to demonstrate a deep and thorough mastery of the content. Every required element is included and it is clear you put forth a high level of effort. There may be a few small errors but they are minor and do not impact the overall quality.	The submission shows you followed the instructions and demonstrated learning. Though it is mostly clear and accurate, some areas need additional information or editing to improve the content or quality. You demonstrate an adequate understanding of the content, but more effort is needed to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding or improve the overall quality of your work.	Important elements are missing, or the work needs more attention to detail. It is clear you started the assignment and made some progress, but your work is not yet graduate-level quality. Perhaps you didn't follow the instructions well or failed to demonstrate an adequate understanding of the content. Please review the instructions and put some additional effort into this assignment. It is recommended you consider revising your work (see tokens in the syllabus).	Either the work was not submitted or there's so little content included that it cannot be assessed at this time. Be sure to review all instructions and carefully check due dates to improve your chances of succeeding on future assignments. I want you to be successful in this class! Please help me help you by ensuring that your work is submitted and completed as required!