



Grading in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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Workshop Objectives

- 1) Examine the dual role of assessment in courses
- 2) Learn how to establish criteria and standards
- 3) Deal with Plagiarism



Introduction Activity

Why choose this workshop?

What is your department?

What class are you TA-ing?

What are the challenges and concerns about grading?



The Dual Role of Assessment

- **Summative** – what have they learned (outcomes, milestones, domain knowledge, high-stakes)
- **Formative** – how are they learning (meta-cognition, critical thinking, feedback, self-evaluation, low stakes)



Summative Strategies

Give some examples of summative assessments that apply to your field. (Hint: think about the learning outcomes of one of your courses)



Formative Strategies

- 1. Clarify what good performance is**
2. Facilitate self-assessment
- 3. Deliver high-quality feedback information**
4. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue
- 5. Encourage positive motivation and self esteem**
6. Provide opportunities to close the gap
- 7. Use feedback to improve teaching**

Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in higher education*, 31(2), 199-218.



Formative Strategies

Give some examples of formative assessments that apply to your field. (Hint: how would you help someone move towards the learning outcomes)



Establishing Criteria & Standards for Grading

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



What is a Rubric?

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 undiscernible.
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.
Vocabulary					



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).



Group Activity

Develop one criteria and describe the various levels of performance.

Rubric for Article Critique

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NOT SATISFACTORY
I: Summary	The article is summarized succinctly, and includes the key points.	The article is summarized, but may be missing a few key points.	The abstract of the article written by the authors is rephrased.
II: Analysis	Each component of the article is critically analyzed.	Most components of the article are critically analyzed.	The components are described but not analyzed critically.
III: Conclusion	A logical conclusion is drawn from the critical analysis, and precise recommendations made on how to improve the study.	Conclusion is logical, but may not be completely related to the analysis. Incomplete recommendations are made on how to improve the study.	Conclusion is vague and unrelated to the critical analysis; Conclusions are too general to be useful. Recommendations to improve the study are unrelated to the critical analysis, and/or are too vague to be useful.



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?

Plagiarism

1.9 “Plagiarism” means the representation of another’s work, published or unpublished, as one’s own or assisting another in representing another’s work, published or unpublished, as his or her own. (Conduct of Research Regulation, McGill)

Plagiarism

Decision	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Exonerated	55	60	57
Admonished	115	126	123
Reprimand	-	-	1
Totals	170	186	181

Admonished:

- Failed paper, assignment, exam
- Placed on conduct probation
- Partial grade for paper, assignment, exam

Plagiarism – what indications are there?

- Changes/irregularities in writing style
- Incorrect citation
- Self-plagiarism
- Social media
- Close collaboration

Plagiarism – how can you stop it?

- Assignments that can't be plagiarized
- Education – talk about plagiarism (or ask your prof to)
 - Mini (formative) assignments on proper citation, paraphrasing
- Online checkers – with caution



Tips and Tricks

- Review rubric with students (when possible)
- When writing comments ‘pick your battles’
- Give examples (good and bad)
- Mark with your ‘boss’ or other TAs

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



Resources

Fair Play Website - McGill (Integrity for Undergraduates)

<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students>

Regulation on the conduct of research - McGill

<https://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/conduct-of-research-regulation-on.pdf>

Annual Report on Student Discipline - McGill

<https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/disciplinary/annual-report>

Website on dealing with plagiarism

<http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/webcasts/>

Article on plagiarism checker limitations

<https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2011/12/07/the-limitation-of-every-plagiarism-checker/>



Many thanks for attending this session!

Acknowledgements:

- Dianne Bateman and Carolyn Samuel
- Alexander DeGuisse
- Holly Garnet
- Mitchell Brown