Session 10A: Effective Techniques for Gathering and Giving Feedback (incl. Grading) (continued)

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Outline

- Effective grading techniques
- Grading vs. learning
- Other effective feedback techniques

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Resources

- *Teaching Tips*
    - Ch.8 (pp.95-101), Ch.9 (p.109, p.111), Ch.11 (pp.128-130), Ch.15 (pp.198-203, 206-207), Ch.26 (pp.348-357)
- *Tools for Teaching*, by B. Davis
    - Ch.32 (http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/grading.html), Ch.33 (not online), Ch.41 (http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/feedback.html)
- *Effective Grading*, by B. Walvoord and V. Anderson
- *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, by T. Angelo and K.P. Cross

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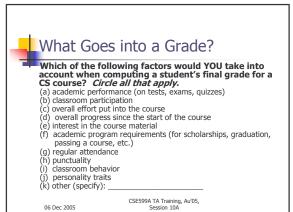## Histogram of Your Responses: "What are Grades Used for?"

Which of the following potential uses of grading would you adopt?

- 3 (a) To describe unambiguously the merit (value) of the work accomplished
- 9 (b) To improve the capacity of students to self-evaluate
- 12 (c) To encourage good quality work by students
- 0 (d) To penalize low quality work by students
- 12 (e) To communicate the instructor's assessment of the student's progress
- 9 (f) To inform the instructor about what students have and haven't learned
- 2 (g) To select students for rewards or continued education
- 1 (h) To signal which students are prepared to do advanced work in the subject
- 5 (i) To warn students that they should pay more attention to the material on which the evaluation was made
- 4 (j) To signal where the student stands with respect to his/her peers.
- 7 (k) To reward student effort
- 1 (l) To give students what they've already paid for
- 0 (m) Other (specify): _____

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Histogram of Your Responses and Mine: "What are Grades Used for?"

My favorites

Which of the following potential uses of grading would you adopt?

- 3 (a) To describe unambiguously the merit (value) of the work accomplished
- + 9 (b) To improve the capacity of students to self-evaluate
- + 12 (c) To encourage good quality work by students
- 0 (d) To penalize low quality work by students
- + 12 (e) To communicate the instructor's assessment of the student's progress
- + 9 (f) To inform the instructor about what students have and haven't learned
- 2 (g) To select students for rewards or continued education
- ½ 1 (h) To signal which students are prepared to do advanced work in the subject
- ½ 5 (i) To warn students that they should pay more attention to the material on which the evaluation was made
- 4 (j) To signal where the student stands with respect to his/her peers.
- ½ 7 (k) To reward student effort
- 1 (l) To give students what they've already paid for
- 0 (m) Other (specify): _____

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What Goes into a Grade?

Which of the following factors would YOU take into account when computing a student's final grade for a CS course? *Circle all that apply.*

(a) academic performance (on tests, exams, quizzes)
(b) classroom participation
(c) overall effort put into the course
(d) overall progress since the start of the course
(e) interest in the course material
(f) academic program requirements (for scholarships, graduation, passing a course, etc.)
(g) regular attendance
(h) punctuality
(i) classroom behavior
(j) personality traits
(k) other (specify): _____

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What Makes Grading Unattractive?

- According to TA opinions the problem is:
  - the repetitive nature of the grading process
  - the non-interactive (solitary) nature of the process
  - the struggle to decide which of several grades to give
  - frustration over low-quality student work
  - the perception that grading is a waste of time
  - feeling like either the bearer of bad news or the "toothless" pleaser (who feels bad about criticizing)
  - ...
- Does it have to be that way? Can't we do better?

Techniques to Reduce Grading Time without Hurting Learning

Which of the following techniques have you never considered? *Circle*.
a) Use only as many grade levels as you need.
b) Pick a (random) problem on a homework assignment and do not grade it.
c) Give only the most important feedback (conceptual, organizational), sparing details that you would otherwise point out if all was right at these higher levels.
d) Focus on feedback that is likely to be most useful for the particular student given their level of understanding.
e) Read through the student's work quickly before starting to make any comments.
f) Consider distributing solutions to everyone, this way you won't have to write the same ideas many times (in response to everyone who didn't solve a problem).
g) Write more comments on intermediate drafts than on finished pieces of work.
h) Meeting with students to offer feedback is often less time consuming than writing it all, and you make sure they hear what you have to say.
i) For drafts, ask students to write, along with the draft, what they think their strongest and weakest points are and where they'd like your feedback to be concentrated, including perhaps specific questions they have for you.
j) Require that students organize their submissions according to your needs (format, style).

Frequent Questions on Grading

- Do TAs have freedom from the opinion of the instructor in how they grade? To what extent?

- What constitutes fair grading?

What Constitutes Useful Feedback?

What type(s) of comments and feedback are most useful to give to individual students?
a) the right answer
b) why their answer was incorrect
c) why they got a particular grade
d) why their assumptions or approach aren't appropriate (or realistic) for the problem
e) the score (grade) on that problem
f) questions meant to direct them toward alternative, more effective approaches

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My Experience in Giving Feedback and Grading

Strategies that have worked well for me:
- (for projects) Meeting with groups of students and give feedback orally in an informal and friendly way
- (for any assignment) Discussing separately what to *sustain* and what to *improve*
- Separating the grade from the written feedback
  - Announce grades later or via a different channel
- Communicating what a grade means -- a quantitative feedback, *not* a final verdict!
- Using alternative feedback sources:
  - Outside experts, peers, self, tools, etc.

My Experience in Giving Feedback and Grading (cont.)

Strategies that have *NOT* worked well for me:
- Returning graded assignments not simultaneously to all students
- Allowing too many possible grade levels for homework assignments
  - Puts extra burden on grader *and* invites complaints
- Writing on a student's graded paper that they need to come and see you during office hours
- Delaying to give feedback in hopes of finding a better "teachable moment"

Techniques for Soliciting Feedback

For individual lectures:
- End-of-class minute paper (appropriate to do on 3"x5" cards)
- Using technology for quick and anonymous classroom assessment

For multiple sessions / part of a term:
- Ask students to summarize (ungraded, anonymous) the key ideas from a set of lectures
- Midterm targeted quick questionnaire
  - Include a question on how students are meeting their own goals so far
- End-of-term course evaluations (and questionnaires)
- Set up an anonymous feedback form (UW-CSE has scripts for doing that quickly)
  - Be ready to read mostly complaints; students rarely feel the urge to praise.

For more, see "Classroom Assessment Techniques" by Angelo & Cross.

Interesting Ideas on Grading and Feedback from the Literature

- Students grading themselves (or each other) based on an established (agreed upon) set of criteria
  - Helps them to develop self-evaluation skills
  - Helps students get more (peer) feedback
  - Helps you return grades faster
- Students writing what they have learned after returning a major exam / assignment.
  - You too should write what you've learned from the experience.
- Students writing briefly, as part of each assignment, "How does this assignment relate to the learning goals in the course?", or simply "Why are we doing this assignment?"
- Recording yourself making comments / feedback on tape or in digital form, then handing this back to the student
  - You can say much more in 5 minutes than you can type, and even more than you can handwrite.