The Grading Process

Gina Frey and Kathy Atnip
The Teaching Center and The Teaching Lab in Arts & Sciences
Outline

- Defining grading
- Grading models
- Process to determine grading policy
- General strategies for grading policy
- Examples
- Telesis demonstration
Grades

- A course grade communicates the student’s level of achievement in a course

- Grades for assignments, papers, or exams communicate to the student how he or she is performing throughout a course.
Redefining Grading

- Identifies the most important learning in the course
- Constructs exams and assignments that test that learning
- Sets standards and criteria
- Guides student learning
- Helps make changes in teaching as a result of information gained in the grading process
Grading Models

- Normative or Relative (curve)
  - Compare a student’s overall performance with the rest of the class, and the grade reflects the student’s level of achievement within that group
    - Grade relative to mean and standard deviation
    - Give certain percentage of A’s, B’s, etc.

- Advantages
  - Outstanding performances compared to peers are rewarded
  - Greatest flexibility for faculty

- Disadvantages
  - Need to interpret grades in context of entire group
  - Grading standards fluctuate from year to year
  - Need history of class performances

Ref: Tips for Improving Testing and Grading, Ory and Ryan, (SAGE, 1993).
Grading Models

- **Absolute or Standards of Excellence**
  - Compare student performance to specified absolute standards. How much of the tasks or content has a student mastered?

- **Advantages**
  - 🌟 Course goals and standards clearly defined and communicated
  - 🌟 Final grades reflect achievement of course goals, not how student compares to a reference group

- **Disadvantages**
  - 🔄 Difficult and time-consuming to determine course standards for each course grade
  - 🔄 Instructor has to decide on what are reasonable expectations of students
  - 🔄 Complete interpretation of the course grade is not possible unless major course goals are also available

Golden Rules of Grading

- Fairness
  - Each student has an equal opportunity to receive each grade

- Accuracy
  - Should reflect the differences in performances

- Consistency
  - Determine a grading policy and follow it throughout the semester. Change only after considerable reflection.

- Defensibility
  - Be able to explain why one student received an A and another a B

- Clear
  - Students should be able to determine their progress

Ref: Tips for Improving Testing and Grading, Ory and Ryan, (SAGE, 1993).
Process

- Identify desired student achievements by developing course objectives
  - How should students be different when they finish this course?
  - What should students retain from your course (in 10 years)?
  - What should students be able to do with the knowledge and skills gained in this course?
  - What is your teaching philosophy?

- Develop a testing plan that evaluates the achievement of the course objectives
  - What type of grading components will be used?
  - How many of each type will be used?
  - During what times in the course will each component be administered and how?
  - How will feedback to the students be handled?
  - How will questions/regrades be handled?
Process (continued)

- Decide on a type of grading model or combination of grading models to be used – see what traditionally is used in your department
- Decide on the weighting of each grading component
  - Importance of different types to course objectives
  - Developmental or unit-based weighting
- Discuss your grading system with colleagues for feedback
Grading Components

- Homework
- Exams
- Quizzes
- Papers
- Writing components: journals, discussion questions
- Projects
- Presentations
- Group work
- Discussion board
- Class participation
General Strategies for Grading Policy

- Clearly state grading procedures in your course syllabus and discuss in class
- Set policies on late work
- Provide enough and a variety of opportunities for students to show what they know
- Keep students informed of their progress throughout the semester
- Stress that grades reflect work done and not a judgment about the person
- Give encouragement to students who are performing poorly
- With students who are upset about their grade, have them prepare the complaint (or justification of change) in writing
General Strategies for Grading Policy

- Return the first graded assignment or exam before the add/drop deadline
- Record results numerically instead of letter grade for greater accuracy when calculating final grades
- Give students an opportunity to rewrite their papers (and receive a higher score)
- Compare your grade distributions with those of similar courses in your department
- Ask the students about your grading policies on student evaluations
  - Were the grading procedures clearly explained?
  - Did you receive adequate feedback on your performance?
  - Were regrade requests handled fairly?
Examples of grading policies

- Science
  - Quizzes: Eight 10-point quizzes, lowest score dropped, top 7 scores normalized to 100.
  - Exam: Three 100-point exams, lowest score dropped
  - Final: 200-point exam
  - Final Grade:
    - Point total is sum of the normalized grades for the final-exam score and the three highest of the 1.5 hour exams and the total quiz scores.
    - Students will be ranked in the order of their point totals. Letter grades based on: position in the ranking and a subjective evaluation of the performance of the class as a whole.

- Science
  - Semester grades will be based upon 480 possible total points.
  - Quiz: one 50-point quiz
  - Exams: three 100-point exams
  - Homework: 13 10-point problem sets.
  - Final: optional 100-point final; may replace one of the exams.
Examples of grading policies

- Mathematics
  - **GRADES:** Each of the Exams 1-4 will count 18% toward the final course grade. Similarly the grade of the quizzes will be 18%. The homework will be 10%. Each exam is worth 100 points, the total quiz score is worth 100 points and the total homework score is worth 100 points.
  - Example: If \( E_1, E_2, E_3, \) and \( F \) are your four exam scores, \( QU \) is your quiz score, \( HMW \) your homework score then your total \( T \) is given by:

\[
T = 0.18(E_1 + E_2 + E_3 + F + QU) + 0.10 \ HMW
\]

- In cases where the lowest of the \( E_1 – E_3 \) is less than \( F \), this lowest value will be replaced in the formula by \( F \). Thus, the lowest in-semester exam will be dropped out in computing averages provided this lowest score isn’t \( F \).
- Your letter grade for the course will not be lower than it would be if it were based on the scale appearing in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>80-89.99</td>
<td>65-79.99</td>
<td>50-64.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of grading policies

- Social Sciences
  - Exams: 2 exams, each worth 25% of your grade
  - Final: worth 40% of your grade
  - Class participation grade: 10% of your grade.
    - Based on participation in the discussion sections. Also, based on 10 one-page memos answering the weekly discussion questions.
  - The standards are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98+</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-90</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-80</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-70</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-98</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-88</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-78</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-68</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Social Sciences
  - Midterm papers: 20% each
  - Final: 30%
  - Attendance: 10%
  - Class Participation: 20%
  - Class participation, especially in discussion sections will also count toward your grade
  - If people don't come to class, I will invoke the dreaded pop quiz and adjust the weights of the other assignments accordingly. So show up!
Examples of grading policies

- **Social Sciences**
  - **Course Grading:** Exam 1– 30%, Exam 2– 35%, Exam 3 – 35%
  - If you are taking the course pass/fail or credit/no credit, you must receive a C or better for credit (i.e., C- will not earn credit)
  - **Exams:** No make-ups will be given. If a missed exam is excused, your course grade will be based upon your performance on the other exams.
  - **Homeworks:** These problem sets will be graded, but they will not affect your course grade. The assignments are provided as an opportunity for feedback and a supplemental study resource.

- **Social Sciences**
  - **Problem Sets:** 10%
    - Graded: good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory
  - **2 Midterm Exams:** 25%, each
  - **Final Exam:** 40%
    - The final exam will be cumulative.
Examples of grading policies

- Writing/Humanities
  - Draft of one paper: 5%
  - Paper 1: 10%
  - Paper 2: 10%
  - Paper 3: 15%
  - Paper 4: 20%
  - Research paper
    - Draft: 10%
    - Revised: 15%
  - Active participation in discussions: 10%

- Writing/Humanities
  - Paper 1: 20%
    - Draft: 5%
    - Revised: 15%
  - Paper 2: 20%
    - Draft: 5%
    - Revised: 15%
  - Paper 3: 20%
    - Draft: 5%
    - Revised: 15%
  - Group project: 30%
  - Class participation: 10%