Ethical Grading Tips

1. **Not all classes qualify for the same grading system.** Course outcomes dictate the type of grading system appropriate for that class. See the "CTL Grade delineator" for guidance on how to structure grading systems.

2. The validity of a grade is directly related to the quality of the assessment tool. Tests are to be **aligned directly to what was TAUGHT** and EMPHASIZED during the course (a criterion-referenced assessment). Exams are not meant to trick students, but rather to accurately capture how much a student has learned as a result of a course.

3. **Never grade on the curve.** Grading on a curve is a based on a standard bell curve; we have to ask, is the "population" of this class large enough to conduct a statistically significant analysis. Grading on the curve breeds competition rather than collaboration. Cognition research clearly reinforces Vygotsky's (Wells, 1999), initial claim: learning is a social endeavor; talking about the content facilitates the acquisition and retention of information.

4. In order to get a fair assessment of students' learning, it is recommended students be given a **variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge** and skills gained. Exams are one method of demonstration; others include graphic organizers, written assignments; presentations; student-teacher conferences, etc.

5. **During the quarter, give frequent assessments** of students' academic progress so both you and the student stay informed about their academic growth; there is no requirement to calculate these "informative assessments" into the grade.

6. **Only grade work that has been announced** to students ahead of time. Provide clear expectations through posting exemplary assignments as models and/or create rubrics that clearly explain the expected proficiency.

7. Keeping in mind the purpose of homework is to reinforce and practice course content taught in class or online, students may still **miss assignments.** Here are some options:
    a. Allow students one or two "tickets" that allow them to miss an assignment without penalty
    b. Allow the student to hand in the work late with or without a minor grade penalty
    c. Require the student to do the assignment and an additional assignment (watch a video and write a reflection, etc. this is one more way the student can deepen their knowledge)

"Missing assignment" policies must be clearly identified in your syllabus and announced in class multiple times throughout the quarter.

Students should never be penalized for our pedagogical mistake. If the majority of students perform poorly on an exam, this indicates there is a problem with curricular alignment and expected proficiency standards. The purpose of an exam is to determine what students *learned, not what they didn't*. Both formative and summative assessments are a method of communication between the teacher and students.

> If no one in the class receives a high mark on the exam, review the test for patterns in students' performance. If most students miss a specific question, throw the question out; it may have been misleading or was not adequately covered in class. This is the process of reflection and revision, central to the improvement of teaching. Today electronic **course analytics** embedded into Canvas can assist with this analysis.

8. **Always provide feedback on their progress BEFORE the fourth week** so students can determine whether they have the necessary prior knowledge or skill level to successfully complete the class. The fourth week is the last week to withdraw from a course without penalty.

9. If you use a percentage method for calculating a grade, **never assign a zero to a missing assignment.** Instead just assign 59; an F need not be graduated.

Typical Letter Grading Scale:

Failure   Passing

| F | D | C | B | A |

Percentage Grading Scale:

Failure   Passing

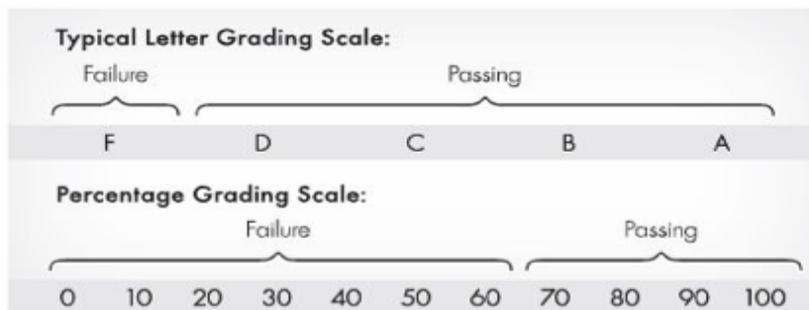0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Figure 2.1: Typical grade designations in the letter grading and percentage grading scales

"When combined with the common practice of grade averaging, a single zero can be devastating effect on a students' percentage grade. The overall grade is unfairly skewed by that one, a typical low score. To recover from a single zero in a percentage grade system, a student must achieve a minimum of nine perfect papers…A single zero can doom a student to failure, regardless of what dedicated effort or level of performance might follow (Guskey, 2004; Reeves, 2004 as cited in Guskey, 2015)