Grading

“A sound grading system is accurate, consistent, and valuable to learning.” (Nilson, 303)

Accuracy

- Create many and varied assignments and tests with clear and unambiguous directions
- Design well-constructed quizzes and tests, reflecting what you cover in class
- Offer different point values – relative to the importance of concepts, principles and relationships
- Establish grading standards appropriate for the level of your students
- Be neither automatically harsh, not overly “easy” as a grader

Consistency

- Cycle the first few tests to the back of the pile and re-grade them at the end
- Grade each section at the time, and not an exam from beginning to end
- If there’s a cover page, ask students to not put names elsewhere, to keep your grading anonymous
- Hide students’ names in Speedgrader
- Create mini-rubrics, or at least notes to self, on what earns points (or loses points) for each short answer question, to keep your grading consistent

Valuable to learning

- Teach students how to take tests
- Give students your rubric before taking the test and go over it with your students to make sure they understand it
- Give them examples of good work (not just one, but many)
- For written work, allow revisions
- Make comments at the end, but be specific
- Direct comments to the performance, not the student
- Review exams after you return them


Efficiency

- Use Speedgrader in Canvas
- Circle mistakes, do not correct them on each exam, post on Canvas a corrected exam, quiz
- Tailor the depth of your grading to the phase of learning
- Spot checks for mechanics (spelling, grammar, formatting, etc.)
- Simplify repetitive comments (make glossary for codes)
• Distribute a list of common mistakes
• Give the most attention to the key components of the rubric
• Have an answer key beforehand
• Read a few assignments before you begin
• Pace yourself (x papers/d)
• Grade when you’re in a good mood with energy
• Make constructive comments, not merely corrective (Feedforward)

Rubrics

• Choose the criteria first (the things which will earn points)
• Select sub-criteria; this will give you individual bullet points in the boxes
• Add adjectives to the sub-criteria (best and worst scores are easiest)
• Assign points. Consider the ramifications of a 10-pt scale versus a 5-point one. Should the “middle” grade be a C? Some rubrics intentionally make the middle grade a B.
• Rubrics are not truly objective – they just look that way
• Consult iRubric or Rubistar for free rubrics

Grading complaints

• After returning a graded assignment, ask students to wait a day before they come see you
• Inform students that a review of their grade might lead to an increase or a decrease of their original grade
• Have students come prepared with specific questions
• Ask students to write a short paragraph explaining why they consider they deserve a better grade
• Try to make students think ahead (“What can I do to help you do better next time?”)
• Don’t change a grade because you feel sorry for a student
• Set a one-week limit for students to ask for a grade review