

Alternative Grading

Shared philosophy among alternative grading schemes

- Grades should reflect students' learning, not their compliance or behavior.
- Grades should reflect what students can eventually show they have learned.
- Students should have multiple opportunities and methods to demonstrate their learning.
- Grades and points are nonexistent or de-emphasized in favor of rich, deep feedback.

Philosophical distinctions among common alternative grading schemes

Standards-Based Grading	Grades should reflect students' proficiency in clearly defined learning objectives.
Specifications Grading	Grades should reflect students' completion of work to clearly specified levels.
Ungrading	Grades should be minimized or nonexistent, and should be determined collaboratively by students & instructors when they must exist.

Standards-Based Grading

- Students are provided with a clear list of learning objectives (or “standards”).
- Assignments are marked based on students' demonstrated levels of proficiency on each of the relevant standards.
- Course grades are primarily based on how many of these standards students demonstrate their learning on over the course of the semester.
- Students are given many chances to demonstrate their learning.

Specifications Grading

- Each assignment is accompanied with a clear list of “specifications” of what constitutes acceptable work.
- Assignments are marked based on whether students have met each of the specifications for that assignment.
- Course grades are based on completing bundles of assignments to specified levels.
- Students are typically given chances to revise their work to demonstrate their learning.

Ungrading

- Assignments are typically not marked with a grade or other evaluation; instead, the focus is on providing feedback.
- Students are typically asked to reflect on their learning many times throughout the semester.
- Course grades are determined collaboratively by students and instructors, often through one-on-one meetings.

Resources

The Grading Conference, June 13–15, 2024 (virtual). <https://www.thegradingconference.com/>.
Alternative Grading Slack Channel <http://alternativegrading.slack.com>.

Standards-Based Grading

- Campbell, Robert, Clark, David, & O’Shaughnessy, Jessica (2020). Introduction to the Special Issue on Implementing Mastery Grading in the Undergraduate Mathematics Classroom. *PRIMUS*, 30(8–10), 837–848. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511970.2020.1778824>.
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Specifications Grading

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- Maitzen, Rohan (2021). Specifications Grading: My First Attempt. <https://rohanmaitzen.com/2021/01/04/specifications-grading-my-first-attempt/>
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Ungrading

- Bagley, Spencer (2020). Ungrading as Resistance. Talk Math With Your Friends. <https://youtu.be/BeTRp73gtp4>.
- Blum, Susan (ed.) (2020). *Ungrading: Why rating students undermines learning (and what to do instead)*. West Virginia University Press. <https://wvupressonline.com/ungrading>
- Jarvis, Claire (2021). Chemistry educators try ‘ungrading’ techniques to help students learn. *Chemical & Engineering News*, 98(16). <https://cen.acs.org/education/undergraduate-education/Chemistry-educators-try-ungradingtechniques-help/98/i16>.
- Sorensen-Unruh, Clarissa (2019). Ungrading: A Series <https://clarissasorensenunruh.com/2019/02/10/ungrading-a-series-part-1/>.
- Stommel, Jesse (2018). How to Ungrade. <https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/>.
- Stommel, Jesse (2023). *Undoing the Grade: Why We Grade, and How to Stop*. Hybrid Pedagogy Inc.