Four “Fs” for Grading to Promote Learning Success

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Session Goals
By the end of this session, you will be able to:
• Define grading for student success
• Prepare for common grading problems
• Apply the four Fs to creating a context and dialogue about grading to help students.

Defining Grading
• An Inadequate Definition

"Grading" is the process of calculating or measuring a student’s work and assigning a letter grade."

Defining Grading
• A Robust Definition
– Grading is
• assessing student learning
• establishing a course context
• building dialogue to make grades meaningful

Common Grading Problems
Grading Causes Anxiety for Students and Teachers

Common Complaints about Grades & Grading

Students
• “It isn’t fair.”
• “I don’t understand why I got that grade.”
• “I don’t know what the professor wants.”
• “I worked really hard and only earned a C.”

Faculty
• “Grading isn’t easy.”
• “Students focus on grades not learning.”
• “I told them what I expected.”
• “Students think they all deserve As.”
Four Fs for Grading Success

Frequent Feedback
Forward-Looking
Focused
Fair

Practice with feedback is necessary
Exposure and familiarity are not enough for deep learning

Design the course for "distributed practice"
Because "cramming... provides no long-term learning benefits" (Doyle & Zakrajsek, 2013, p. 75)
Test frequently

Two purposes:
- Learners practice recalling (= brain change)
- They get feedback on accuracy
  (Brown et al., 2014, p. 43)

Test frequently

WHAT? More tests?

Four Fs for Grading Success

Low-stakes testing

- Helps students know how to improve their performance in future
- Might be ungraded or worth just a few points

Classroom Assessment Techniques

- Simple strategies to diagnose learning
- Helps students know how they're progressing
- Manageable for teachers – can give group feedback
  (Angelo & Cross, 1993)

Sample Classroom Assessment Techniques

- Minute paper
  - Main points in your own words
  - Muddiest point
- Think/Pair/Share
  - Students write an response individually
  - Revise it with a classmate
  - Together, they're ready to share with the whole class
Polling

- Use polling or clicker software to diagnose student learning
- Immediate feedback for teacher and student

Four Fs for Grading Success

Focus:
- to concentrate attention

Four Fs for Grading Success

Focus:
- make your expectations clear to students

Four Fs for Grading Success

Ways to help students focus on your expectations:
- Exam Review Guides
- Rubrics
- Checklists
- Instruction Sheets
- Samples of Exemplary Work

Four Fs for Grading Success

Fair
What makes grading fair?

- Frequent feedback
- Forward-looking
- Focused
- And what else…?

Level of course and students

1. Course in context of whole curriculum
2. Developmental level of students
   - Work on component skills and build toward complex, integrative projects

Multiple components of grade

Choose a variety of ways appropriate to your field
- Writing
- Speaking
- Performing a task
- Depicting visually
- Individual work
- Group work

In sum, focus on the learners and their learning

Four Fs for Grading Success

- Frequent Feedback
- Forward-Looking
- Focused
- Fair