

Communicating Expectations Using Specification Grading

Johnson Center Roundtable

May 2022 Workshop Week

Facilitator: Jim Hebda

Question:

- What does it mean when a student gets a 73% on an assignment?
 - To you? To them?
- How can we refocus students on learning rather than grades?

Specification Grading:

- Clear Pass/Fail criteria for each assignment
 - Learning goals and/or competency focused student feedback
 - A fail on any one learning goal is a fail for the assignment
- Opportunity to reattempt motivates students to improve
 - Multiple opportunities to demonstrate passing knowledge
- Rewards students for demonstrating learning/ability at different rates
- Clear, high standards closer to real world expectations

Grading and Assigning a Course Grade:

- Clear rubric that details A- or B-level mastery as Pass
- Basic requirements can be P/F
 - Length, Style adherence, # citations, adherence to a prompt, etc.
- P/F can limit faculty time lost to creating uniform partial credit
- Course grade linked to number and/or difficulty of outcomes passed
- Bundles of work linked to different grades based on challenge
 - Retrieval vs Analysis vs creativity or decision making
- Use for all or only a portion of the course grade

Mock Syllabus 1

- 5% Attendance
- 40% P/F Short papers (4)
- 40% Midterm and Final
 - Traditionally graded or P/F by section
- 15% P/F Daily reflections

Mock Syllabus 2

- 50% P/F SLOs (5x10)
- 10% P/F Exit tickets (0.5x20)
- 20% P/F Group project
- 15, 18, or 20 bundles
- 20% Midterm and final
 - Traditionally graded or P/F by section

Discussion:

- What is one assignment you give that could benefit from a P/F rubric?
- What course would benefit from an intentional updating of the student learning goals?
- How do you think students in your favorite course would react to incorporating some P/F assignments?

“Grading tactic worked, I had never experienced the learning goals like this. It helped me to retain information better at a more effective rate than other methods.”

“I liked how the grading system was because fails did not make me nervous, but instead showed me what I needed to study.”

“I really like the way we completed the units through the quizzes and tests. Having the opportunity to really show that I comprehended the material really helped me in the end and I felt like I was actually learning things instead of memorizing.”

“This course took a different approach to our grading system which I must say is very commendable. It has forced me to look at chapters individually, know what they entail and understand them better. It also taught me to resolve any lack of understanding within a chapter.”

**- Chem 111
End of Semester Evaluations**

Sources:

Specifications Grading by Linda B. Nilson

Toledo 2015 [Encouraging Higher-Order Thinking in General Chemistry by Scaffolding Student Learning Using Marzano's Taxonomy](https://justtv.wordpress.com/2016/02/16/rethinking-grading-an-in-progress-experiment/)

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