Annotated Bibliography


The report by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee attempts to explain the unique characteristics of Australian Universities’ grading procedures which set Australian Universities apart from the rest of the world. The committee points to the autonomy of Australian Universities in being able to uniquely select appropriate standards as they see fit for the students. The report also indicates some goals and objectives that individual university standards attempt to accomplish. Explicit standards are necessary to clearly articulate learning goals so students know exactly what is expected. The article also points to a common standard of judging student performance normatively versus the performance of peers. The article comes off naturally biased towards the Australian education system that the authors serve on a committee for.


University of Illinois website provides basic guidelines to encourage professors to innovate grading criteria that can measure students’ performance most efficiently and accurately. The website gives professors the chance to see what are some advantages and disadvantages to a variety of grading procedures.


Blaisdell’s debate of imprecise grades versus personal comments depicts the very subjective grading process of an English course can be. Criticizes that objective grading system fails to treat students’ writings maturely and seriously and that all one needs is teacher’s remarks on his or her paper. Blaisdell extends his realization of the painful process in trying to justify the grades that he renders to students in such a way that it only contaminates his assessments of the papers with long unfruitful rationalizations about the grades rather than original response to the papers. Piece continues his beliefs in forgiving technical errors in a paper, but not real sins such as rudeness, thoughtlessness, meanness, and shallowness.


Raises ethical implications of grading procedures of computerized grading program, called the Intelligent Essay Processor, and assigning values to essays based on stringent rules. Offers and explores various methods for the fairest way possible of grading student works by giving illustrative examples of approaches to grading. Examines both the advantageous and substandard aspects of criterion-references grading and self or peer grading. Blanke presents his concerns regarding the side effects of both consequential grader and deontological grader. Also forwards William Frankena’s book of Ethics about three theories of utility: act, general and rule, and their relations to grading procedure. Shows how respective utilitarianism generally builds its reputation based on how an action is morally evaluated and promoted on the basis of its good consequences. Topic complicates further by introducing deontology grader, the opposite of consequential grader, which deals with morally acceptable acts regardless of consequences, as such it encourages students to follow a strict path once it has been proclaimed.

Lou Bloomfield publishes a commentary on reasons and solutions for grade inflation. He argues that grade inflation is not so much a teacher’s attempt at being popular, but rather a way to get piece of mind from students. Society rewards the outward appearance of performance rather than actual substance, and teachers can get a free pass from student complaints by simply giving higher grades. The solution is the posting of the class average as well as the grade on official transcripts. An average allows the outside world to see how all the students performed on the relative scale, and forces teachers to justify overly high or low grades. This method forces teachers to be accountable and in turn opens up the use of the full range of the grading scale.


Source provides excellent background on the purposes and goals of assessment in the higher education classroom. Sections on validity and reliability of assessment have vital information that will help clarify our interpretations of “unfair.” Sections on objective versus subjective assessment can also be used to illustrate from an instructor’s perspective why one may be used over the other.


This United Kingdom-based source provides relevant background on the purpose and goals of assessment in higher education, which are consistent with those from the American source. A discussion regarding the reliability and validity of assessment is utilized from the perspective of the underlying purpose for the assessment. The source also gives a good example of how assessment can be unknowingly biased toward.


The Senate Committee on Educational Policy recommends a change in the approach of University at Illinois calculation of Grade Point Averages (GPAs) from decimal equivalents of 0.33 and 0.67 to numerical grade weights of 0.3 and 0.7. Reasons and elaborates on the inconsistency between the Senate’s policy, which states that GPAs should be computed on “effective numerical grade weight increments of 1/3” (EP.97.19), and the campus’ practice. Also elicits reason to eradicate the mathematical imprecision that results from three “thirds” not totaling to one, which occurs regardless of the number of decimal places used. Demonstrates how the proposed weights of 0.3 and 0.7 reflect a bell-shaped distribution of grades within each letter grade. Finally concludes that the proposed change successfully offers more weight to the letter grade and less to the plus or minus, which is in accordance to general expectations.


This article provides insight into the perspective of college instructors on the “fairness” of grading policies at the recent meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. One source of debate is whether or not student effort should be a factor that contributes to final grade determination. Many professors feel that this is a better way to rate student performance, while others view this as an injustice for not strictly following the grading scale developed. The article provides excellent view points from instructors at numerous colleges and from varied disciplines.

This report by the UTA Task Force for the provost’s office researches and concludes that plus/minus grading should be applied at UTA. Chief reasons for adopting the plus/minus system include a more precise grading procedure (differentiating between a high and low B) and a more constant pressure on students to not drop performance at the end of a semester. The study concludes that contrary to the stigma, plus/minus grades drop the overall GPA by only .06 points. The report does also point to some negative effects of plus/minus grading including an increase in formal and informal student complaints when grades are on the border. This report is directly to the provost’s office and is meant to demonstrate the findings and opinion of the task force after full investigation.


Oversees the different grading procedures exercised throughout various prestigious Universities and how lecturers try to pursue uniformity in grading through subjectivity. However, this source explores the differences in teaching techniques amongst teaching assistants and offers recommendations to avoid such discrepancies.


A brief look into a different grading policy in place at Harvard Business School provides an interesting perspective on the use of grades. While the majority of the article is about the reversal of their nondisclosure stance on grades, the idea of grades as a motivating factor for students is mentioned and supported by examples. Also, the use of grades as a factor in employability is stressed by examples of companies who will not hire graduates from nondisclosure institutions.


This article discusses the controversy regarding grade inflation. Mark, the author, makes a statement on how students’ expectations for better grades have increased throughout universities. However, this need for a higher GPA assuring economic security has led to some negative results affecting the students.


Source counterbalances the goals of completing all course units while ensuring students’ improvements in their skills. Mapes succinctly briefs the importance of students in compromising their teachers’ needs as well as limitations and vice versa. Approves that a set of curriculum is necessary, but elicits arguments that it is often oversimplified and rigid of a technique. Suggests that a personalized assignments deadline augments students’ quality of writing and eventually the true purpose of the course, but concludes that the same guidelines that are intended to guide students through the learning process actually hinder the students from learning.


Reveals some United States teachers have helped students cheat on standardized tests from examining records of one thousand Chicago classrooms over eight years. Source
identifies the reasons or motivations for helping the students cheat. Also offers suggestions to prevent cheating by hiring outsiders to proctor and avoiding early distributions of paper to administrators.


The study by the Dayton School of Law examines why students fail the bar, reasons that closely parallel those for failing in other educational environments. A key point is the slowly developing apathy by students when courses get hard, and grades remain constantly low regardless of effort. This can create a feeling that effort is not commensurate to success, as well as a general loss in confidence. For this reason, grading purely on performance can hurt the students in a long term way.


This article compares several procedures behind adjusting college GPAs to account for the inconsistencies that occur in grading procedures. While the adjusting process itself is unimportant to our topic, it is notable because there are apparent inconsistencies that deem it necessary for the Educational Testing Service to find a way to appropriately adjust the GPA to make it a more accurate measure. Furthermore, the variables that are used to adjust the GPA provide insight into how an “objective” measure of aptitude might be found.


Frances Bauer and Anita Pouliot are members of the University of Western Ontario’s Ombud’s office. They frequently hear student and faculty complaints about grading procedures, and are in charge of ensuring the fairness of examinations. Fairness is defined as having an appropriate level of rigor and equity, both going hand in hand. Exams can be of greatly varying difficulty, as long as the grading and material covered is consistent with the course handout and policy. They also comment on multiple-choice vs. open-question exams, concluding that both are fair practice and a good mix is required to accommodate varying student preference. The article is aimed at other university offices to promote fairness and share guidelines for ensuring fairer grading.