

# Evaluation and Grading: The Biggest Teacher Fear!

Samra Bujak, Azamat Akbarov  
International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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**ABSTRACT----** *One of the most challenging steps in our teaching responsibilities is the evaluation of student progress. Evaluation can be one of the most threatening steps for the inexperienced teacher. Planning for student evaluation is an integral part of planning for teaching, not just the final step of the instructional process. As someone who has had to maintain a high GPA in order to gain admittance to your graduate program, you are most familiar with summative evaluation--an assignment or set of assignments that result in a letter grade that is supposed to reflect your overall grasp of course material at the end of a period of time. Without question, assessing your students with grades is one of the most important tasks you may be asked to do as a teaching assistant. However, just as important as summative evaluation--determined through quizzes, tests, term papers, mid-terms, and final exams--is the formative evaluation that we can do throughout the semester in order to assess how well your students are learning as they prepare for summative evaluation. The purpose of this paper is to help teachers, especially young inexperienced teachers, to face with their biggest fear and evaluate their students in a proper way. Paper presents several ways how they can do it easily.*

**Keywords---** evaluation, teaching, education, learning, assessment

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Receiving grades is sometimes an emotional experience. Some students take grades to heart and consider them as their personal achievement /success. Grading process is very difficult to students and teachers; both. Especially it is very hard for new teachers; young teachers. While grading our students we always wonder how to do our grading fairly and efficiently. So, if we can keep in mind some main principles, grading can be an experience that increases student learning (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

While evaluating your students it is not important just to give points and grade the student, you should also give your comments about student work and explain why you gave such good or bad grade. You have to give your grading standards and explain them what level of knowledge they should have for passing the course or to get an "A". The aim of evaluating the students is to motivate them to continue learning (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

Research indicates that how you grade depends on the way students view your course, your assumptions about teaching, learning and evaluation and your educational philosophy. We also know that when requirements or expectations for assignments and performance appraisals are not clearly articulated or communicated, students and we, ourselves become frustrated with the processes of assessment and evaluation. Grades provide the triple-crown of assessment at the end of any unit or school term.

You can measure how well a student is learning as well as how effectively you are teaching the material, and you can provide valuable feedback to students. Because grades are used to determine entrance into programs and as criteria for scholarship qualification, grades can produce anxiety in most students, and the fear of a bad grade can even inhibit learning from taking place.

While you cannot prevent all grade anxiety, here are some helpful suggestions to reduce it in your class:

1. Let your students know what is expected of them from the start of the course. Ideally, you should create a grading plan at the same time you plan the course. While you are preparing a syllabus, decide how you will evaluate student learning, how the students' work should be graded, and how much each test, paper, or assignment will count towards the final grade.
2. Check to see that all graded assignments (tests, papers, quizzes, etc.) are well-written, balanced, and clear.
3. Devise fair and reasonable grading procedures that will be applied equally to all students.
4. Provide ample feedback to your students, so that they understand why points were taken off and how they can prepare answers for later assignments.

## 2. PROCESS OF GRADING

As a teacher, while grading student work the crucial thing is to be fair and reliable. It is also recommendable to grade as efficiently as possible. State your criteria clearly. It is significant to summarize what you will be looking at when you evaluate/grade student work. Does neatness count? Is posture important? How essential is good organization? Consider grading papers anonymously. Have students turn in their work with a title or cover page with their name on it. Turn that page back on all of the assignments before you begin grading so that you will not know whose work you are evaluating (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

Grade only three to five papers at a time. Our mood and our energy level affect the grades we give.

When you finish, “norm” all the papers yourself. If you grade papers alone, particularly over several days, it is helpful to group the papers according to grade when you are done. Do all of the papers in the same grade range (e.g. the 80s, or B-range) generally have the same level of quality? If not, now is the time to make adjustments (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

For tests, problem sets and short answers, consider grading in teams. When assignments and tests have multiple problems to grade, you may save time and ensure consistency by getting together in a team and each taking two or three problems to grade on all tests. While this may be somewhat tedious, it does allow each grader to get a sense of common problems and grade more quickly by focusing one’s attention (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

Do not “split” grades. Some teachers like to give two or more grades on papers and assignments. For instance, one for content, the other for organization. However, this can suggest to students that the two are not connected, when in fact they are.

Commenting on student work is an important part of the educational process; simply assigning a grade is not enough – your comments tell the student why you graded as you did and how he or she can improve in the future. There are several benefits to commenting on student papers:

1. Comments justify and explain the grade you have chosen to give.
2. Comments let you give students feedback for continued improvement
3. Finally, comments can motivate and encourage students. When properly written, comments on student work can inspire them to continue working and improving as learners (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999).

## 3. WHAT IS THE TROUBLE WITH EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

“As used here, evaluation refers to the total process of arriving at a score or grade to demonstrate how much a student has learned about a subject. Assessment refers to the techniques such as tests and projects from which grades are derived and lead to evaluation. Below is a summary of some problems with student evaluation and assessment:

1. Evaluation is a highly inconsistent process. Teachers give different numbers and types of assessments and weight them differently.
2. There is disagreement on issues like the role and value of homework. Some teachers assign homework frequently and weight it heavily, while some don’t assign it at all.
3. Some teachers will allow retakes of tests and quizzes, others do not.
4. Different policies exist for work turned in late.
5. Districts may or require different final grades as a passing mark – 60 to 70 is a common but large range.
6. Districts may set a minimum score that teachers can record – e.g., no grade lower than a 50 is allowed.
7. The validity and reliability of student assessments vary.
8. There are major philosophical differences regarding evaluation. Some teachers view learning as primarily a student responsibility, while some place the responsibility for teaching mainly on themselves.
9. There is little agreement on many assessments and what kinds are needed for evaluation.
10. Even within the same school different teachers teach differently and test differently for the same course” (Suskie, 2009).

## 4. HOW DO EVALUATION PROBLEMS HARM STUDENT LEARNING AND TEACHER INSTRUCTION

„Without standard procedures for assessment and evaluation it is difficult if not impossible to ascertain the effectiveness of teaching and the efficiency of learning. Scores on various assessments and standardized tests vary greatly, but where does the accountability lie? With so much inconsistency it is hard to glean meaningful data from scores. When many variables are allowed to go uncontrolled responsibility is lost in the morass of numbers, procedures, techniques, attitudes, demographics, etc. Accountability becomes only a word“ (Suskie, 2009).

„What does it mean if Ms. Smith has 20 students in a ninth grade physical science class and all receive A’s and B’s? Does it mean she is a superior teacher? After all, Ms. Jones teaches the same subject to the same number of students who

received C's and D's. Based on the facts presented above, not much can be determined because there are too many unknowns. These are the dilemmas educators find themselves facing constantly" (Suskie, 2009).

„Quantitative data is the life's blood of research, and education produces lots of it. Regrettably, little of it is used. If it is used there is often just a superficial comparison of results. Beginning learners can be discouraged by exposure to teachers whose philosophies of evaluation may be tainted by over-estimating the value of homework while underrating the effects of demographics. Enthusiastic learners can be quickly discouraged by inflexible rules and deadlines that are not supported by parents“ (Suskie, 2009).

## 5. METHODS OF TESTING THE STUDENTS

McKeachie suggests in his "Teaching Tips" some planning methods of testing and assessing the students such as: - first of all is to list goals for the course, then to decide when to test the students, after that to construct the test, choose the type of questions will it be short-answer questions or multiple-choice and matching questions or essay questions. After all this teacher should decide how many questions will be there and in the end to instruct and inform students about all of this.

McKeachie recommends us to choose essay type questions because of their powerful effect on the way students study, but there is a problem sometimes because instructors don't grade essay tests very reliably. And a lot of teachers also don't know actually how to grade essay type questions and this could cause a lot of problems when it comes to grading these kind of questions. McKeachie also introduces us to other methods of assessing learning except this traditional way of giving tests and exams. Teacher can also grade:-

- Performance Assessment
- Graphic Representations of Concepts
- Research Papers, Journals,
- Portfolios
- Peer Assessment
- Assessing Group Work
- Classroom Assessment

## 6. CONCLUSION

As we can see there are a lot of ways to evaluate students except this boring way of giving the tests we have more interesting ways, modern ways to check their knowledge and assess the grade. But the teachers biggest fear is to experiment with the new, modern ways of assessing the students they rather stick to the secure, traditional ways of just giving the test and that's all, which is very bad method. Because they are afraid to try something new, especially young inexperienced teachers. The most important things that I want to highlight about testing and evaluation are that:-

- Learning is more important than grading.
- Tests and other assessments should be learning experiences as well as evaluation devices.
- Providing feedback is more important than assigning a grade.
- Try to assess attainment of all your objectives, even if some of the objectives are not appropriate criteria for grades.
- Avoid evaluation devices that increase anxiety and competition.

Teachers and administrators must become more involved in staff development that is centered on deciding what works, why it works, and how it is known that it works. Technology affords the opportunity to easily analyze data, improve assessments, share information among colleagues, access hundreds of studies, and much more. Schools must decide on the direction of instructional programs based on identified, tested, and proven best practice. There needs to be a rebirth of instruction that emphasizes intellectual prowess and relies more on the science of learning and teaching. There is much in the process of education that needs to be thrown out and much more that needs to be included. Consistency is the key.

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