

Grade Less While Students Learn More

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Overview: When learning is approached passively it results in low-level thinking, memorization and regurgitation. Which also leads to the easily utilized objective testing method, which may be appropriate for novice learners. However, passive learning does not help learners to produce knowledge nor enhance problem-solving skills that are essential for athletic trainers. Learning must take into account the process as well as the product. In teaching this translates into creating active learning assignments that are focused on the learning process and not just the end grade. Yet as faculty we are often tempted to minimize active learning assignments to avoid, for many reasons, the grading that comes with them. This session will present approaches to creating prompts that direct the student to more clearly think about the ideas and concepts of the assignments and alternative grading methods and timesaving, learner-centered feedback to elevate athletic training student learning.

Developing appropriate assignment prompts

Faculty should offer clearly defined prompts to allow all students to achieve at their highest level. Clear prompts created during assignment construction eases grading and improves student and faculty satisfaction with the assignment product. Students will engage better with the assignment resulting in a better product and a happier faculty member with less grading burden. Ultimately a clearly written assignment with appropriate prompts will help to balance learning effectiveness with efficiency.

Regardless of the type of assignment (oral, written, practical), the following assignment prompts should be included:

- Purpose
- Format/genre
- Interactive components
- Expectations for use of sources
- Audience
- Explicit, available grading criteria

While setting up appropriate assignment prompts may take additional time up front in the planning process, the result is greater time savings during the grading process.

Breakout Session: Assignment prompting

Using alternatives to the traditional grading process

Traditional grading is considered the ABCDF grading scale with instructor centered grading and feedback. Of the variety of available grading alternatives this session will touch on grading techniques, peer review, and contract grading.

Grading Techniques

While deciding on the best assignment prompts, how the assignment will be graded will also come into play. The instructor should determine what method will work best to meet the specified goals of the assignment and the type of course. Not all grading techniques will work for every course or every assignment. The following are good questions to ask when making the decision on how to grade an assignment.

- Do I focus on grammatical and editorial errors or not?
- Do I grade in a formative or summative manner?
- Do I use a rubric for my feedback or do I write in the margins?
- Do I let students negotiate the grading criteria? To what extent?
- How much do I focus on the minutia versus on the activity and behavior of learning?

Peer Review

Peer review has been shown to be an effective learning tool for students when utilized correctly and that peer assigned grades are often similar to instructor assigned grades. Peer review as part of the learning process works because students are forced to do the work ahead of time, often review the assignment instructions twice, strive to do better so as not to embarrass themselves, and take peer critique better than instructor critique. Using peer review means that the instructor must select and train the peer review process accordingly. The different types of peer review are:

- Open-Ended—for the experienced learners who understand what is expected
- Guided—instructor led through general questions to guide the learners
- Directive—instructor led with checklist of specific criteria for the learners to review

Contract Grading

Contract grading gives an instructor the freedom to move away from points and letters when grading and towards emphasis on the processes of learning. While instructors provide assignments that aid in learning, students complete a selection of the assignments at a specified level of competence for a pass/fail grade in order to meet the requirements to earn the desired grade in the course. The students also have multiple opportunities of revision. Contract grading allows instructors the opportunity to help students improve rather than focus on giving grades and moving on to the next thing. Students value that they feel they have more control over their grade. While this method may alleviate time spent determining the differences of a B- and a B, contract grading still requires clearly defined expectations of the contract and the assignments.

Breakout: Practicing grading skills

Creating revision cues in student feedback

Faculty often grade assignments in the same fashion as they were graded, which is not necessarily effective, it is just what they know. Focusing on the positives and the process and not just the negatives in your feedback can help transition the student from a passive learner into an engaged learner with the tools to improve. While all feedback to students should be quality feedback, the dependence on feedback is a direct result of the ability to create high quality assignment prompts that minimize the amount of feedback required.

Student Identified Feedback Failures

- Minimal or no feedback or explanation of a grade
- Only negative comments provided
- No feedback on how to improve
- No grading criteria included or explanation of grading criteria

Feedback Successes

- Rubric/matrix shows positive and negative in easy to review fashion
- Overall summaries of positive and negatives give more depth and helps show positives
- Learner-centered feedback helps students identify weaknesses and understand where remediation is necessary in a constructive fashion
- Tone of voice in feedback can make or break the student response to the feedback

Breakout: Feedback cues

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