

## Grading Crunch: Emergency Message

What you are facing is grading final exams/papers/projects, right? The best practices on grading emphasize that we should separate comments from grading. And we should comment only when and how the comments will improve the student's learning in the course.

So:

- Will the student rewrite the work? If not, don't comment.

But you need to justify the grade, right? And you need to have a mental framework to guide your evaluation. Yes, we all know we should have developed thorough guidelines before the assignment, with rubrics and help and all that. But we didn't. So:

- Make yourself a checklist, photocopy it, and write little notes as you read the writing.

Even if you don't know exactly what to include as factors, you can still identify lots of basic ones. Imagine you have a series of questions on an exam. For each question, you could have items like:

- Uses course terms correctly
- Provides the expected example or illustration
- Communicates effectively

Then you type up a sheet with those items under each question number, the points for the question, plus a little space. Photocopy it, one for each student. You read the student answer and write a word or two by each item and put a score.

Same thing for a final paper. Why should we edit a student's final paper??????? (For that matter, why should we edit any paper, but that is another conversation.)

- Make a list of generic expectations for the paper, using your instructions as a base. Feel free to use mine above, plus others that fit, like:
  - Sufficient number of sources
  - Sources are appropriate
  - Citations are correctly made
  - Paper's overall argument is clearly made
  - Paper meets the expectations of the assignment

This advice is from someone who assigns lots of writing and gives lots of feedback. But I try to do it wisely, when and where it will help the student learn. For most of us at this stage, extensive comments will not help students learn.

So stay tuned for next semester, when I'll toss out some ideas for making grading more effective and efficient from the beginning and all through the semester!