
Grader Evaluation of Student Work

This handout lists general guidelines to keep in mind when evaluating student submissions, both exams and homework. The goals of these guidelines are to make the grader aware of some of the issues that concern both students and instructors. Your marking of student work, your awarding of points, will often be scrutinized by both the instructor and the students. You should be aware that the collective result of your marking is the basis for the assignment of a letter grade to the student, a permanent record on the student's university transcript.

The purposes of student submissions are many. To students, they are work product that validates their grade and their knowledge of course material. To instructors, they are a means to evaluate the knowledge of students and mastery by students of course material.

Student Issues:

1. Instructive: Do they know where they went wrong? In many situations, the corrections made by graders help to show the student where they went wrong. If you don't award full credit, you must indicate some nature of what is incorrect. Not awarding full credit alone is insufficient to let the student know what is missing.

2. Amount of points awarded: Are the number of points awarded for the student's work representative of the underlying knowledge? Many times, a student will say that they deserve more points than they were awarded.

3. Tabulation: Are all the points added correctly? Are the numbers of points awarded per page correctly recorded on the front of the submission?

4. Discrepancies: Students will often go to the grader first with their questions. Additionally, due to logistics of processing large numbers of submissions, often a chain-of-command for discrepancy resolution is followed.

5. Every last point: Many times students will ask for regrades to try to get more points.

6. Timeliness: Often one assignment builds on another. Often students want to get assignments back before the next one is submitted so that they can know where not to go wrong in the future. The instructor should set the expectations of how long is appropriate. The grader should communicate back to the instructor if the students cannot get their work back within the expected time frame.

Instructor Issues:

Each particular instructor will have their own concerns about the marking of student submissions. Please take note of those concerns. Additionally, the list below is a welcome supplement.

1. Accuracy: The instructor will depend upon the accurate marking of student work. The sum of the points in assignments and exams determines the student's letter grade for the course.

2. Consistency: Most often, the same grader will grade all submissions for a particular question. The guidelines may not address every situation, and if the same person grades the same question, the result is often most consistent.

3. Clarity: The student should be told where and how they are not correct. This cuts down on student questions and regrade requests.

4. Accountability: The grader should initial each page/question that he or she is grading. If the student has questions in which the instructor needs grader input before making a decision, these initials help to expedite which grader to contact.

5. Positive Points or Negative Points: You should have a convention and stick with it. If positive points are awarded, you should also indicate the total possible for that question. (1/3 for example). Additionally, if you are subtotaling, sub-totals should be distinct from normal award of points.

For example, you can "block" out your positive sub-total points. Lastly, for the page, you should also have a page total, clearly distinguished on the top or bottom corner of the page. For example: Page Total: 25/45.

6. Blank Space: When assignments are distributed to students, they can add or change the submission. Circling the parts of the answer that are correct, and crossing out the parts of the answer that are incorrect will discourage submission of altered work for regrade. Upon inspection, the original student's work should be clearly distinguishable.

7. Timeliness: Often, there is a "statue of limitations" under which submissions are accepted for reevaluation. These limits need to be clearly communicated to students.

8. Compound errors: Often for questions with multiple parts, when a student misses an early part of a question, the key for the remaining parts of the question will not match the student response. Since exams are intended to assess understanding of course material, whenever possible the remaining parts of the student's response should be evaluated using the key as a guide with consideration as if the early parts of the student response was indeed correct.

Logistics of Grading Guideline and Key

For some submissions, you will be provided a grading guideline and key. For others, you will be asked to create the guideline and key yourself. In either case, you may be amending or adding to the guideline once you start evaluating student submissions. Regardless of how complete is the guideline, there is always the unforeseen student response. Such a response needs to be integrated into the guideline as if it were there originally. You should return your augmented guideline back to the instructor. You may even have to rewrite a "final" guideline to summarize all that you have done.

Provided Guideline:

You'll need to follow the provided guideline to the best of your ability. If situations arise in the submissions that are not addressed in the guideline, you should immediately ask for clarification. Bringing up such issues early in the grading process helps all other graders be consistent and fair.

Creating a Guideline:

If you are asked to create a key or guideline, after doing so, you should review what you have created with the Instructor. Your key and guideline need to be reviewed for accuracy and consistency with course content and course policies.

Grading Focus:

Before you start the evaluation of the student work, be sure that you understand and agree with the answers in the key. Sometimes mistakes exist in the key that go uncovered. If you catch an error before the evaluation begins, much time and energy is saved in not having to regrade the exams. Additionally, sometimes you will come across unusual student responses. If possible, you should bring such cases to the attention of the instructor, as they often show insight not always obvious at first inspection by the grader. After grading a few problems, please have your grading reviewed.

Identification:

Be sure that your name and quarter is written on the page of the exam key that you are using. Before you leave the grading session, be sure that you review your final key with the Instructor, TA, or Head Tutor. Be sure you submit the key when all is okay.