Specifications Grading:
Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time

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Participant Outcomes

- Articulate criteria for evaluating a grading system.
- Critically evaluate our predominant system of grading against these criteria.
- Explain how the new grading system introduced here, *specifications (specs) grading*, works and meets these criteria.
- Implement the new grading system in your own courses.
Criteria of an “Ideal” Grading System

- Upholds high academic standards
- Grade reflects students’ achievement of outcomes
- Students know what is expected of them
- Rewards higher-order cognitive thinking and creativity
- Motivates students to learn and do excellent work
- Makes students feel responsible for their grades
- Minimizes student-faculty conflict (e.g., grade protests)
- Minimizes student and faculty stress
- Gives students feedback they use
- Saves faculty time
- Discourages cheating
- Fosters high inter-rater agreement
Additions?
Subtractions?

Let’s evaluate our grading system.
A New Gestalt
Element #1

Pass/Fail grading of assignments & tests — like competency-based educ and:


http://www.wiu.edu/users/mfll/GRADCONT.HTM

Elements #1 & #2

- Pass/Fail grading of assignments & tests
- Tokens (virtual)
How Do You Wind up with Final Letter Grades?

Point system: Each passed test or assignment = N points (all or nothing)
# of points at end = A, B, C, D, or F

Or Bundles/Modules
Elements #1, #2, and #3

- Pass/Fail grading of assignments & tests
- Tokens
- Bundles or Modules
A Graphic Representation of the Relationship between More Hurdles and Higher Hurdles

Higher Hurdles
Bloom’s hierarchy of cognitive operations;
Anderson & Krathwohl’s revised hierarchy;
Perry’s stages of cognitive development;
Wolcott & Lynch’s steps of problem-solving skills and thinking performance patterns;
ability to solve more complex problems
10-Bundle Model

- For a D, students have to complete bundles 1 through 5.
- For a C, they have to complete bundles 1 through 7.
- For a B, they have to complete bundles 1 through 8.
- For an A, they have to complete all 10 bundles.
For a D, students have to complete only the easiest & most basic bundle.

For a C, they have to complete that basic bundle + a more challenging one.

For a B, they have to complete these 2 bundles + an even more challenging 3\textsuperscript{rd} one.

For an A, they have to complete all 4 bundles, where the 4\textsuperscript{th} is the most challenging one.
3 Synthetic/Hybrid Models

For D: average 60-69% on exams
For C: average 70% or higher on exams
For B: C requ’ts & complete a group project
For A: B requ’ts & complete an individual paper
For C: successfully complete Module 1
For B: C requ’ts & Module 2
For A: B requ’ts & score ≥ 90% on Module 3

For C: average 70% or higher on exams
For B: C requ’ts & bundle of assignments
For A: B requ’ts & score ≥ 90% on final exam
For Online or Blended Classes

For C: average $\geq 70\%$ on non-proctored exams

For B: C requ’ts & average $\geq 80\%$ on add’l assignments

For A: B requ’ts & average $\geq 90\%$ on advanced material; OR B requ’ts & score $\geq 90\%$ on proctored final
Let’s Evaluate New Grading System

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