

# Grade-related criteria and their use in marking

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## Some issues

- what to assess (knowledge, skills, understanding)
- what can/cannot be measured
- how to assess and mark/grade (accuracy of interpretation)
- who should assess (role of teacher, student, awarding bodies etc)
- ensuring accuracy of judgments (marker reliability)
- fairness and transparency
- levelness, benchmarking, calibration
- mark/grade distribution
- profiling across assessment opportunities and weighting
- what to measure, what is being measured and the predictive power of it (validity)
- backwash effect

## Indicators for quality assurance

- curriculum fidelity (clear curricular specification and broad coverage in the assessment)
- comparability (consistency of approach, common understanding of criteria)
- dependability (content validity and reliability, consistency and comparability)
- public credibility
- context description and
- equity (use of a range of indicators and multiple opportunities to achieve)

(Gipps, 2012)

## Assessment

- the process of forming a judgment about the quality and extent of student achievement or performance
- therefore by inference a judgment about the learning that has taken place

(Sadler, 2005)

## Types of assessment

- unseen examinations, structured or unstructured, with or without choice of questions
- open book examinations
- examinations with advance information about questions
- single question unseen paper
- multiple choice tests, quizzes
- coursework assessment
- oral examination
- assessed report, dissertation, thesis
- negotiated assessments
- self, peer, group assessment
- portfolios

(Elton & Johnston, 2002)

## Principles of educational assessment

- clear standards are set for performance based on holistic criteria;
- assessment processes are shared with pupils;
- pupils are encouraged to monitor themselves;
- mastery and progress orientated feedback is given;
- encourages pupils to think and is based around good-quality tasks that are anchored in important and relevant subject matter and are engaging, contextualised and equitable;
- is concrete and within the experience of the learner and takes place in conditions that are not threatening;
- values the overall quality of the response;
- features assessment by teachers who have a good understanding of the constructs they are assessing as a key component

(Gipps, 2012)

## Assessment criteria

- explain what a student needs to demonstrate in order to complete an assessment successfully
- provide the minimum requirement expected of students
- differ according to the discipline, the type of assessment and the level of the students

(Sadler, 2005)

## Good assessment and feedback practices

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards).

To what extent do students in your course have opportunities to engage actively with goals, criteria and standards, before, during and after an assessment task?

2. Encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks.

To what extent do your assessment tasks encourage regular study in and out of class and deep rather than surface learning?

3. Deliver high quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct.

What kind of teacher feedback do you provide – in what ways does it help students self-assess and self-correct?



4. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.

To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes activate your students' motivation to learn and be successful?

5. Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher-student).

What opportunities are there for feedback dialogue (peer and/or tutor-student) around assessment tasks in your course?

6. Facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning.

To what extent are there formal opportunities for reflection, self-assessment or peer assessment in your course?

7. Give learners choice in assessment – content and processes.

To what extent do students have choice in the topics, methods, criteria, weighting and/or timing of learning and assessment tasks in your course?

8. **Involve students in decision-making about assessment policy and practice.**  
To what extent are your students in your course kept informed or engaged in consultations regarding assessment decisions?
  
9. **Support the development of learning communities**  
To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes help support the development of learning communities?
  
10. **Help teachers adapt teaching to student needs**  
To what extent do your assessment and feedback processes help inform and shape your teaching?

(Nicol, 2007)

## Rationale for criterion-based grading

- Students deserve to be graded on the basis of the quality of their work alone, uncontaminated by reference to how other students in the course perform on the same or equivalent tasks, and without regard to each student's previous level of performance.
- At the point of beginning a course of study, students deserve to know the criteria by which judgments will be made about the quality of their work. This has a primarily **prospective purpose**, which is to enable learners to use the information to shape their work intelligently and appropriately while it is being developed. However, specifying the bases for grading also serves **retrospectively** in that stated criteria help to provide a rationale for grading judgments after they have been made and the results given back to the students.

(Sadler, 2005)

## Grade-related criteria

- criteria are attributes or rules that are useful as levers for making judgments analytically (as opposed to holistically)
- explain what a student needs to demonstrate in order to achieve a certain grade or mark in an assessment
- enable students to be positioned within the overall set of marks available for an assessment

(Sadler, 2005)