Minimalistic grading: Increasing efficiency while maximizing student benefit

Monday, March 10th, 2014
Outline

• Goals of grading
• How to best achieve these goals
  • Minimalistic grading
  • Grading rubrics
• How YOU would achieve these goals
Goals of grading

Many possible goals of grading:
- Reinforce course objectives
- Provide helpful feedback
- Outline future course expectations
- Grammar mistakes? Essay structure?

What are your own grading goals?
Goals of grading

- What if you don’t have time to give students as much feedback as you’d like?
  - Example: 30 minutes per assignment x 200 PSY 100 students x 2 sections = 200 hours of grading (for a halftime TA assignment, that’s 10 weeks of work)

- Can your grading goals still be achieved?
How best to achieve these goals

- One way to achieve these goals is through minimalistic grading, or the Less is More (L = M) technique (Leydens & Santi, 2006).

- L = M technique
  - Summary paragraph
  - Few (if any) margin comments
  - Grading “rubric”
  - Key items
How best to achieve these goals

- L = M technique
- Summary paragraph
  - One-paragraph summary of the good and the bad
- Few (if any) margin comments
  - Repetitive across assignments, takes a lot of time. If “track changes”, easy for student to avoid reading these at all.
- Grading “rubric”
  - A handout for what your notations mean. Example: * means these claims are not sufficiently supported.
- Key items
  - Perhaps you can’t give feedback on every part of the paper. What are the most important parts for that assignment?
### Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Comment and Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(checkmark)</td>
<td>Good point—on target! Keep this up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>I can’t understand the meaning of the sentence or phrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awk.</td>
<td>This is an awkward construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Def</td>
<td>Define what this word or phrase means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elab.</td>
<td>Elaborate. This needs support. Why have you said this? Why or how is what you have written of use in your argument?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.I.</td>
<td>Follow instructions. You have not followed the instructions given on the assignment sheet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How would you achieve these goals?

- Ask yourself, what are my grading goals? Create your own grading rubric. Share with a partner.
Benefits of minimalistic grading

- More efficient grading – easier to grade papers in a reasonable amount of time.
- Clear expectations – rubric outlines your goals for the assignment, and ensures fairness across individuals.
- The extra student effort creates an additional learning experience! (Bjork & Bjork, 2006)
  - Desirable difficulties – when more effort is required to process information, it is learned more thoroughly and retained longer.
  - Makes sense – thinking about skimming typed comments, versus “translating a foreign code” – one requires learners to understand the content, and one doesn’t – which would you prefer?
Questions?

Please email any questions to: delozier@rams.colostate.edu

Thank you!