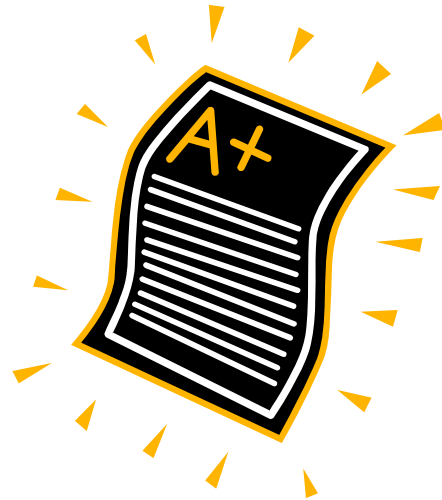


# Grading

Freshman Seminar is a letter graded course. The university requires that instructors explain their grading policy in the course syllabus. This section will provide some suggestions for grading criteria, grading models, and sample assignments. You should choose a grading system that best fits your own style and goals.

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## **Grading Philosophy**

Grading is the means by which we assess student learning in our courses. Grading includes tailoring assignments to the learning goals of the course, establishing criteria, helping students acquire the knowledge they need, assessing student learning over time, shaping student motivation, feeding back results so students can learn from their mistakes, and using results to plan future teaching methods.<sup>1</sup>

Freshman Seminar is a letter graded course; therefore, you must give assignments and make assessments of the submitted work. We do not expect that all our students will receive A's. We do expect that your course will have high academic standards comparable to other first-year Appalachian courses.

Assignments should be meaningful and clearly explained. The purpose of each activity should be clearly articulated to students. Students respond best to learning environments in which they understand the purpose and goals of what they are doing.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, feedback should be provided to every student in a timely, constructive, and specific manner. Students should understand why they received the appropriate grade and what they could do to improve the assignment. Furthermore, the University requires that we explain our grading policy in our syllabus.

This section will provide some suggestions for assignments, grading criteria, means of feedback, and grading models. You should choose a system that best fits your own style, goals, and values, and then adapt it as you see fit.

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, Barbara E. and Virginia J. Anderson. Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Erickson, B. & Strommer, D. Teaching College Freshmen. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991.

## Things to Consider when Grading Freshman Work<sup>3</sup>

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- The primary function of grading is to communicate as accurately as possible the extent to which students have learned what the course was designed to accomplish.
- Frequent evaluations provide structure many freshmen need to keep up with their work. They also enable them to determine whether their study activities are adequate before it is too late.
- Have an assignment due every two or three weeks.
- Give shorter tests and/or written assignments during the first couple of months of the freshman year.
- Grade according to predetermined standards (see Grading Models for examples) and make those standards explicit at the outset. Students are more likely to achieve high standards if they know what those standards are.
- If the first one or two evaluations produce many low scores, it may indicate that there is a problem with instruction or the clarity of the assignment. It is worth exploring.
- Consult with colleagues about what you can reasonably expect freshmen to accomplish in one term and ask others to review your assignments before you administer them.
- Talk with students about academic integrity and why we value it, take reasonable preventive measures to prevent cheating (e.g. create new assignments each semester), and pursue official action when cheating is discovered. Consult the section in the manual concerning academic integrity for more information.
- Give students opportunities to rewrite papers or retake an exam. This can reduce pressure and often improves learning. Compromise by taking the average of the first and second grades. Allowing students to rewrite papers also meets the spirit of the Writing (W) designator.

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<sup>3</sup> Summarized from Teaching College Freshmen, by Bette Erickson and Diane Strommer, Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1991

## Giving Feedback<sup>4</sup>

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- When grading assignments, ask yourself, What does this learner need from me at this time? Shape your comments accordingly.
- Speak to the learner, not the error. Focus on what the student has achieved and what might yet be achieved.
- Praise the student for the progress made, indicate what needs to be done, and give advice to the student about how to do those things.
- Offering your students the opportunity to submit a draft before the final paper can be very effective. Students are more highly motivated to use the draft comments because they can still do something about that particular paper.
- When grading, attempt to outline the student's paper. If/when the outline breaks down, you can share this with the student in feedback.
- Communicate priorities. Students typically try to revise by trying to fix the first passage the teacher has marked, then the second passage, and so on. They tend to ignore those final comments teachers make on a paper that are usually more global in nature, for example, not well-organized, needs better evidence, etc. When a paper is in deep trouble, try to only communicate those more global concerns so as not to confuse the student with more superficial issues.
- Avoid surprises. By carefully spelling out the criteria for the paper, students can often avoid large disappointments or they can at least see them coming.

### Sample Checklist:

- Proofread for spelling mistakes
- Edit for grammatical errors, word choice, & style
- How could the paper be better organized?
- Does the introduction effectively explain the purpose of the paper?
- Is the conclusion effective?
- Are there appropriate transitions between ideas?
- Are references correctly cited within the text?
- Do the responses fully answer the questions?
- Does the paper clearly explain ideas and concepts?
- Does the paper provide personal & specific examples to support points?

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<sup>4</sup> Summarized from Walvoord and Anderson, (1998) Effective Grading, pp. 110-115.

## Grading Models

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### Model 1: Accumulated Points

The underlying principle is that, to some extent, good or poor performance in one area can be offset by work in other areas. This model is developmental in the sense that a poor performance early in the course is not necessarily crippling if the student earns enough points.

Example (from Beth Marsh's syllabus):

Attendance	100 points
Class Participation	100 points
WebCT Journals (10)	100 points
Daily Activities and Quizzes	100 points
Cultural Event reaction paper	25 points
Class Cultural Event attendance	25 points
Middle School Project	150 points
DMA Projects (5)	100 points
Myers-Briggs paper	100 points
Wellness presentation	100 points
Final exam	100 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000 points</b>

### Model 2: Percentage/Weighted System

The underlying principle is that several kinds of performances are distinct from one another, and that they are valued differently in calculating the final evaluation. The instructor can apply various values and criteria in deciding how heavily to count each type of work. There may even be a developmental progression, where the instructor gives a low weight to early tests/assignments and a higher weight to later tests/assignments or the final exam.

Example:

Papers	25%
Attendance	20%
Journals	20%
Daily Activities	10%
Presentation	10%
Final Project	15%

There are, of course, other grading models. These two are the most commonly used in teaching Freshman Seminar at ASU. Choose a model that best fits your own style. *It is most important to include an explanation of your grading model in your syllabus and to explain it to your students in class (maybe several times).*

## Sample Assignments and Grading Rubrics

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Once you have established the assignments that assess what you want your students to learn, *you need to ensure that your instructions will be clear to students*. With sketchy or vague assignments, you run the risk of having students turn in work that is not relevant or desirable. On the following pages you will find several examples of clear assignments and grading rubrics used by Freshman Seminar instructors.

## Myers-Briggs Essay Guidelines

Point value = **100 pts**

Due date: **Tuesday, October 10**

- 1) Please list your Myers-Briggs type and explain what **each** letter means about you. Provide some examples to illustrate your explanation.
- 2) Address how understanding your MBTI score can help you be more successful in college. You should give examples for **each** trait about how it can help **and** hinder your college success. Please be as detailed and specific as possible, providing a thoughtful analysis.

This essay must be typed, double-spaced, and should be about three pages in length. I am looking for thoughtful responses and critical analysis. You should also pay attention to style, grammar, and spelling (Remember, I'm a J). You may use any resources that you wish, including *New Connections* and the handouts you received in class. However, do not plagiarize. Cite ideas that are not your own using the MLA method.

## Myers-Briggs Essay – Grading Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Eligible for rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

Point value = **100 pts**

Due date: **Tuesday, October 24**

\_\_\_\_\_(30 pts) Please list your Myers-Briggs type and explain what each letter means about you. And provide some examples to illustrate your explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_(40 pts) How can understanding your MBTI score help you succeed in college?

\_\_\_\_\_(20 pts) You should give *examples* for **each** trait about how it can **help** you succeed in college.

\_\_\_\_\_(20 pts) You should give *examples* for each trait about how it can **hinder** your college success.

\_\_\_\_\_(10 pts) This essay must be typed, double-spaced, and should be about three pages in length.

\_\_\_\_\_(20 pts) You should also pay attention to style, grammar, and spelling.

Comments:

**Value: 100 points**  
**Due: Monday, July 26**

## Career Exploration Assignment Guidelines

### Assignment:

1. Complete a counseling interview session with a Peer Career volunteer. **Turn in your notes from this session with your paper.**
2. Complete an assessment inventory (CPPlus, O\*Net, or Discover) at Peer Career and receive a list of jobs/fields to match your inventory results. **Include this list in the paper that you turn in to me.**
3. Write a 2-3 page summary paper evaluating two careers. The evaluation should include a description of the job, work tasks, work settings, salary range, education and training (associated majors especially), employment outlook, skills needed for the job, benefits, and opportunities for advancement.
4. Be sure to conclude with your thoughts on which major/career(s) you are now thinking about pursuing.

This paper should be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and grammatically correct. Please ask someone to proofread it before handing it in. Be sure to include your notes from your meeting with a Peer Career volunteer and your results from the assessment inventory you completed in Peer Career.



## **Journal Topics**

*Weeks 1-5*

*Please post all journals to WebCT.*

**Journal topic #1:** Tell us about why you are here at Appalachian, how things are going so far, and what you want to get out of your time here. Set *5 goals* for yourself. Tell us about those 5 goals and why you have chosen them. **Your journal entry is due Friday (August 29) by midnight.** If you have trouble posting your journal to WebCT this week, please email it to both Beth ([glassek@appstate.edu](mailto:glassek@appstate.edu)) and Josh ([jc37045@appstate.edu](mailto:jc37045@appstate.edu)).

**Journal topic #2:** This week (and last) you have undoubtedly discovered things about yourself that you didn't realize before or that you hadn't thought about in a while. Tell us about what you have learned about yourself this week and how those things will make a difference in your life for the remainder of the fall semester. Also tell us how things are going for you so far. How are your other classes going? **Your journal entry is due Friday (September 5) by midnight.**

**Journal topic #3:** Pick your own topic (see syllabus for ideas). **Your journal entry is due Friday (September 12) by midnight.**

**Journal topic #4:** Think of one of the successful experiences you have had so far in your college experience. What was it? What made the experience successful? What did you learn from your success? Think of an unsuccessful experience or failure you have had this semester. Why did it occur? How could you have prevented it? What did you learn from it? **Your journal entry is due Friday (September 19) by midnight.**

**Journal topic #5:** Evaluate your tutoring experience up to this point. What good things are happening at the school? What is surprising to you? What mistakes have you made or seen? What is your favorite thing about the experience? Your least favorite thing? Name two goals you would like to achieve through your tutoring experience for the rest of the semester? **Your journal entry is due Friday (September 26) by midnight.**

## **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

### **Paper Assignment**

Value = 100 points

Requirements: Typed, double-spaced. Should be approximately 3-5 pages.

Please choose (2) of the following questions to answer. This is an academic paper; therefore, I will be grading on content, critical thought, spelling, and grammar. You should include an introduction and conclusion, as well as have transitions between ideas. Please be very specific and thorough when answering these questions. You should make reference to the book and use citations when necessary. Remember that you must cite the author even when you paraphrase. See below for an example of MLA citations.

#### **Topics:**

- 1) What does it mean to be proactive? Are you? Can you achieve this? What can you do to start being proactive?
  
- 2) Covey believes that whatever is at the center of our lives will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power. What is the center of your life? How does it affect the areas of your life? Briefly discuss the concept of being principle centered. Are you principle centered? Can you achieve this?
  
- 3) Describe the concept of the Emotional Bank Account. What are the major deposits? Describe this concept in connection with one of your own relationships, be it a parent, friend, or significant other. Are you making more withdrawals than deposits?
  
- 4) Discuss empathic listening. What does this mean and why is this important? Do you do this? Can you? Think about your significant relationships when answering this question.
  
- 5) What is meant by the term "Sharpening the Saw?" What are the four dimensions of renewal **and how do you** address each of these areas?

**For these questions, you should clearly explain Covey's ideas and concepts, and then use your own examples to support these points.**

#### **MLA Guide to In-Text Citations:**

##### **Direct Quote (with signal phrase):**

Covey states that, "insert quote here" (67).

##### **Direct Quote (without a signal phrase):**

"here is the quote" (Covey 67).

**Paraphrase:** This is not my idea, but I am summarizing it (Covey 67).

## **7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

\_\_\_\_\_ Spelling, grammar, word choice, & style (20 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization, Transitions, Introduction, & Conclusion (15 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Proper use of citations (10 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Explanation of Covey's ideas or concepts (25 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal analysis, examples to support Covey's ideas (30 points)

## Wellness Presentation

Value = **100 points**

Due: **November 16 or 18**

You will be divided into groups of three-four and be required to make an oral presentation on a wellness topic. You will need to address the topic itself, statistics about the topic as it relates to ASU, and where you can go on our campus for help if need it (could be more than one place).

### Possible Topics:

- ◆ Alcohol
- ◆ Drugs
- ◆ Nutrition
- ◆ Safe sex/STD's
- ◆ Sleep
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Eating disorders
- ◆ Colds and Flu
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Managing Stress

### The presentations must:

- 1) Be 10-15 minutes in length
- 2) Use PowerPoint (we will go over this in class)
- 3) Have at least five sources (you must have at least one source from each of the following areas: Internet, your textbook, wellness center, and library).
- 4) Include a bibliography (MLA Method) for your presentation, listing each source and where you found it.
- 5) Conform to proper presentation guidelines: dress appropriately, be confident, be yourself, speak slowly, and be organized.
- 6) Individually submit a ½ to 1 page paper detailing your contributions to the group's effort.

All group members must be involved and are required to speak.

Group's Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you are  
evaluating your own  
group.

## Wellness Presentation Evaluation

On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate the group on the following factors. Please note that 5 is a high score, and 1 is a low score.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The group began their presentation with an introduction that included an overview of their presentation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The group provided accurate information in an organized format.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The group's power point presentation was effectively incorporated into the presentation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The speakers maintained good body language including eye contact, body movement, pleasant voice tone, and natural smile/inviting facial movement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Overall Impression – The presenters were “well-rehearsed,” highly organized, the main points flowed in a logical order, and the presentation held your attention.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What letter grade would you assign to this group?

What did the group do most effectively?

What should they pay more attention to in future presentations?

**Wellness Presentation**  
**Student Feedback/Evaluation Form**

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*Please rate the following on a ten-point scale (with ten being highest):  
You may also add comments below each item.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ The introduction was effective
- \_\_\_\_\_ The PowerPoint presentation (layout, organization, color, graphics, font size, easy to read, etc..)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The presentation was organized in a logical manner
- \_\_\_\_\_ The presentation included smooth transitions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Delivery (eye contact, avoiding “umms”, did not read from notes, tone, gestures, pace, etc..)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The information presented was useful/relevant
- \_\_\_\_\_ The presentation was engaging/interesting
- \_\_\_\_\_ The speakers seemed prepared
- \_\_\_\_\_ The presenters knew the information they presented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The conclusion was effective