

TWO SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS FOR CONTRACT GRADING

Peter Elbow

Self Evaluation of Learning

Because the contract grade (like any grade) tells so little about what students actually learned during the course, I get them to fill out this form at the end of the semester and bring it to a final conference. I want them to figure out what they did learn. As we go over it, I tell them where I agree and disagree. Usually I agree. If I had too many students for conferences, I would still ask them to fill it out.

NAME: _____ Date _____

Short answers are fine for these questions (eg., Yes, Sort of, No), but feel free to elaborate.

About your grade:

Did you meet contract terms for a B? (Check out the contract again.)

Did you have many drafts that could push you to a higher grade?--assignments I noted as "excellent" or better than needed for the contract?

Here are the actual learning goals I had for you:

Are you able to enjoy and use writing? E.g.,

- To enjoy the process, to throw yourself into it, to take risks?
- To use writing in your life, figure things out, make decisions, deal with feelings?
- To use writing to help you learn material in other courses?
- To enjoy sharing writing with others--and give and get responses?

"Invention": are you able to find lots of ideas and words?

Thinking, perplexity: are you able to dig to real questions in your essays? to get to what really matters? to push toward figuring something out--creating a *movement* of thinking?

Voice: can you get life and energy into your language? Can you make your writing sound comfortably like you—or like the way you want to sound?

"Show, not tell": Can you find words that make people see what you see, feel what you feel?

Genuine revising: Can you rethink or "re-see" what you've written and try out new ideas, new structures, new voices? develop or explore further what you've already written?

Copy editing: Can you successfully get rid of virtually all mistakes in grammar and mechanics?

Feedback: can you give good feedback to others--and perhaps more important, can you get them to give you the feedback you need?

How well did you come to understand the writing process and learning process?

How was your level of effort over the semester?

How much do you feel you improved your writing over the semester?

Illustrating the Simplicity of Record Keeping under Grading Contract

Note that I need to record only those occasions when a student has either failed to meet the conditions for the contract—or exceeded them. Here are some representative examples. For students like Sarah Applebaum, I have no record at all for the whole semester: they have simply done everything needed for the B. I've given these students lots of feedback but I have no "grade" to record other than the silence that means "You're still fine for your B." Sometimes, of course, I write little notes to myself in my file about the student. (Names are changed.)

Sarah Applebaum.

MIDSEMESTER GRADE: B.

Final Grade B.

Chris Fuller.

Out 9/18. 10/6 no 3b. Out 10/2. Out 10/9. 4a unsatisfactory, not enough effort.

MID SEMESTER GRADE: B/C.

11/5 not enough journal. 11/6 letter too short; 11/11 5p unsatisfactory--full of errors. 11/13 no reading report--though he did the reading. Out 11/24 and 11/26.

Final Grade: C.

Erik Smith.

Excellent revision on 3c. Excellent at-home feedback you wrote on someone else's midprocess.

MIDSEMESTER GRADE: NOT YET UP TO A OR A/B FOR FINAL GRADE, BUT IN THE RUNNING FOR IT IF YOU CAN HAVE SOME MORE EXCELLENT JOBS.

3/29 excellent for 4b. 4/15 skimpy journal, though he protests. Excellent job on 6b.

Final Grade: A/B

Sean McAllister.

1b, virtually nothing--didn't read assignment. Made it up following week--and did good job. 2/18 missed conference. 2/23 too little revising for 3c. Out 3/4. Out 3/11. Made up 3p and process. Extra revising for revision of essay 3--very good job.

MIDSEMESTER GRADE: B, BUT YOU ARE SAGGING. YOU'VE USED UP YOUR TWO CUTS.

4/1 extra revising for 4c--and a very good job. Pretty strong on 4c and 4p. Excellent on 5a. 4/13 made up feedback on someone else's 4b. 4/15 out (didn't check journal). 5c--strong and interesting if not really outstanding.

Final Grade A/B.

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### **About my code.**

--The numbers 1 through 6 represent six essays done throughout the semester.

--a = first draft

--b = midprocess draft

--c = final substantive revised draft: the best essay they can make, not worrying about copy editing

--p = publication draft: the only assignment is to copy edit or get it "virtually without errors in standard edited English."

Not every essay went through all those drafts. I print out their midsemester grades for them on little slips of paper in ALL CAPS.