Alternative Assessments and Feedback
The Problems

- Students don’t respond to feedback.
- Students fixate on the grade.
- Professors worry about cheating on tests and plagiarism on written work.
- Professors and Students are opposing forces when it comes to grades.
- No one is digging into the content and practice of the discipline.
Potential Solutions

• Work the feedback process into the assessments.
  • This can be anything from providing general feedback on classroom assessment techniques to incorporating feedback into a revised product.

• Remove the grade as a point of contention between faculty and student
Specification
Grading

• Professor sets the specifications for successful completion of an assessment. Students either pass or fail the assessment.

• Professor “bundles” assessments and students choose which to pursue to earn a certain grade.

• Assessments are tied directly to course and program outcomes with the added bonus that it creates artifacts the program can show accreditors.
Un-Grading

• The emphasis is on metacognition, developing life-long learning skills, and student provided evidence of what they’ve learned.

• The practice can include:
  • Periodic self-reflection.
  • Student self-evaluation (like a performance evaluation).
  • Student produced artifacts of what they’ve learned.
Some Preparation is Required

The professor needs to communicate to the students:

- Why they are using this approach,
- The standards that are expected,
- that specification grading or ungrading is a conversation on growth and development and that they prioritizes student agency and development,
- They will be unharmed.
Resources

- Ungrading
- Jesse Stommel - How to Ungrade
- Clarissa Sorensen-Unruh - Ungrading: A Series (Part I)
- Susan Blum, ed. Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)

- Specifications Grading
- Macie Hall - What is Specifications Grading and Why Should You Consider Using It?
- Linda Nilson - Inside Higher Ed, Yes, Virginia, There’s a Better Way to Grade; and Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time