SHIFTING MINDSETS: MOVING TOWARDS A COMPETENCY-BASED GRADING APPROACH

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KEYWORDS: Competency, assessment, grading, mastery

SUBTHEME: Assessment

Changing academics', and students', minds about the importance of grades can be a challenge. In this 2-hour workshop we will discuss the rationale, practicalities and challenges related to moving from a traditional grading structure (i.e., numerical marks) towards a competency-based grading structure (e.g., categorical grades; Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory). We will present different models of competency-based grading, including some of which can be implemented without full buy-in from stakeholders to allow for gradeless courses (Townsley & Schmid, 2020).

In the first part of the workshop, we will outline the considerations and advantages associated with the removal of grades from courses. We will then describe how competency-based grading has been implemented in three very different scenarios: (1) a large introductory first year Physics course; (2) for every course in the Master of Psychology (Clinical) program, consisting of a small cohort of students undertaking accredited training; and (3) changes to courses at UNSW Canberra that still meets Australian Defence Force requirements where marks are required. We will also outline issues raised by academic colleagues across UNSW who are interested in adopting competency-grading, and share resources that have been created to assist them in the transition.

The second part of the workshop will be a facilitated discussion around the transition from traditional to competency-based grading and ways to implement this. We are keen to hear from those who are interested in making the transition but have reservations around implementation, including specific concerns and any resources which they would find helpful. We are also interested in gaining an understanding from others who have experience implementing competency-based grading at their institutions, including their experiences, challenges faced and advice for others. Finally, we are very keen to hear from those with experience persuading stakeholders to adopt competency-based grading, including specific points put forward to convince colleagues and management.

REFERENCES

Townsley, M. & D. Schmid (2020). Alternative grading practices: An entry point for faculty in competency-based education. *Competency-based Education 5*(3), e01219. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1219.