From: Dr. Linda Nilson's Presentation to PLNU Faculty
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School of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering
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INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIVE REPORT [edited]

The individual reflective report is intended to be undertaken as an ongoing, continuous process throughout the course-unit, rather than something only to be addressed at the end of your experience. It records your analysis of the journey you and your team have undergone, what you have learned and how you have proactively addressed issues that have occurred each week. The reflective report is an important part of the learning process as well as the assessment.

Your reflections should be anchored to each of the tasks your team undertakes. Individual reflection should include not only reflection upon the knowledge learned as a result of the exercise or task, and how this could apply to sustainability and enabling change in other contexts, but also the personal and professional skills developed, including the nature and extent of contributions to the group process. Reflection should identify (i) any learning needs at any stage of the process, (ii) the actions taken by the team or individual to remedy those needs and (iii) evaluation of the outcome of those actions.

Task 1 - Introduction: *200-300 words*

- How would you describe yourself in 1 or 2 sentences?
- Why did you choose this course unit? What did you hope to achieve?
- What were your preconceptions about teamwork and humanitarian aid?

Task 2: c*500 words*
This is your first experience of working in this team, so you will be getting to know each other as well as learning to apply this learning approach, supported by a facilitator.

- What did I learn about forming a new team?
- How much did I contribute to the discussions in general?
- How useful was my contribution to the progress of the task?
- Did I: Provide factual information? Ask questions? Offer advice? Try to keep the group in harmony?
- What did I learn about finding appropriate information?

Task 3: *800-1000 words*
You may well have been assigned to a new team for this task, so you will be getting to know each other as well as developing the skills learned in the previous week.

- What did I learn about the new team?
- How much did I contribute to the discussions in general?
- What was my contribution to the task and how useful was it?
- What was my reaction to the feedback to Task 1 and what did I learn from it?

Task 4*: 800-1000 words*
By now the group should be getting into its stride and building upon the previous exercise. You are now ready to tackle a more complex problem, making use of your experience and lessons learned in the first task to improve your performance in this task. Pick up any more ideas about how the group works and also to reflect on how these will affect the way that you tackle issues in the future, and in your future professional career.

- What did I learn about how to support successful team-working?
- How might I act differently in future to be more effective?
- What did I learn from discussing co-operative problem solving?
- What was my reaction to the feedback to Task 2 and what did I learn from it?

Task 5*: 800-1000 words*
By now the group should be comfortable with working together and have begun to understand individual strengths and use these to the best advantage. You will now have received feedback for previous tasks, so consider how the feedback has promoted the development of your abilities.

- What has changed in the way that I now approach the tasks that is different from the way I approached the task at the beginning of this unit? How do I use the feedback from the previous task to inform my future work?
- How do I now plan my work and the team's work to promote collaboration within the team and enhance individual contributions?
- What was my reaction to the feedback to Task 3 and what did I learn from it?
- How prepared do I feel to undertake the final task without the support of a Facilitator?

Task 6: 8*00-1000 words*
In this final scenario you will have had the pressure of knowing that your group report counts more significantly towards your results and that you are relying on the contributions of your colleagues. You will also have faced the challenge of tackling an ill-defined problem.

- How has working in a multi-disciplinary team affected my view of problem-solving? What have I learned about working with individuals from other disciplines?
- How do I feel about the contributions that I have made to the group process and team dynamics?
- Looking back over the whole course-unit, how do I think that my knowledge and skills have developed? Where are my weak points? What am I going to do about them?
- What have I learned in terms of knowledge, skills, techniques or perceptions that may be of use in my future professional career?
- How has my understanding of processes of change and project management, towards humanitarian aid, developed over the course of this unit?

Conclusion*: 500-1000 words*
A final conclusion, developed from but not merely repeating your reflections on each task and each discussion. This should explore questions such as the following:

- How have your own abilities and professional skills developed and how do you intend to further build on these skills in the future?
- What have you learned about enabling change and humanitarian aid that could be applied to other situations or projects?
- How has your perception of project management changed as a result of considering this in a humanitarian context?
- What have you learned about how to research and critically analyse literature sources and practical problem solving?

- What have you learned about working in a team with people with different personalities, from different backgrounds and different academic disciplines?
- What are the key lessons you have learned during your experience in this course-unit; from your team, your tasks, your own contributions and feedback given? How do you intend to apply these lessons in your future endeavours?

Illustration of grading only on more hurdles

Dr. Kathleen Kegley, Synchlora Management Consulting; formerly University of Maryland University College and Clemson University, Plant Medicine

The learning outcomes focus on recognizing, memorizing, and applying basic terminology and concepts and categorizing plants, plant pathologies, and treatment strategies, and her course modules reflect these outcomes. Students earn a "C" for having an average score of 70% or higher across the objective exams. These assess students' abilities to recognize, recall, and apply basic terminology and concepts and grossly classify plants, plant pathologies, and treatment strategies. For a "B" students have to meet the requirement for a "C" and complete sets of assignments that go into more detail on six different plants. Correspondingly, the classification schemes become finer. For an "A" students must meet the requirements for a "B" *and* complete sets of assignments on six *more* plants, for a total of twelve plants. In other words, students have to master more content to attain a higher grade, but the cognitive sophistication demanded is about the same for each grade.

- Successfully complete Module 1 to get a "C."
- Successfully complete Modules 1 and 2 to get a "B."
- Successfully complete Modules 1, 2 and 3 to get an "A."

Illustration of grading only on higher hurdles

Dr. Laurence L. Leff, Computer Science Professor, Western Illinois University

Leff's grading system rests on the idea that some programming tasks are more challenging than others – that is, they diverge further from the template problems and solution strategies that the text and the instructor provide in the teaching process. He offers a range of assignments of varying difficulty. Good-faith attempts that do not yield a workable program that accomplishes the specified task do not count.

- For a "C": Successfully complete only the easiest six assignments.
- For a "B": Successfully complete the intermediate set of six assignments.
- For an "A": Successfully complete the most difficult six assignments.

Note that students complete the same number of assignments no matter which grade they are aiming for. Those who want an "A" do not carry a heavier workload, although more challenging work may take more time. Students who can complete assignments at a higher level can easily do all of those at lower levels, so there is no reason for them to perform the lower-level tasks.

Leff builds in an incentive for students to submit all their assignments on time. He requires the fewest assignments if the students hand them in on time, several more assignments if they turn them in slightly late, and still more if they hand them in very late.

Illustration of grading on both more and higher hurdles

Dr. June Pilcher, Professor of Psychology, Clemson U., Advanced Physiological Psychology

- Grade of "A":
    - Complete and hand in 12 out of 14 possible learning logs by the due date.
    - Read and hand in summaries on 11 out of 12 possible reading assignments by the due date. Note that each reading assignment consists of two to three chapters to read and summarize.
    - Prepare and teach two chapters of your choice.
    - Complete a final project of high quality (see below).
- Grade of "B":
    - Complete and hand in 11 out of 14 possible learning logs by the due date.
    - Read and hand in summaries on ten out of 12 possible reading assignments by the due date. Note that each reading assignment consists of two to three chapters to read and summarize.
    - Prepare and teach two chapters of your choice.
    - Complete a final project of acceptable quality (see below).
- Grade of "C":
    - Complete and hand in ten out of 14 possible learning logs by the due date.
    - Read and hand in summaries on nine out of 12 possible reading assignments by the due date. Note that each reading assignment consists of two to three chapters to read and summarize.
    - Prepare and teach two chapters of your choice.
- Grade of "D":
    - Complete and hand in nine out of 14 possible learning logs by the due date.
    - Read and hand in summaries on eight out of 12 possible reading assignments by the due date. Note that each reading assignment consists of two to three chapters to read and summarize.
- Grade of "F":
    - Complete and hand fewer than nine out of 14 possible learning logs.
    - Read and summarize less than eight out of 12 possible reading assignments.

The outcome of the final project is for students to explain how and why some aspect of human brain behavior impacts outward behavior. While this task involves outside research, the product could be merely descriptive. But students must exercise creativity in communicating their

explanation in a novel modality – for example, a half-hour video documentary, a series of public service TV commercials, a set of informational brochures, or a research proposal requesting funding. Options for a team project could include staging a well-documented debate or educational play of about a half hour.

Hypothetical illustration of grading on both more and higher hurdles using Bloom's hierarchy of cognitive operations

- For a "D" (or "F") in the course, fail to meet the minimal requirements for a "C," which demand only basic knowledge and comprehension of 70% of the material.

- For a "C" in the course, earn a total of 70% or higher on multiple choice exams that test basic knowledge and comprehension of the material.

- For a "B" in the course, fulfill all the requirements for a "C," plus successfully complete additional work that demonstrates application and analysis – for example, solving problems that require choices among different possible approaches or algorithms or writing a paper on how a real-life situation or event exemplifies a certain concept or phenomena.

- For an "A" in the course, fulfill all the requirements for a "B," plus successfully complete additional work that demonstrates synthesis and evaluation – for example, writing a paper that integrates course material and outside research to develop several solutions to a "fuzzy" problem and appraising each alternative for its strengths and weaknesses.

Grading and Learning Outcomes Section of a Hypothetical Syllabus Where the Course Uses Specifications Grading

For a D:
Pass three midterms and the final exam with a *total* average score of at least 70%. The work that passing these exams will require will give you minimal, recognition-level mastery of most of the course material.

For a C: All that is required for a D, ***plus***:
Turn in a one-page, typewritten outline or concept map of *each reading assignment* on the day it is due. Each outline or concept map will be considered "acceptable" if it fulfills the length and formatting requirements, shows a good faith effort, and does not closely resemble anyone else's. Two late *OR* unacceptable turn-ins (*only two*) are allowed for any reason. (Exceeding two exceptions drops one's course grade to a D automatically.) This additional series of assignments will help ensure that you read all the assigned reading material thoroughly and leave the course with a decent mastery of it, including the ability to recognize and explain it.

For a B: All that is required for a C, ***plus***:
Write *four* reflection papers, each typewritten 500-700 words and turned in on time, on your progress made in mastering the material. Be sure to analyze these factors: what study, note-taking, reading, and other learning methods you have been using; your areas of strength and comfort as a result; your remaining areas of confusion, difficulty, and/or discomfort; and what else you plan to do to master especially challenging material. This additional series of writing assignments will help ensure that you reflect on the course material and the process of your learning it, thereby helping to ensure you leave the course with a good mastery of both the material and how you best learn it so you can pursue the subject matter efficiently in the future.

For an A: All that is required for a B, ***plus***:
You will be placed on a team with other students pursuing A's to solve a major real-world problem using the course material. Like all good problem-based learning problems, you will have to identify unknowns and conduct research beyond the course material to develop a sound solution. The problem will be "fuzzy" in that it will have more than one possible approach and solution, but some will be better than others. This additional assignment will help ensure that not only will you have mastered the material and know how you best learn it, but you can also apply it, research additional related material, and synthesize it all to solve a genuine problem facing the world today.

(Other possible A-level assignments: well-research policy statement; sound strategic or business plan; research proposal; corporate annual report; substantial newspaper, magazine, or journal article(s); concept map of specified subject matter displaying its organization and issues)

Making the Transition from Traditional to Specs Grading

Traditional Grading	Adapted to Specs Grading
Standard grading policy in syllabus needing little or no explanation or justification, with more points leading to a higher course grade	Explain and "sell" specs grading to students, referring to the relationship between high expectations and student success, the need for greater rigor, the concept of andragogy, the effectiveness of a safe yet challenging environment, pass/fail practices in licensing exams and employment, and any meaningful analogy. Emphasize the choice and control they will have over their course grade, workload, token use, and possibly other aspects of the course, such as their assignments and the outcomes they will achieve.
Series of assignments and tests over the term required of all students, usually culminating in a major challenging assignment late in the term Students required to attend all classes and/or participate in all online class forums	Identify the cognitive level(s) of all assignments and tests and the specific outcomes they (except those only for reading compliance). Redesign existing assignments and tests as needed. Group the assignments and tests into three or four bundles or modules that entail different amounts of work (more hurdles) and/or different levels of academic challenge (higher hurdles, higher cognitive level). Associate each bundle/module with a course grades, awarding higher grades for more work and/or higher academic challenge. Make the major challenging assignment a requirement only for an "A." Considering allowing students some choice over assignments, features of assignments, due dates, and the like.

	Set deadlines for completion of "C" and "D" bundles/modules after the middle but before the end of the term.
No clear relationship between course grades and outcomes achievement False appearance that all students have attained all the learning outcomes by the end of the course	Explicitly link each bundle/module with the outcomes that students will demonstrate by successfully completing it.
Multi-level rubrics to assess assignments and essay tests	Develop specs from the top one or two levels of the traditional rubrics. Elaborate the specs, making them as specific and unambiguous as possible. Lay out a formula or template for a complex assignment or essay test.
Partial credit	Grade all assignments and tests pass/fail, credit/no credit, satisfactory/unsatisfactory against the specs. Be willing to return work as unacceptable/no credit to a student.
Opportunities to revise work for a higher grade or more points	Students exchange a token for the opportunity to revise unsatisfactory work. *OR* The drafts students submit for instructor and/or peer feedback must meet certain specs or get no credit or feedback.
Late work policies	Students exchange a token for a 24-hour extension.
Special encouragement to disadvantaged students	Actively encourage disadvantaged students to aim for an "A."