

# Title: "UDL Grading Flowchart"

Flowchart begins with Question 1

## 1. Q1: Do you provide diagnostic and formative assessments to your learners before grading?

- 1.1. If "No" to Q1, then A summative assessment is just part of the full story. Track your learners journey through ungraded diagnostic and formative assessments before considering providing a graded assessment.
- 1.2. If "Yes" to Q1, then UDL grading starts way before you give out an assignment or test or even before you begin the lesson. It starts with finding out where your students are with the content or topic at hand. This usually means that you do some sort of diagnostic and formative assessment. Starting with a diagnostic or formative assessment is particularly important during (and after) this COVID crisis. The California department of education states that "deep concerns about learning loss have triggered an urgency that district and school staff have in place useful diagnostic assessments that can identify where students are in their learning within key content areas when they return to school so teachers can teach them most effectively". The Teaching and Learning in Higher Education website adds: "The goal is to get a snapshot of where students currently stand - intellectually, emotionally or ideologically - allowing the instructor to make sound instructional choices as to how to teach the new course content and what teaching approach to use." Now, let's face it, you can't wait until you have the results of these assessments to totally plan out the lesson and the rest of the assessments but as an experienced teacher you can use the results of the diagnostic to customize the plan that you have already created. A UDL lesson already has options and choices embedded, because you have already proactively planned for variability but the diagnostic can give you very important insight into adjustments you will need to make or choices or assessments you might need to add or remove. It will also provide the students with an important progress



monitoring tool and help them self-differentiate based on what they already know or can do.

2. **Q2: Are your assessments aligned to stated standards and objectives and designed with multiple means for action and expression?**

- 2.1. If "No" to Q2, then Identify potential barriers within "one-size-fits-all" design and redesign using UDL best practices.
- 2.2. If "Yes" to Q2, then Your assessments need to be based upon the standards and objectives that you stated at the beginning of the lesson and it also needs to provide options for the students to choose so that they can best show you what they have learned. These options and choices will also help reduce or eliminate "test anxiety". Dr. David Rose, one of the original creators of the UDL framework, states that "when we consider learner variation in affective, recognition, and strategic networks, we realize that in order for assessments to focus accurately on what is being assessed, they need to be adjustable to meet learner variability. To get the most accurate data about what students understand and can do, assessments should not offer only one means of response but should provide multiple opportunities in varied media for learners to demonstrate skills and express themselves." Additionally, "such flexibility in assessment also has a role in encouraging students to seek knowledge beyond the requirements of the assignment they are being asked to do, especially as they have chosen what interests them. Furthermore, the integration of UDL into assessment is not only beneficial to students, but also to faculty, as these practices would enable them to look more deeply at the course's goals and objectives, to determine what students should show during the learning process, and to notice the students' enthusiasm and creativity in their courses"(Alsalamah, 2020).



3. **Q3: Do you provide students with multiple attempts to resubmit work/revise formative and summative assessments?**
  - 3.1. If "No" to Q3, then revisit your grading procedures to encourage a growth mindset and ensure that student learning reflects their current learning, not previous attempts (i.e, averaging original scores and retakes)
  - 3.2. If "Yes" to Q3, then it is often stated that “we learn from our mistakes” but we can only learn from our mistakes when we are given opportunities to correct them! It’s suspect that anyone deeply learns from their mistakes when assessments provide nothing more than checks, “x’s” and non-specific comments. Students need to go back into the assessment and correct what needs improvement. Some educators feel that this process is unfair to the students who get the answer right the first time and that if a student needs more time to learn a concept or a skill, that the grade should reflect that. We respectfully disagree! Grades should reflect current learning and not past mistakes.
4. **Q4: Do you have a UDL inspired rubric that clearly outlines how a student will be graded?**
  - 4.1. If "No" to Q4, then build a rubric that can be universally applied to all options regardless of mode of delivery so that learners truly understand how they will be measured.
  - 4.2. If "Yes" to Q4, then students need to know how a particular assessment will be graded and they need to have a tool to help them self assess their work and monitor their progress toward reaching a goal. “Students can use the rubrics to self assess. The students can answer the essential questions with their own big ideas. This empowers the students.” (OCALI, n.d.) The type of rubric you use is less important than the fit that the rubric has to the assessment. “UDL does not have an ideal rubric type, that is to say, the ideal rubric for UDL is the one that can accurately support the measurement of student knowledge for the course learning outcome(s) without constricting the options of how a learner can show what they know. ([Learn more about the different types of rubrics here](#)). A rubric designed with UDL in mind takes into consideration:



- That the assessment, and therefore the rubric design, will be based on the learning outcome(s) being measured, not the assessment method chosen.
- That the rubric will be provided to students with the assessment outline to ensure they know how they will be graded for a specific assignment, and what knowledge is being measured. "(Mohawk College, n.d.)

5. **Q5: Are grades/points explicitly aligned to standards and outcomes?**

- 5.1. If "No" to Q5, then consider revising your rubric or scoring so that the grade truly measures whether or not the student has met the standard/outcome.
- 5.2. If "Yes" to Q5, then you can't assess and grade the student's work if you haven't evaluated the standards and goals first and you can't assign a grade if you are not clear about what fulfills the standards or goals when the students show what they know. The University of Illinois (n.d.) Center for Teaching Innovation has a full website of "Assigning Course Grades" that covers multiple ways of assigning grades. The method that most integrates with UDL is the discussion of Grading with "Established Standards". I have added some *UDL connections* to each of their advantages in italics:
- Course goals and standards must necessarily be defined clearly and communicated to the students. (*a UDL foundation*)
  - Most students, if they work hard enough and receive adequate instruction, can obtain high grades. The focus is on achieving course goals, not on competing for a grade. (*UDL high expectations*)
  - Final course grades reflect achievement of course goals. The grade indicates "what" a student knows rather than how well he or she has performed relative to the reference group. (*UDL Expert Learning*)
  - Students do not jeopardize their own grade if they help another student with course work. (*UDL collaboration*)



6. **Q6. Do you assign the grading points for each component on the rubric to accurately reflect the value of the knowledge or skill attached to that component?**

6.1. If "No" to Q6, then make sure that you have accurately valued each component in the assessment to match the importance of the information. Some things should be worth more than others!

6.2. If "Yes" to Q6, then it seems that assigning a point value to an item on an assessment or rubric is a black magic skill that no one talks about. Yeah, we might assign one question 10 points and another 5 or another 25 but the reasons why we do this are not documented. When I was teaching, I certainly did this with some unspoken rule too. True and False questions, fill in the blanks, matching or multiple choice were given a 1, 2, 5 or 10 point value and short answers got a higher value. Essays got an even higher value. It was as if the length of the answer was the most important consideration in the assignment of value. Nothing could be less true. But, if we don't embrace and fully understand our standards and objectives, every question may be equal and many times irrelevant to the assessment of learning in a given student. We need to be able to determine if the student's answer is correct, incorrect, or partially correct by judging the answer against the standard(s) being measured. When an answer is obviously wrong it is easy to subtract all of the points for that question, but what if the answer is partially correct? So, it is very important that you align the questions on your assessments to the standards and goals of your lessons and consciously and deliberately recognize the value of the component parts of the standards and goals and assign the point value to match the importance of each component (Idea 💡 - this would be a great topic for your next department meeting or faculty professional development day!).

7. **Q7. Do you allow students to "self report" their grades or reflect on their learning?**

7.1. If "No" to Q7, then consider adding the opportunity for each student to reflect on their performance and grade themselves while also reflecting on how the choices they made throughout the unit impacted their learning. (You will always have the right and responsibility to disagree!)



7.2. If "Yes" to Q7, then "Self Reporting" is more commonly used on formative assessments but reflection can be used on any type of assessment. In *UDL Theory and Practice*, Meyer, Rose, and Gordon state, "Most importantly, explicit formative assessment can provide a basis for individual learners to become more self-aware-more metacognitive -- about their learning. By modeling continuous prompts for reflection, teachers can begin to support students in monitoring their own progress. Effective scaffolding and mentorship helps students learn to assess their individual effort and persistence over time and ultimately gain a sense of autonomy over their own learning. The data collected from formative assessment can also be valuable to other teachers and parents as they work with that same learner. Intentional, ongoing assessments benefit not only individuals but also whole school communities." Dr. John Hattie confirms this in *Visible Learning MetaX* (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, n.d.). His research shows that self reported grades have a very positive impact on student outcomes. His meta-analysis of 250 studies on over 79,000 students shows an effect size of 1.33 and a high confidence rating (anything over .4 is a considerable effect and this is in the top 10!). Allowing students to self report is also a great opportunity for a "teaching moment" where you can review what the student self reports and discuss with them the reality of their knowledge or skill; this turns into a great opportunity to provide mastery oriented feedback.

## 8. Q8. Have you removed penalties for non-essential (construct irrelevant) errors?

- 8.1. If "No" to Q8, then removing the penalty does not mean you can't identify an error, it just means that the student won't be penalized for an error not aligned to the standard or goal like a spelling error in a math test.
- 8.2. If "Yes" to Q8, then It is critically important that grades reflect a student's learning. I understand that seeing a misspelling or a grammatical error is hard to ignore but can we just point it out without penalizing the student? [UDL Theory and Practice](#) explains this perfectly, "Whether formative or summative, assessments need to be on-target to measure the construct-the affect, concept knowledge, or skill-they are intended to measure. It is common for factors that are irrelevant to the goal of an assessment to interfere with its accuracy. For example, requiring a response to be hand-written may conflate handwriting or spelling difficulty with lack of knowledge



about a subject. Similarly, requiring students to take a test in a fixed amount of time may conflate stress-management skills with level of understanding.”

9. **Q9. Do you give mastery oriented feedback on the returned assessment or have either an individual or group discussion about how the assessment has been graded.**

9.1. If "No" to Q9, then consider adding time to give this mastery oriented feedback so that students will not only know why they got something right or wrong but where they can go to get more information or increase their knowledge.

9.2. If "Yes" to Q9, then every assessment is an opportunity to continue the learning process of the lesson. Mastery oriented feedback is essential to support ongoing learning. An assessment may happen at the end of a lesson but it is not the end of the learning on the topic. Feedback should “guide learners toward mastery rather than a fixed notion of performance or compliance; towards successful long-term habits and learning practices”. (Nguyen, 2021) Furthermore, feedback under the [UDL Guidelines](#) must make sure to:

- encourage perseverance, efficacy and self-awareness
- emphasize effort and improvement, rather than relative performance
- be frequent, timely, and specific
- be substantive and informative rather than comparative or competitive
- model how to incorporate evaluation, including identifying patterns of errors and wrong answers, into positive strategies for future success (Nguyen, 2021)

10. **Q10. Do you return the assessments to the students quickly and allow for discussion and resubmission?**

10.1. If "No" to Q10, then students need to be able to learn from the assessment too! Just a grade is not enough.

10.2. If "Yes" to Q10, then this may be the simplest step in the process but one that is sometimes ignored due to time constraints or department policies. The students need to see the results of the assessment, not just the final grade. They need to be able to discuss what they got right and what they missed and they need a chance to



rework and resubmit whenever possible. I know that time is precious and that there is never enough of it but learning should be more than a race to cover as much material as possible so that we can help build independent, resourceful and knowledgeable students who become expert learners.

