Time to Grade Papers – Again!

What are Your Goals for Grading Your Papers?

To help students become better writers: If this is your goal, you should be aware that students view comments made on end-of-semester papers through the lens of grades – NOT as ways to improve writing.

To help students deepen knowledge of course content: Then do not waste your time editing grammar & punctuation.   Editorial marks suggest that the content must be fine.

To finish course requirements: Students will learn more at this point if you say less. One or two comments and a rubric for the rest.

To model what a professional paper should look like: Too late. Post a model much earlier in the semester and do not waste time trying to show students what their paper could have looked like.

Grading More Efficiently

Consider offering 2 due dates:
- For the first due date, explain that you will add comments throughout the paper.
- If students choose the second due date, explain that there will be no comments on the paper and no opportunity for students to question the grade.

"Whatever requires my feedback happens earlier in the semester, so that students have an opportunity to use the comments to improve their work." (Cohan)

Consciously limit the time spent on each paper (Cohan)

If you are turning back work more than a week after it is due, it is probably backfiring for both the students and you. The sooner students get things back and know what they did wrong and how they can improve, the better. When they are getting their work back too late, your extensive feedback is not really helping them, because their minds are no longer on that project. (Cohan)

Schedule a block of time to grade papers immediately following the submission of student papers. For example, I have papers due on Monday, and then if I am not teaching on Tuesday, I block out that Tuesday to grade -- even if it is months in advance. I have then made an appointment with myself. That makes it possible to return those same papers on Wednesday. (Cohan)

Commenting More Effectively

We do not have time to comment on everything; research shows that overwhelming students with comments is counterproductive. (Flash)

Research suggests that students may regard comments written on preliminary drafts as information that will improve their writing, and comments written on final drafts as justifications for the grade. (Flash)

Comment using questions, reactions, & suggestions rather than corrections, judgments, and mandates. (Flash)

Focus primarily on higher-order concerns such as organization, substance, and clarity of ideas/argument (Bean)

In the margins, write specific comments and ask specific questions:

"Wow, this really surprised me…"

"This causes me to question…"

"Have you read what Sartre has to say about this?"

"How do you intend us to understand 'self-violence' here?"

In the end-comment:

Consider using a response rubric that does not break down points within categories

Consider voicing one positive comment

"This is a strong draft in which you…"

"I was interested to read…"

Limit yourself: 2-3 numbered margin comments & a short summary

References

Sources for Deborah J Cohan:
https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/02/11/advice-grading-more-efficiently-opinion
https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/12/12/why-professor-doesnt-assign-term-papers-opinion

Source for Pamela Flash:
Writing Across the Curriculum 10 Nicholson Hall Office: 612-626-7579 Center for Writing, and 216 Pillsbury Dr. SE Office of Undergraduate Education Minneapolis, MN 55455 http://writing.umn.edu/tww/index.html

FHSS Writing Lab

1175 JFSB   fhss-writinglab@byu.edu
https://fhsswriting.byu.edu/fhss-writinglab@byu.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Joyce Adams (422-8168) * **Student Lab Manager**: Mallory (422-4454)