

Theory of Knowledge: Grading and Assessment

Proficiency-based (skills or performance-based) assessment: more than 5 years ago, I moved from points, numbers, and percentages to a proficiency-based (or skills-based) system of evaluation. It's pretty simple, really. Students demonstrate (perform) a particular skill and work towards mastering that skill. If they don't get it the first time they revise and rework that performance until they do. (with only a few exceptions) Mastering the course content (resulting in an A) means the student has mastered the required skills.



Skills (a.k.a. learning targets, proficiencies): There are a finite number of skills required to master any course, though the nuances are many. The skills assessed for this course are set, in part, by the federal and state departments of education. They are set by master educators with decades of time and experience in the classroom. They are also set by the students in the feedback and course evaluations they provide. For Theory of Knowledge, the skills are:

- Reflections: written demonstrations of your critical thinking (30%)
- Concept applications: knowing and applying key concepts specific to the course (35%)
- IB assessments: required presentation and essay (15%)
- Academic scholarship: project management, timeliness, contribution to learning environment, growth, teamwork, academic and ethical honesty. (20%)

Calculating your grade:

There are four skills (learning targets) and each is weighted. Within each skill, you will have many opportunities to demonstrate your abilities. Each assignment is graded 1-4. Each skill is calculated by averaging all scores.

4 = highly proficient/mastery

3 = proficient

2 = developing proficiency

1 = insufficient evidence (likely the student did not turn in that assignment)

Assignments: some assignments are focused on one skill area while others speak to many skills. A written **reflection** on a reading and class discussion demonstrates critical thinking, project management of deadlines (**academic scholarship**), and, in some cases, application of key terms from the course (**concept applications**).

Transparency: Each assignment, each performance is guided by a comprehensive rubric (explanation) for what is expected and what must be demonstrated to achieve proficiency. Students should always know how they will be graded, what the expectations are, and when a project is due.

Revisions: each assignment can be revised once. All revision work **MUST** be accompanied by the original, evaluated work to establish the revision process. There are some hard deadlines for revisions to allow student and teacher sufficient time to process their work. These deadlines are published each semester.

What cannot be revised is timeliness (academic scholarship). If you are due to present an art piece or turn in your rough draft of an essay, you are either on time or you are not.

It's not perfect, but it's much more authentic: I appreciate that this system is messy, confusing, and a little frustrating. While it may not be as 'easy' as points/numbers/percentages, it is much more illustrative of what a student knows and what they need to learn. I find that it shifts the conversation from "what can I do to get my grade up" to "how do I revise this to make it better." It asks students to take the lead with their education, be in the driver's seat, and focus on the skills they need to learn rather than accumulating points in the areas they already know.

As always, I hope you will contact me with any questions about the system. Thank you for your patience.
Vanessa Hughes 503.916.5120 x75042 vmhughes@pps.net