Improving Online Courses to Improve Student Outcomes

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# Flexibility for Students

## Late Policy Example

**Late Policy**. Life often gets in the way of study. To accommodate that, you have 3 Late Passes. To use a Late Pass, you must

* Notify Stephanie **before** **the assignment is actually due**. Any time before the actual midnight deadline is fine.  The notification must be via email to Stephanie.delaney@seattlecolleges.edu with the words “Late Pass” in the subject line. Do not say why you are asking for the late pass. It does not matter. Your request will be approved as long as you have late passes remaining.
* Turn in the assignment within 4 calendar days of the due date with a note that it is being submitted late with a late pass.

After you have used your three late passes or if you have neglected to request one, late assignments will get a penalty of 3 points per day.

*Please note*: The late passes are here to make the class easier on you. There is no benefit at all to not using the late pass, so please use them. That is why they are available.

## Contract Grading Sample Language

**Grading Contract**

We have a 1000 point grade system with 30% each for the essay and discussion, 10% for quizzes, 20% for the Service Learning Project and 5% for a combination of the pre class assignment and the weekly feedback surveys.

We are using a contract grading system for this class. This basically means that if you do all of the things I ask, you are guaranteed to get a 3.5. My goal in contract grading is to reduce the stress of grades and help you to focus on learning. Thus, all assignments are graded as complete/incomplete. If you do the assignment on time and according to the assignment directions, you will earn a “complete”. If not, you will receive an “incomplete”.  All “incomplete” work is eligible for one resubmission within 4 days of receiving the incomplete grade.

If you complete all of the activities below, you will earn a 3.5 (90%).

* the Pre-Class Assignment
* the Weekly Essays
* the Weekly Discussion
* the Weekly Quizzes
* the Weekly Feedback Survey
* the Service Learning Project

**How is my work graded?**Each assignment is graded “complete” or “incomplete”.  If you do all of the work as described in the instructions and do it well, the work will be graded as “complete” and you will get full credit.

If it is not done well or the instructions are not fully followed, it will be graded as “incomplete” and you will get no credit. If work is graded as incomplete, you have one opportunity to resubmit, after making edits based on the feedback provided in the assignment. You will have 4 days after the grade is posted to resubmit.

Each assignment has a rubric associated with it, explaining what I look for in reviewing the work.

**How do I get a 4.0?**A 4.0 is reserved for extraordinary work and will only be considered at the end of the quarter. You may petition for a 4.0. To petition for a 4.0, you must demonstrate

* that you completed all of the above
* that you regularly posted 5 or more quality responses in the Weekly discussion (3 are required, plus 2 or more extra posts).
* that you earned at least 1 “gold star” for extraordinary work.
* that you have added at least 3 quality resources to the course via Flipboard

You may petition for a 4.0 in Week 8 of the quarter.

**What happens if I don’t complete everything?**Each assignment is given points and if you earn fewer than 85% of the points (850 points), then you will be assigned a grade based on the Social Sciences grading scale, found on the last page of the syllabus.

# Focused Cognitive Load

[**Minimize Cognitive Load to Maximize Usability**](http://www.nngroup.com/articles/minimize-cognitive-load/) **by Kathryn Whitenton** – short but good overview of cognitive load and 3 good steps to minimize it.

[**Nuts and Bolts: Brain Bandwidth**](http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/498/nuts-and-bolts-brain-bandwidth---cognitive-load-theory-and-instructional-design) – Cognitive Load Theory and Instructional Design by Jane Bozarth – another short and good overview with additional ideas for minimizing it.

# Introduce Students to Growth Mindset

I expect everyone in this class to be successful. I have set up every activity to ensure that people who are willing to work hard will reap the reward of a good grade. It's not about being smart, it’s about working hard. The understanding that hard work leads to success, more so than innate talent, is known as the Growth Mindset.

Please watch these two short videos to learn more about the growth mindset.

[Mindsets: Growth vs. Fixed](http://youtu.be/VwDUhDDOM9M) (2:21 min) -

[Growth vs. Fixed Mindsets](http://youtu.be/o8JycfeoVzg) (1:16 min) -

# Reduce Costs

[**How to Use Open Educational Resources (OER)**](https://www.waol.org/info/training/instTrainingRegV2.aspx)– online course from SBCTC – Offered monthly.

[**Open Course Library**](http://www.opencourselibrary.org) – Excellent source of course materials and each course has textbooks under $30, with many absolutely free. Curated and created by Washington state community college faculty.

[**Flat World Knowledge**](http://www.flatworldknowledge.com) – traditional textbooks at flexible prices, depending on the type of access the students use. Content completely editable. Many include course materials like test banks.