

OPID Teaching Scholars 2006-07  
Project Title: Non-Linear Grading  
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Abstract, August 2007

As a semester ends, some method must be used to convert scores of graded items into an end-of-semester grade. A commonly used method is referred to as linear-grading, where scores of graded items are summed to arrive at a total score, which is then compared to hurdles, and students receive the grade associated with the highest hurdle overcome. A problem with linear grading is students sometimes 'game play' the scoring system and intentionally slack off on important study areas. This project involved identifying other grading systems, referred to as non-linear. Secondary data plus interviews with a sample of professors who review pedagogically focused journals led to identifying over 20 innovative grading systems. A subset of grading systems was then tested in a lab experimental with a sample of 160 undergraduate students. Results indicate students generally like linear-grading systems more than other systems, but they expect to study less when faced with linear-grading systems compared to other systems, and they expect to learn less when faced with linear-grading systems compared to other systems.