Cultural Expectations 3: Examinations and Grading

Worksheet KEY

This worksheet will include information about examinations and grading in American colleges. *Please note* that each web address is accompanied by a QR code. You can scan the code with your smart phone to access the website or type the web address into a web browser.

**Part 1: Examinations**

Colleges use examinations to **evaluate** your understanding of a subject.



**Placement Tests:** These tests are used to decide which class you should take. You will take them before enrolling in English, Math, or ESL.

For information about placement tests at COC, go to <http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/Assessment/Pages/Placement-Test.aspx>. The website includes information about the placement tests, including study guides and other resources.

**Class Tests:** These tests are taken during a class. Instructors use them to evaluate your understanding of course material. You may take a midterm, a final, multiple tests, or no tests at all.

* Closed Book: You may not use your textbook during a test. Usually, these tests will include objective questions such as multiple choice and true/false. These tests usually check your understanding of material in the textbook or from lectures.
* Open Book: You may use your textbook during a test. Usually, these tests include more difficult questions and test complex skills like critical thinking and problem solving. Answers cannot be found directly in the textbook. **DO NOT** skip studying a chapter just because you’ll be able to use your book during a test. You will waste time reviewing the book when you should be answering test questions.

Midterms: A midterm is an important test that occurs approximately halfway through the semester.

* It may be **cumulative**; in other words, it might cover all the material you studied in the first half of the semester.
* It may be worth a large proportion of your grade. Some midterms are worth up to 50% of your final grade for the class.
* Use the midterm to prepare for future tests. Review the exam style (how the professor wrote the exam), the material covered in the midterm, and your own study methods.

Finals: A final is an important test that occurs at the end of the semester.

* The final may be **cumulative** (covering all the material for the semester). It may cover only the material discussed after the midterm.
* Finals are usually worth a large percentage of your grade. The final exam could be worth more than 50% of your final grade for the class.
* Prepare for the final by reviewing all course materials, including previous test/assignments and study guides.

Secrets of Success for Test Taking:

* Mark all test dates in your calendar at the beginning of the semester.
* Take good notes all semester and review them frequently.
* Review class material frequently over the course of the semester.
* Take test preparation workshops early in the semester at The Learning Center. For more information, see TLC’s Supplemental Learning website: <http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/TLC/Pages/Supplemental-Learning.aspx>.
* Know your subject well.
* Manage your time efficiently. Avoid “all-nighters” (studying all night before an exam).
* Seek help from your instructor or TLC tutors.
* Keep all class materials (notes, assignments, quizzes, and exams) until the end of the semester. Use them to study for the final.

Before an exam, find out…

* What the exam will cover
* How much the exam is worth
* How the professor will grade the exam
* What types of questions it will include
* How many questions it will include
* What resources you can use (if any)
* What supplies you will need (Scantron, Blue Book, pen, pencil, etc.)

Rubric: A rubric is a list of criteria that a professor uses to evaluate your work. In other words, it tells you how a professor will grade you and what you have to do to earn the grade you want.

Test Proctoring: Sometimes, you may not take a test in your classroom. This could occur because you’re in an online class, have an accommodations letter from Disability Services, or have a personal situation that prevents you from taking the exam at the scheduled time.

See your professor to discuss arrangements for proctoring an exam. This means that you will take the exam in TLC under the supervision of one of their employees. Discuss proctoring with your professor as soon as possible (at least two weeks in advance) so she or he can make arrangements on your behalf.

For more information about proctoring, see TLC’s Testing website: <http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/TLC/Pages/Testing-in-TLC.aspx>

**Part 2: Grading**

Your grades indicate the degree of success you had in a course. Your grades for all classes are measured as an average (GPA). Information about calculating your GPA appears below.

**What do grades mean?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Meaning** | **Percentage** | **Grade Points** |
| A | Excellent | 90-100% | 4 |
| B | Good | 80-89.99% | 3 |
| C | Average | 70-79.99% | 2 |
| D | Below Average  (Not a passing grade) | 60-69.99% | 1 |
| F | Fail  (Not a passing grade) | 0-59.99% | 0 |
| FW | Failure to Withdraw  (Not a passing grade) | Student ceases to participate after the withdrawal deadline | 0 |

**Other Grades:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Meaning** |
| I | Incomplete: A student experiences an emergency in the last week of class that prevents him/her from finishing the course. |
| W | Withdrawal: The student withdraws from the class after the official drop date. A grade of W will affect the number of times the student is allowed to take the course |
| P | Pass |
| N | No Pass |
| CR | Credit |
| NC | No Credit |
| RD | Report Delayed: The professor is unable to report your grade by the time grades are due. |

**Calculating GPA**

1. For every class, multiply the number of grade points by the number of units a course is worth
2. Add the products from all of your classes
3. Divide by the total number of units

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Grade Points** | **x Units** | **= Product** |
| Math | 3 (B) | 3 | 9 |
| English | 4 (A) | 3 | 12 |
| Biology | 3 (B) | 4 | 12 |
| Photography | 2 (C) | 3 | 6 |
| TOTAL |  | 13 | 39 |
| GPA | Divide Product by Units | 39/13 | **3.0** |



You can see additional information about grading at COC at <http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/admissions/Pages/transcript_grading.aspx>.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): Every class has a set of Student Learning Outcomes, which explain what students should learn by the end of the semester. Instructors use the SLOs to design their courses, including developing exams and assignments for determining grades. All gradable assignments in a semester try to assess how successful students are in achieving the SLOs.

Graded Assignments: In addition to exams, your instructor might grade you on a variety of assignments, such as:

* Essays
* Research Projects
* Oral Presentations or Tests
* Journals
* Team Projects

Weighted Assignments: Some instructors use a system of weighting grades to make some assignments worth more in the final grade than others.

Imagine you are working on two assignments—a one page journal worth 10% of your grade and a test worth 40% of your grade. Your professor might score both assignments out of 100 points. However, the assignment with the higher weighting (the test) will affect your final grade more than the lower weighting (the journal).

**Student Success Tip:** Review your syllabus frequently so you know what assignments you must complete, when they are due, and how much they are worth.

Exercises

**Exercise 1: Case Study**

*Instructions:* Read the below case study. Then, answer the question in 3-5 sentences.

Maritza is taking a United States History class. Her grade is made up of three different assignments:

* Midterm (40%)
* Final (50%)
* Participation (10%)

Maritza is very busy; she is taking three other classes and works 25 hours a week. She had a paper due the day before her midterm, so she only got a chance to begin studying for the midterm the night before. She stayed up until 3:00 a.m. trying to learn all the information, but she ended up falling asleep at her desk. When it was time to take the midterm, she was tired and anxious. She ended up getting a D on the midterm (60/100 points).

After receiving such a low grade, Maritza’s confidence dropped. She didn’t want to answer any questions in class because she was afraid she would look stupid. Unfortunately, this means she has a low participation grade as well. She’s not sure exactly what it is, but she knows it can’t be good.

Now, Maritza has one week before the final. She really wants to pass the class, but she’s afraid that she’ll get another D on her final.

Question: What should Maritza do to make sure she does well on the final exam? Name 3-5 steps she should take.

**Exercise 2: Calculate a Grade Point Average**

*Instructions:* Use the information below to determine a student’s GPA for the semester.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Grade Points** | **x Units** | **= Product** |
| Anthropology | 2 (C) | 3 | 6 |
| Geology | 1 (D) | 3 | 3 |
| Cardio Cross-Training | 4 (A) | 1 | 4 |
| French | 4 (A) | 4 | 16 |
| TOTAL |  | 11 | 29 |
| GPA | Divide Product by Units | 29/11 | **2.63** |

Self-Reflection

*Instructions:* Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What did you learn about examinations and grades in the United States in this workshop?
2. How will you use this information to help you succeed in your classes?