GRADING RUBRIC EXPLANATION
All of My Courses

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Overview of My Grading Criteria

Purpose of Course Assessments

The grading system described in this document is appropriate for all the different types of assessments that I use in my classes. It is important that students carefully read this grading rubric to successfully pass the course.

In general, questions, activities, and problems are designed to assess a moderate amount of material at a reasonably deep level of understanding. Specifically, questions that ask students to generate examples, integrate ideas, compare/contrast research findings, or apply a concept to a unique situation always tap a deeper level of understanding than those that simply ask students to repeat back definitions, lists, examples, or answers to highly similar questions.

Assessing Levels of Performance on Criteria

Regardless of what task you are asked to do (such as explain a theory, work a statistics problem, or provide an example), the same three basic, inter-related indicators of quality are applicable:

- "Appropriateness" – The extent to which the ideas or method are relevant to the question
- "Correctness" – The extent to which the statements or work is correct and accurate
- "Completeness" – The extent to which a complete or thorough answer is given

Put simply, a good answer clearly communicates a clear, insightful, and elegant answer to the question at hand. A concise, but thorough, statement is always the ticket to a good grade; an unnecessarily lengthy answer gives the reader the impression that you are not organized and that you do not fully grasp the topic. Similarly, instructors can only judge the quality of an answer by what is explicitly written, not by what the student "had in mind" when writing the answer.

In general, your level of performance in achieving these indicators of quality can be judged on the following general rubric. For each task involved in an answer, performance on that task will be rated as being one of the following:

- Unacceptable – Performance does not meet the quality expectations for the task
- Problematic – Performance meets low quality expectations for the task
- Satisfactory – Performance meets normal quality expectations for the task
- Comendable – Performance meets high quality expectations for the task

The Criteria as Applied to Different Tasks

Explaining Theories and Key Concepts

In most cases I am interested in your ability to identify and explain theories and key concepts. This is the traditional core aspect of many questions. Can you explain the relevant concepts at the appropriate depth in your answer?

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Rubric Category	Unacceptable (0 points)	Problematic (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Commendable (3 points)
Theories & Concepts (0-3 Points)	Concepts are irrelevant, incorrect, or missing for the question.	Concepts are unreasonable with major flaws, such as as barely relevant, misused, or vague details.	Concepts are reasonable but with minor flaws, such as only broadly relevant, slightly incorrect, or only paraphrased details.	Concepts are clearly relevant, with accurate and thorough explicitly-defined details.

Providing Evidence for and Applications of Theories and Concepts

Definitions of concepts by themselves do not clarify meaning; good examples are always more capable of clarifying the exact meaning or importance of a concept. Can you explain how and why a main concept is important in a practical or everyday situation? Similarly, as a science, psychology demands that we support our statements with research examples and findings. Can you provide strong research-based justification for the main concepts?

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Rubric Category	Unacceptable (0 points)	Problematic (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Commendable (3 points)
Applications & Evidence (0-3 Points)	Evidence or example is irrelevant, incorrect, or missing for the question.	Evidence or example is unreasonable with major flaws, such as barely relevant, misused, or vague details.	Evidence or example is reasonable but with minor flaws, such as only broadly relevant, slightly incorrect, or only paraphrased details.	Evidence or example is clearly relevant, with accurate and thorough explicitly-described details.

Relatedly, applying the key concepts is also the core aspect of most problem-based questions in mathematics and statistics, but now in terms of your ability to use the proper procedures and to apply the proper formulas. Can you implement the relevant procedures and formulae to provide a correct answer?

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Rubric Category	Unacceptable (0 points)	Problematic (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Commendable (3 points)
Formulae & Solution (0-3 Points)	Solution is irrelevant, incorrect, or missing for the question.	Solution is unreasonable with major flaws, such as barely relevant, misused, or vague procedures.	Solution is reasonable but with minor flaws, such as only broadly relevant, slightly incorrect, or only paraphrased procedures.	Solution is clearly relevant, with accurate and explicitly-implemented procedures.

Writing Style and Integrating Material

Submitted work should more than a bulleted list or disorganized jumble of statements and claims. For example, an essay should concisely integrate the concepts and examples to answer the question at hand. Can you organize your argument and justifications into a coherent and elegant written piece of work? Similarly, even problem-based questions in mathematics and statistics require interpretation. Can you organize your numerical answers in a written manner that communicates and integrates what has been learned while solving the problem?

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations
Rubric Category	Unacceptable (0 points)	Acceptable (1 point)
Writing Style & Integration (0-1 Points)	Writing is improper for the question, has several spelling or grammatical errors, or has unclear or haphazard organization.	Writing style is proper for the question, has few spelling and grammatical errors, and has a focused and integrated organization.

In the case of longer course assessments – such as research papers or summaries – the quality of the writing may become more of an emphasis than it was for shorter essays. Simply put, in some cases there is more writing to be evaluated and the writing takes greater weight as a result.

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Rubric Category	Unacceptable (0 points)	Problematic (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Commendable (3 points)
Writing Style & Integration (0-3 Points)	Writing is inappropriate, incorrect, or incomplete for the task.	Writing is inadequate with major flaws, such as several spelling and grammatical errors, or has haphazard organization.	Writing is reasonable with minor flaws, such as a few spelling or grammatical errors, but has adequate organization.	Writing is good with minimal errors and a focused and integrated organization.

Combining the Criteria for Specific Course Assessments

Most course assessments involve multiple criteria. In these cases, each of the components would be assessed using a version of tasks and rubric categories above. The appropriate combined rubric for the course assessment will simply stack the separate categories to create a final rubric and the point total will be determined similarly. Some assessments are relatively simple and will contain only a couple of rubric categories, whereas other assessments – such as exams, papers, projects, etc. – are relatively complex tasks that contain many components.

Specific Criteria for 4-Point Activities

Worksheet-based questions are relatively simple tasks that are generally appropriate for activities. Their purpose is to provide you with an opportunity to practice identifying appropriate examples of a concept or describing research evidence. Because these typically exist as pre-organized worksheets, formal writing style has less weight; however, some level of proper writing (i.e., sentence and paragraph structure, etc.) would be necessary for clarity.

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Category	Unacceptable	Problematic	Satisfactory	Commendable

Applications & Evidence
 	
(0-3 Points)
	❑ Inappropriate
	❑ Incorrect
	❑ Incomplete
		❑ Relevancy Vague
		❑ Major Inaccuracies
		❑ Lacking Details
			❑ Relevancy Implied
			❑ Minor Inaccuracies
			❑ Details Too Broad
				❑ Relevancy Described
				   No Inaccuracies
				   Thorough Details

Writing Style & Integration
 	
(0-1 Points)
	❑ Improper Format for Question
	❑ Several Grammatical/Spelling Errors
	❑ Unclear or Haphazard Organization
			❑ Proper Format for Question
			   Few Grammatical/Spelling Errors
			   Focused and Integrated Organization	

Specific Criteria for 4-Point Essays

Short essays are generally appropriate for homework assignments and exams. Here the purpose is to assess your ability to explain a specific concept, either in a general sense or though examples. Because it is an essay question, it will be expected to have a proper written form (i.e., sentence and paragraph structure, APA style, etc.).

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Category	Unacceptable	Problematic	Satisfactory	Commendable

Theories & Concepts
 	
(0-3 Points)
	❑ Inappropriate
	❑ Incorrect
	❑ Incomplete
		❑ Relevancy Vague
		❑ Major Inaccuracies
		❑ Lacking Details
			❑ Relevancy Implied
			❑ Minor Inaccuracies
			❑ Details Too Broad
				❑ Relevancy Described
				   No Inaccuracies
				   Thorough Details

Writing Style & Integration
 	
(0-1 Points)
	❑ Improper Format for Question
	❑ Several Grammatical/Spelling Errors
	❑ Unclear or Haphazard Organization
			❑ Proper Format for Question
			   Few Grammatical/Spelling Errors
			   Focused and Integrated Organization	

Specific Criteria for 4-Point Statistics Problems

Another version of the 4-point rubric is used for a typical story-based problem in Statistics, where I am specifically interested in your ability reasonably implement the relevant procedure and to communicate a correct answer. And because I always ask for a short, written interpretation of the solution, there is an expected of proper written form as well (i.e., sentence structure, APA style for Results, etc.).

Criteria	Does Not Meet Expectations		Meets Expectations	
Category	Unacceptable	Problematic	Satisfactory	Commendable

Procedures & Formulae
 	
(0-3 Points)
	❑ Inappropriate
	❑ Incorrect
	❑ Incomplete
		❑ Relevancy Vague
		❑ Major Inaccuracies
		❑ Lacking Details
			❑ Relevancy Implied
			❑ Minor Inaccuracies
			❑ Details Too Broad
				❑ Relevancy Described
				   No Inaccuracies
				   Thorough Details

Writing Style & Integration
 	
(0-1 Points)
	❑ Improper Format for Question
	❑ Several Grammatical/Spelling Errors
	❑ Unclear or Haphazard Organization
			❑ Proper Format for Question
			   Few Grammatical/Spelling Errors
			   Focused and Integrated Organization	