

# LIVE GRADING – A MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO ASSESS STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Presented by Suzanne Valdez, Clinical Professor of Law

University of Kansas School of Law

Materials by Betsy Brand Six (Adapted)

## WHAT IS LIVE GRADING?

- An interactive, in the moment, constructive assessment of a student's performance done in a discreet time period.
- \*Satisfies both formative and summative assessment requirements under ABA Standard 314

## WHAT TYPES OF COURSES ARE WELL-SUITED FOR LIVE GRADING?

- Writing / Drafting Courses or any assignment where writing is part of assessment. (e.g., drafting a contract in a first year contracts course)
- Practical / Experiential Skills Courses

# LIVE GRADING IN WRITING COURSES – WHY IT WORKS AND HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GOING INSANE

## Pros for PROFESSOR:

- 1) You can't procrastinate.
- 2) It limits the amount of time you can spend on any one paper.
- 3) If you do it right, it forces you to prioritize; you usually don't have time to comment on everything.
- 4) If you write comments and then conference, live feedback can save you time.

## LIVE GRADING IN WRITING COURSES – WHY IT WORKS AND HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GOING INSANE

### Pros for PROFESSOR:

- 5) You don't have to be as careful about how to convey something because it isn't written down.
- 6) Gives you an opportunity to get to know the student.
- 7) You can get something wrong – students are more forgiving of a mistake made in the moment.
- 8) You get a sense of common student mistakes. This helps with addressing to class as a whole.
- 9) Give you sense of where you “missed the mark.”

## LIVE GRADING IN WRITING COURSES – WHY IT WORKS AND HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GOING INSANE

### Pros for STUDENT:

- 1) Like real life, students can practice not being defensive in a lower stakes setting.
- 2) You can more fully explain to students what you mean.
- 3) Encourages you tell the student what she did well rather than focus exclusively on improvement.
- 4) Much easier to avoid making wrong assumptions about why students made a particular choice and you can tailor your feedback accordingly.

## LIVE GRADING IN WRITING COURSES – WHY IT WORKS AND HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GOING INSANE

### Pros for STUDENT:

- 5) Gives the student an opportunity to get to know the professor.
- 6) Gives you a better opportunity to make connections to previous assignments, future assignments, other classes and practice.
- 7) The tone of your voice allows you to convey more nuances, such as when a comment is important and when it is relatively minor; also allows you to convey compassion.

## LIVE GRADING IN WRITING COURSES – WHY IT WORKS AND HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GOING INSANE

### CONS:

- 1) It's exhausting for the professor.
- 2) Takes longer to convey few comments.
- 3) Limits your flexibility during the day and makes it more difficult to grade at your favorite coffee shop.
- 4) You end up repeating yourself (no cut and paste).
- 5) Students may forget your comments.



## TIPS FOR MAKING IT WORK

- Make your assignments manageable by making the short or limiting what you are evaluating.
- Have a primary plan about what you are going to focus on and the order you plan to review. (e.g., a pleading under FRCP provides for “notice pleading.”)
- Only if there is time do I review an assignment for style and grammar.
- Have students bring syllabus (assignment), rules and class notes with them to the conference.

## TIPS FOR MAKING IT WORK

- Build in time between student conferences to assign a preliminary grade.
- Give yourself an opportunity to make adjustments/corrections or address comment themes in class.
- Make written comments as you review or pause to give the student time to make notes.
- Be open-minded to how this process can make you a better teacher.

## LIVE GRADING IN PRACTICAL SKILLS/ EXPERIENTIAL COURSES

- Used in an intensive / workshop type course where the student has sufficient time to prepare for evaluation (i.e., through the use of a preparatory syllabus).
- Must be clear with student on what skill is being evaluated and the student must be prepared to do it.
- Live grading in this context is usually done by practitioners in a workshop format (2 lawyers per 6 students).
- Important for professor to train practitioners on how to give constructive and appropriate feedback to students after the student performs.
- Standards for assessment – Excellent | Good | Average with assigned points.

## LIVE GRADING IN PRACTICAL SKILLS/ EXPERIENTIAL COURSES

- Verbal feedback is given to the student in front of other students. In this manner, students learn from each other.
- Important for workshop faculty to take notes so if the student has questions about performance they can be answered.
- Faculty member should assess performance of all students at some point during the workshops so that the faculty member has a sense of the student's performance.