

## 7 Things to Know About Alternative Grading

### 1. What it is

Alternative grading practices include ungrading, grading for growth, mastery grading, revision, group testing, etc. In other words, alternative grading attempts to address the inequities typically associated with the traditional grading paradigm.

### 2. How it works

The [Grading for Growth](#) blog provides a good introduction to implementing student-centered grading practices including un-grading, mastery grading, standards-based grading and more.

### 3. Who's doing it

Some CSU instructors are already incorporating alternative assessment strategies. In Spring 2023, CSU started a community of practice focused on alternative assessments for instructors who are interested in (or currently employing) alternative assessments in their classroom. Some institutions that use alternative assessment practices include Brown University, Hampshire College, Antioch University, Sarah Lawrence College, Alverno College, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Prescott College, Evergreen State College, and Reed College.

### 4. Why it's significant

- When the focus is moved away from grades and points, students can focus on learning. Timely feedback is an opportunity to inform students of where they excel as well as identify areas of growth that can be corrected/revised in an upcoming assignment. For more information, read [Feedback or Feedforward? It's All About the Timing.](#)
- Traditional grading, especially in the form of two mid-terms and a final, is not supportive of traditionally marginalized students, neurodiverse students, students with learning disabilities, [Teaching More by Grading Less \(or Differently\)](#)
- Alternative grading and “ungrading” can be started in [small steps](#) and does not require an immediate overhaul of your course. Can be implemented within existing structures/systems.

### 5. The downsides

- It can take extra work and a bit of creativity to set up the Canvas gradebook for alternative grading practices.
- It may be challenging to get buy-in from students or colleagues.
- Trying something new is often uncomfortable.

### 6. Where it's going

Alternative grading practices and the conversation around reevaluating traditional grading continues to grow and gain momentum across higher education. For more information, read [To Help New Students Some Colleges Are Eliminating Grades](#)

### 7. The implications for your classroom

- You *can* hold students accountable and have high expectations with non-traditional grading practices.
- Getting students involved in grading and establishing grading criteria supports self-directed learning.
- Alternative grading practices often keep the focus on learning over “points.”

Join the [CSU Community of Practice on Alternative Assessments](#) in Fall 2023

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