

Q: What is standards based grading?

A: Standards based grading measures how students are performing on learning targets. The purpose of standards based grading is to determine what a student knows, or is able to do, on specific learning targets, as opposed to simply averaging scores over the semester.

Q: Why are we doing standards based grading?

A: We are doing standards based grading to clarify what our students' grades mean. To illustrate the lack of clarity in a traditional grading system, consider three different students, all of whom earned a 75% C

Traditional Grading System for Unit 1		
Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Unit 1 Homework: 100%	Unit 1 Homework: 50%	Unit 1 Homework: 75%
Unit 1 Test: 50%	Unit 1 Test: 100%	Unit 1 Test: 75%
Overall Grade for Unit 1: 75%	Overall Grade for Unit 1: 75%	Overall Grade for Unit 1: 75%

While these three students all have identical grades, their understandings of the information are likely quite different. Student 1 may have the most questionable understanding of the information, as he only averages a 50% on major assessments. Student 2 might very well be a quite gifted student, but it seems she's not very good at turning in homework. Student 3 is likely legitimately struggling to master the content, as his consistency suggests this grade is a good representation of what he actually understands.

Put simply, Standards Based Grading aims to clear up the uncertainty about what grades mean. The goal is to do all we can to make sure that a grade is the best representation of what a student actually knows in the content, and not a measure of anything else.

Q: But what if my student has always gotten A's? How will this affect them?

A: It depends on how your student achieved those A's. If your student was receiving an A in a class because he or she was turning in all homework but not demonstrating proficient knowledge on major assessments, it is possible his or her grade will go down. In this new system, homework no longer works to cover up for lower assessment scores. Students will *only* be graded based on how they perform on assessments, though assessments can be taken multiple times in order for students to achieve their true potential.

Q: So why does homework not count in the grade?

A: We consider homework to be practice, rather than something to be formally evaluated. Students should only be assessed based on their best product, which is the assessment.