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FLO FRIDAY - Ungrading Unpacked

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Since time immemorial, the səliłwətaʔt təməx^w (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish), x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), and the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations of the Lək^wəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we are grateful to live, work, and play. We are committed to building relationships with the first peoples here, based in honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality.

Ungrading Unpacked

Definitions, problems, practices,
observations, alternatives...

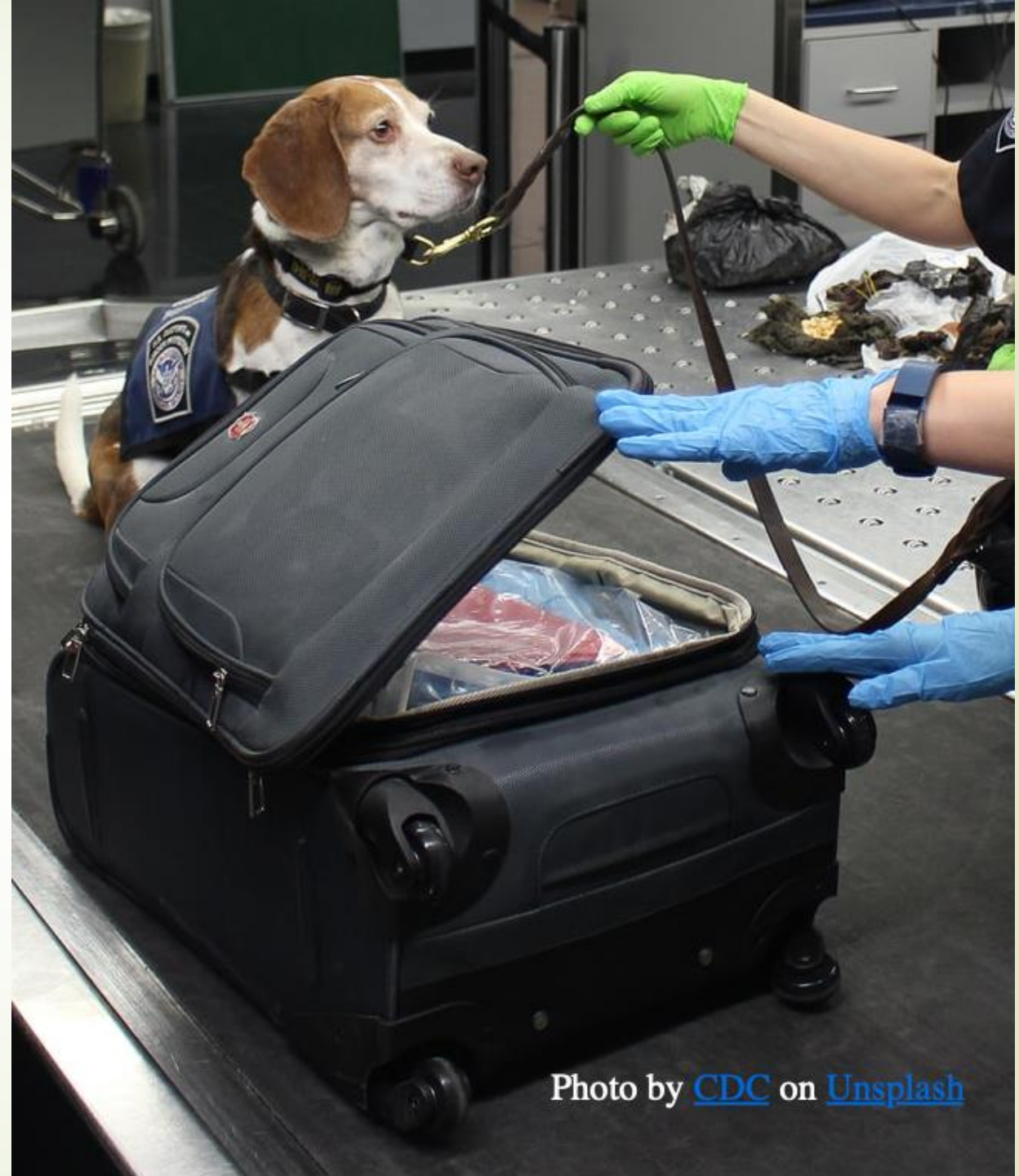


Photo by [CDC](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Land Acknowledgement: With Gratitude

I am grateful to be taking part in this session from the Justice Institute of British Columbia's New Westminster campus located on the unceded traditional territories of the Qayqayt, Musqueam and Central Coast Salish Peoples.





Tentative Agenda

Introduction

Definitions

Issues

What to do?



What is ungrading?

➤ Definitions

- Grading
- Ungrading
- Why grade?
- Why ungrade?

Ungrading: Definitions

Ungrading is **not**:

- not grading
- abandoning assessment
- a shortcut
- a formula
- free and easy teaching

Ungrading **is**:

- part of one's pedagogical intentions
- a way to liberate your feedback
- a process that needs to be communicated to and shared with students
- applicable to different faculties/disciplines



Grading

- ➡ *“a grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite amount of material”*
(Paul Dressel, 1957)



Ungrading: Philosophical Example

- ➡ "Ultimately ungrading – eliminating the control-based function of grades, with all its attendant harms – means that, as long as the noxious institutional requirement to submit a final grade remains in place, whatever grade each students decides on is the grade we turn in, period." (Alfie Kohn, *Ungrading*, pg. xv.)

Ungrading: Practical Example

- ➡ *“...a process within my exam grading that I use to focus student attention on individual constructive and specific feedback (with no numbers attached) and that involves a conversation between the student and the instructor.”*
- ➡ (Clarissa Sorenson-Unruh)



POLL QUESTION: Let's back up: Who knows something?

- What's your level of interest in Ungrading?
- What's your level of knowledge about Ungrading and Ungrading practices?
- How much do you use Ungrading in your teaching?

Pedagogical Intentions

As an
educator,
I want to:

Make my class/subject matter interesting to students.

Challenge my students to

- challenge themselves,
- take risks,
- learn by failing

Improve the quality of students' thinking

The Big 4 Findings

1. *Grades tend to diminish students' interest in whatever they're learning.*
2. *Grades create a preference for the easiest possible task.*
3. *Grades tend to reduce the quality of students' thinking*
4. *Grades discourage collaboration in favour of competition.*

Kohn, A. (2011). The case against grades. *Educational Leadership*.

Tannock, S. (2017). No grades in higher education now! *Studies in Higher Education*.

Grading and Rigor

- What do you call the person who got the lowest passing grade at medical school this year?



What about the students?



Jesse Stommel ✓
@Jessifer

Start by trusting students. [#4wordpedagogy](#)

7:53 AM · Apr 30, 2016



333



27



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BIRD courses

Universal Birds

The courses found within this section are recommended for students from all faculties. These courses do not require students to have any prerequisite knowledge in order to succeed because they are introductory courses or have forgiving grading schemes. There is a general consensus that these courses are easy to get a 90+ with minimal effort and will help lighten your overall workload.

Math 1229

Earth Sci 1086

Comp Sci 1033

Kin 2000



Math 1229 Methods of Matrix Algebra

Professors: Dr. Allen [redacted]
and Dr. [redacted]

Time Commitment	Lecture Hours: 3 hours per week
	Study Hours: 1-2 hours per week
Estimated Grade	90+ With Minimal Effort 80+ Guaranteed

My perspective

- UBC Dept of Educational Studies
- JIBC Centre for Teaching, Learning, Innovation
- ADHE 327: Teaching Adults





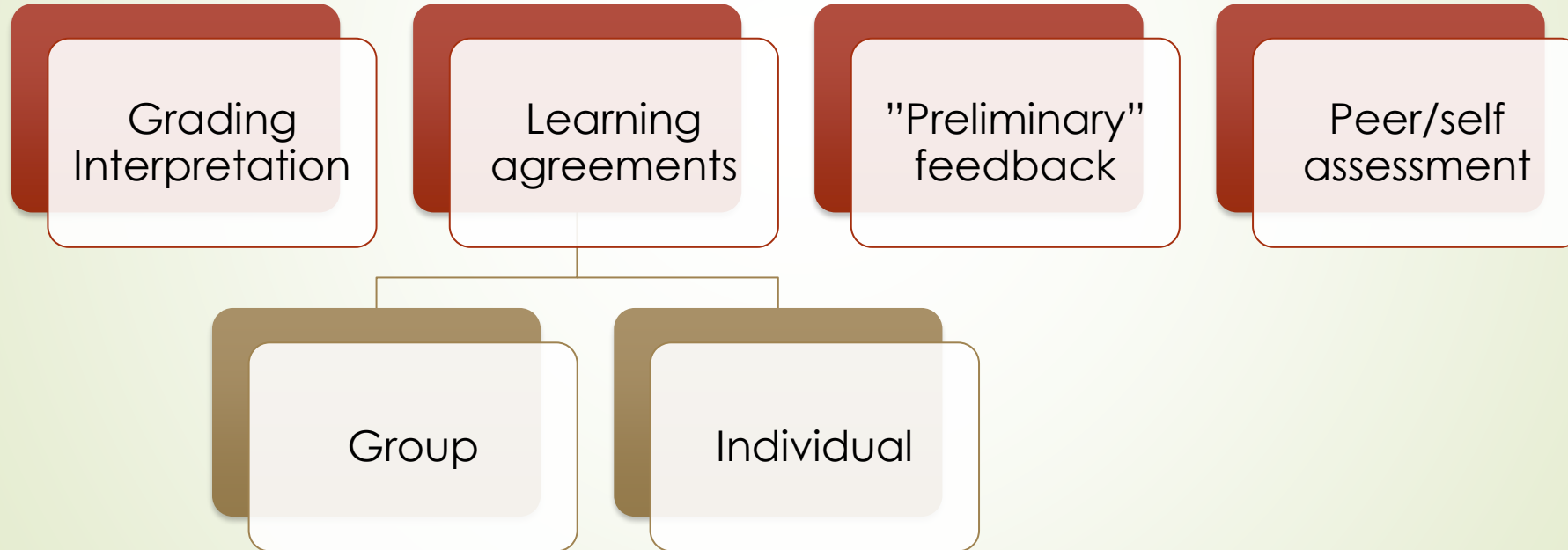
Hey Conscientious Educator: What happens when you improve something in your class?

- Students benefit from the change and everyone does better!
- Program administrators ask why your grades are inflating?

Hey Conscientious Educator: What happens when you work hard to ensure that everyone succeeds?

- Everyone succeeds!
- You are asked to bell your results, mark harder, spread out the grade distribution?

Some strategies





Grading Interpretations: reducing misunderstandings

Letter Grade	Percent	Range Description	Application in ADHE 327 Weeks 1-4
A+ A A-	90-100 85-89 80-84	Work of outstanding quality. Exemplary work that demonstrates excellent comprehension of the subject, exceptional thoughtfulness and an inquiring mind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Learning Goals are in-depth, comprehensive and draw on elements and concepts derived from course readings. Goals are connected with materials presented in Weeks 1-4. (JV)- Self-Assessment is introspective, thoughtful, and draws on personal experiences. Evidence of concepts taken from readings are integrated in responses. (JV)-Sets the tone of the learning environment to be a safe space to discuss new ideas and expand knowledge and concepts in a judgment free discussion while keeping discussion focused(SH)



Group Learning Agreement

Group Participation Expectations


- **Frequency:** Contribute to each assigned discussion and 2-3 comments per week. (NB)
- **Timing:** Respond to weekly discussions by Thursday night, 1-2 comments by Saturday night and 1 comment by Sunday night latest to wrap up discussions for the week. (NB)
- **Communication:** Let group members know if you are unclear about anything in advance, or if you might have course conflicts. (MB)
- **Attitude:** Preserving a positive learning environment. Good vibes throughout the term! (MA)

2. Self Assessment

Complete the following assessment checklist. Please add commentary where required.

Criteria	Completed (y/n)
I posted my video introduction on time.	
I contributed to each of the following discussions forums:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Succeeding at online learning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Considering adult education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adult learners and motivation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching Perspectives inventory results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any others?	
Based on these discussions, what can you tell me about how learning works for you and how it might work for your own learners (when you are in a position to teach someone):	
I completed the Readiness to Learn Quiz on time.	
I contributed to the Group Learning Agreement. Use the following assessment criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">I led the process:I contributed significantly to the criteria:I contributed somewhat to the criteria:I added my name to the agreement/schedule on time:	
Please describe how you met the criteria for this question:	
Please describe yourself as an adult learner, based on the information you have considered so far in the course (include references):	
Based on your work in the class so far, what questions are you hoping to resolve in the next part of the course?	

Self
Assessment: an
opportunity for
metacognition



Preliminary Feedback: uncoupling feedback from the grade

Assignment Component	Observations
Presentational materials	<p>The Pictochart looks interesting. But there were some aspects of it that could use a little more elaboration. E.g. <u>what's</u> the significance of the images? I'm sure they relate to the description but it's more implicit than stated for clarity.</p> <p>There is a bit of a jump from your summary overview to the direct questions. I would suggest ensuring a bit more to help bring Arseneau's long chapter to the attention of everyone as it takes a few different approaches to highlight this perspective.</p>
Activities/Questions to generate discussion	<p>The key to this perspective relates to the idea of bridging so focusing on methodologies in that regard is a good approach.</p> <p>One of the more standard methodologies in this regard is Problem Based Learning (PBL), well known in medical education. You might want to investigate that.</p>
Discussion	<p><u>As facilitator</u> you want to be more present than I am seeing at the moment. Try not to let someone reply and then leave that hanging. Their chances of reappearing and contributing diminish over time.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Be prepared to wrap things up on Sunday. How will you do that in a way that ties together your initial material with the</p>



Variations

- **Minimal Grading** (Peter Elbow)
- **Contract Grading** (Asao Inoue)
- **Specifications Grading** (Linda Nilson)
- **Mastery** “Grading” works like this: when a student completes a task, they get either a C for complete, R for resubmit, or 0 for missing or incomplete (The template above is shared with the student and I update there. It isn’t ideal but the best considering our LMS doesn’t really allow for non-grading).”
Jennifer Eidum




BREAKOUT GROUPS

Find the others

- Introduce yourselves,
 - where you're from,
 - what you teach/study/research (your field/discipline)
 - where you work,
- Has anyone tried it?
 - Examples of ungrading, i.e. your attempts
 - Suggestions for ungrading
 - Barriers/Questions
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zZOemsTgP-xoTISqilzSMYfgVI9NJjaHKcznfxrhfaM/edit?usp=sharing>



Ungrading Unpacked

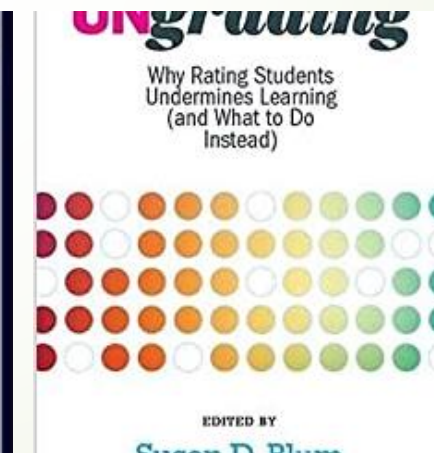
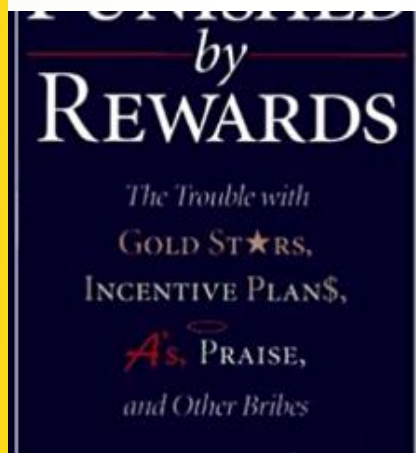
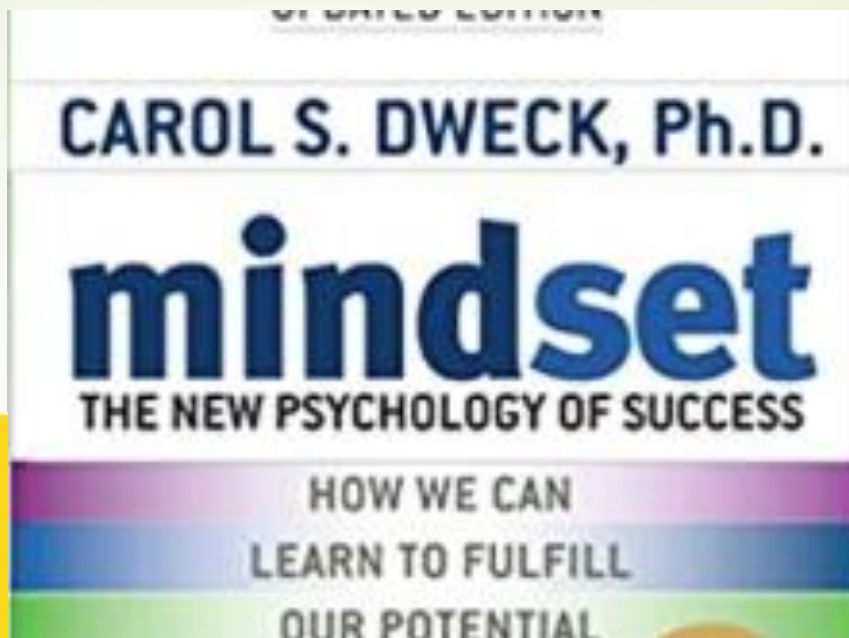
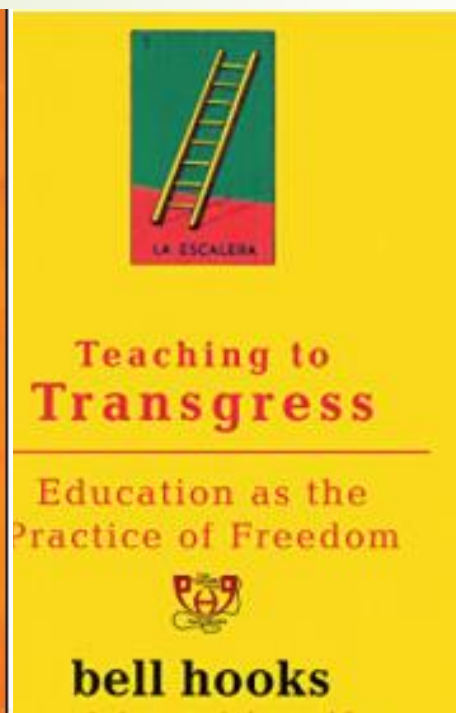
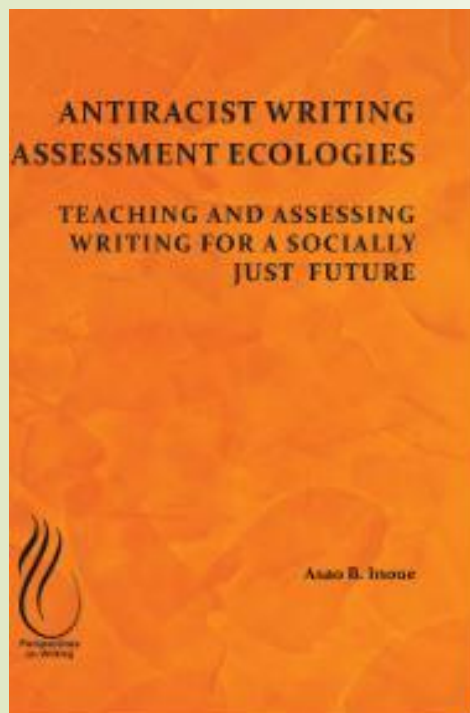
- Ungrading + UDL
 - Ungrading + EDI
 - Ungrading + Radical Pedagogy
 - Ungrading + power
 - Ungrading + rigor
 - Ungrading + motivation
 - Ungrading + STEM
 - Ungrading + performance
 - Ungrading + COVID-19
 - Ungrading + assessment
- 



Observations

- Pedagogy, which includes thoughts on grading, has to be integrated into the curriculum regardless of your subject matter.
- Talking about what matters to students is a positive aspect of class discussion.
- Students and instructors have distinct views on grading, but we're not always certain what others are thinking.
- Letting go of control feels risky, (and it is...)

Reading Up on Ungrading



Articles and Presentations

- Inoue, A. (2015). Appendix A: English 160W's Grading Contract. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0698> <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/inoue/appendixa.pdf>
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- Stommel, J. (March 2020). *Ungrading. A Bibliography*. <https://www.jessestommel.com/ungrading-a-bibliography/>
- Sorensen-Unruh, C. (May 2021). *Ungrading*. Presentation to UBC. Ref: <https://clarissasorensenunruh.com/2019/02/10/ungrading-a-series-part-1/>
- Sorensen-Unruh, C. (2020). Ungrading: What is it and why should we use it? *ChemEd Exchange*. <https://www.chemedx.org/blog/ungrading-what-it-and-why-should-we-use-it>
- Tannock, S. (2017). No grades in higher education now! Revisiting the place of graded assessment in the reimagination of the public university. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(8), 1345-1357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1092131>



The End!

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Thank you everyone!



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