Using Specifications Grading to Promote Student Engagement and Content Mastery in a BSN Honors Program

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Conflicts of Interest and Disclosures

Neither the planner(s) or presenter(s) indicated that they have any real or perceived vested interest that relate to this presentation.
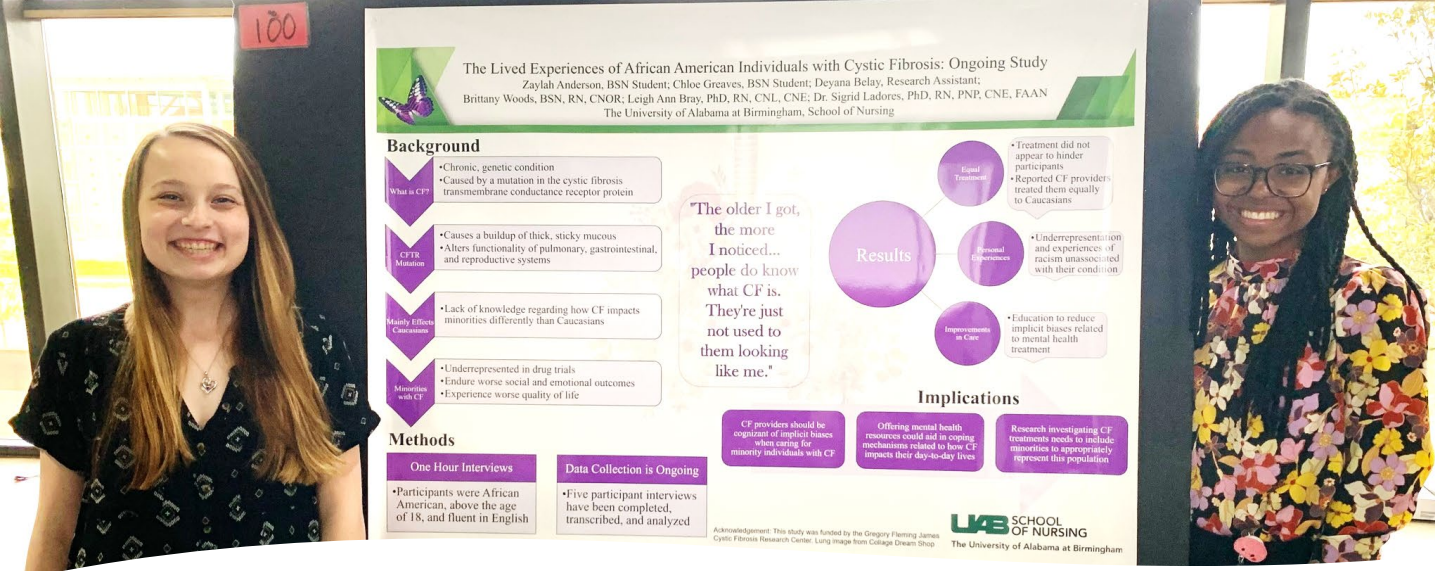
Acknowledgements

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BSN HONORS PROGRAM

- Three courses, total 6 credit hours

- Immersion into nursing scholarship

- Completion of quality improvement or research project

- Cohorts average 15-25 students

- Minimum GPA of 3.0 overall; 3.4 in 1st semester BSN courses
- Have ≥3 semesters remaining in the BSN program
- Can attend in-person class
- Open to mentorship and continued development

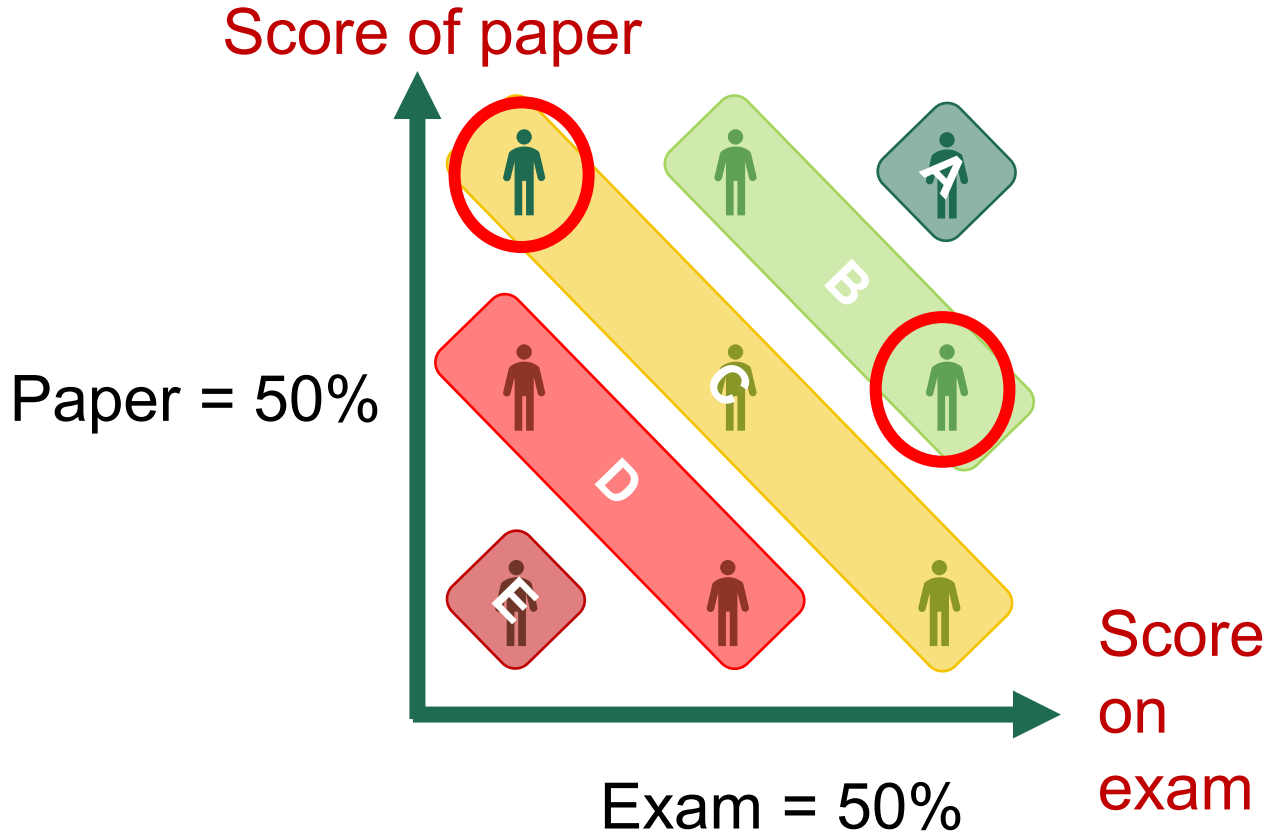# WHAT IS SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

- Final grade based on how many assignments student satisfactorily completes
  - Assignments bundled to reflect the hierarchy of learning objectives

- Each assignment evaluated as complete/satisfactory or incomplete/unsatisfactory
  - Pre-determined goals and requirements of the assignment, or "specifications."

WHY USE SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

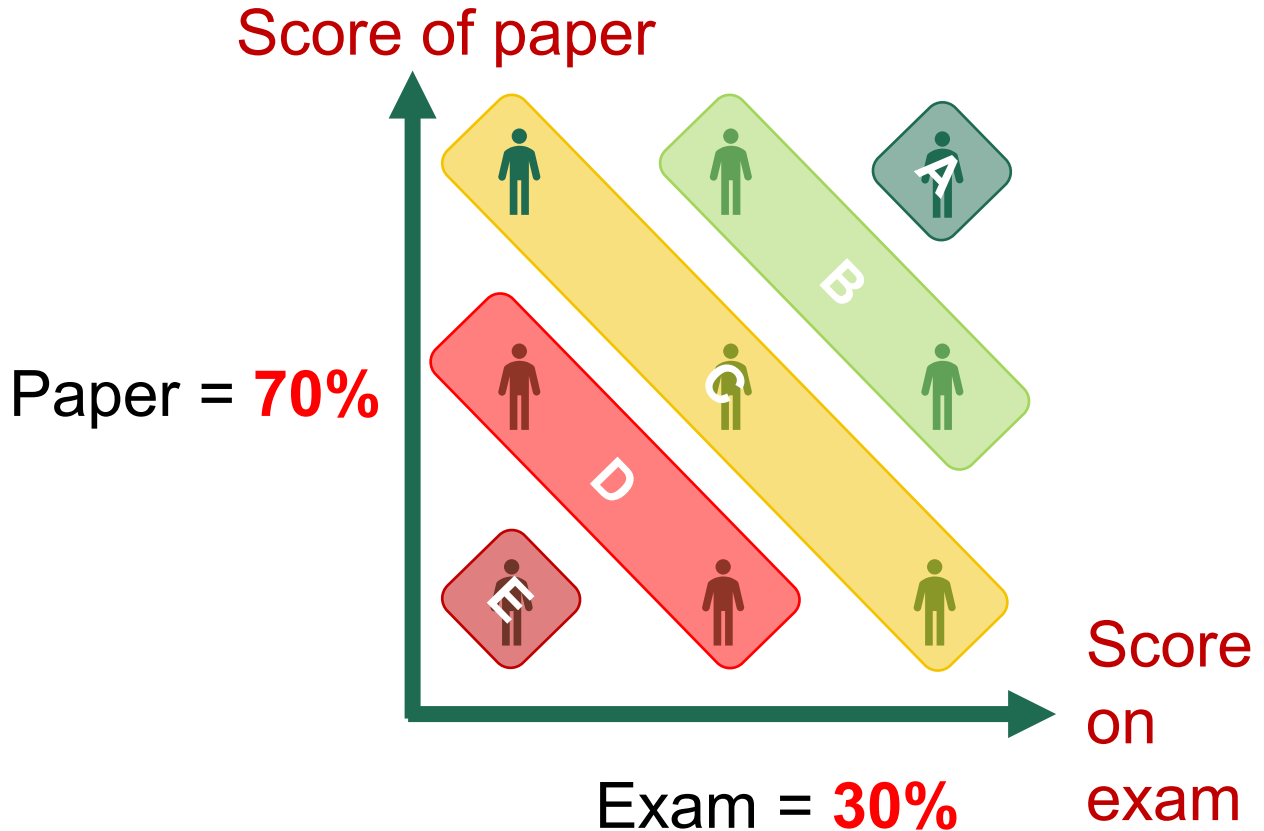Goals of a grading system → internally valid, transparent, and fair

- Internally valid: with specs grading, final grade directly aligns with objectives
    - Compare to points system where student's exam score may have made up for a poor paper
- Transparent: less subjectivity in grading
- Reduce student stress, increase engagement

WHY USE SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

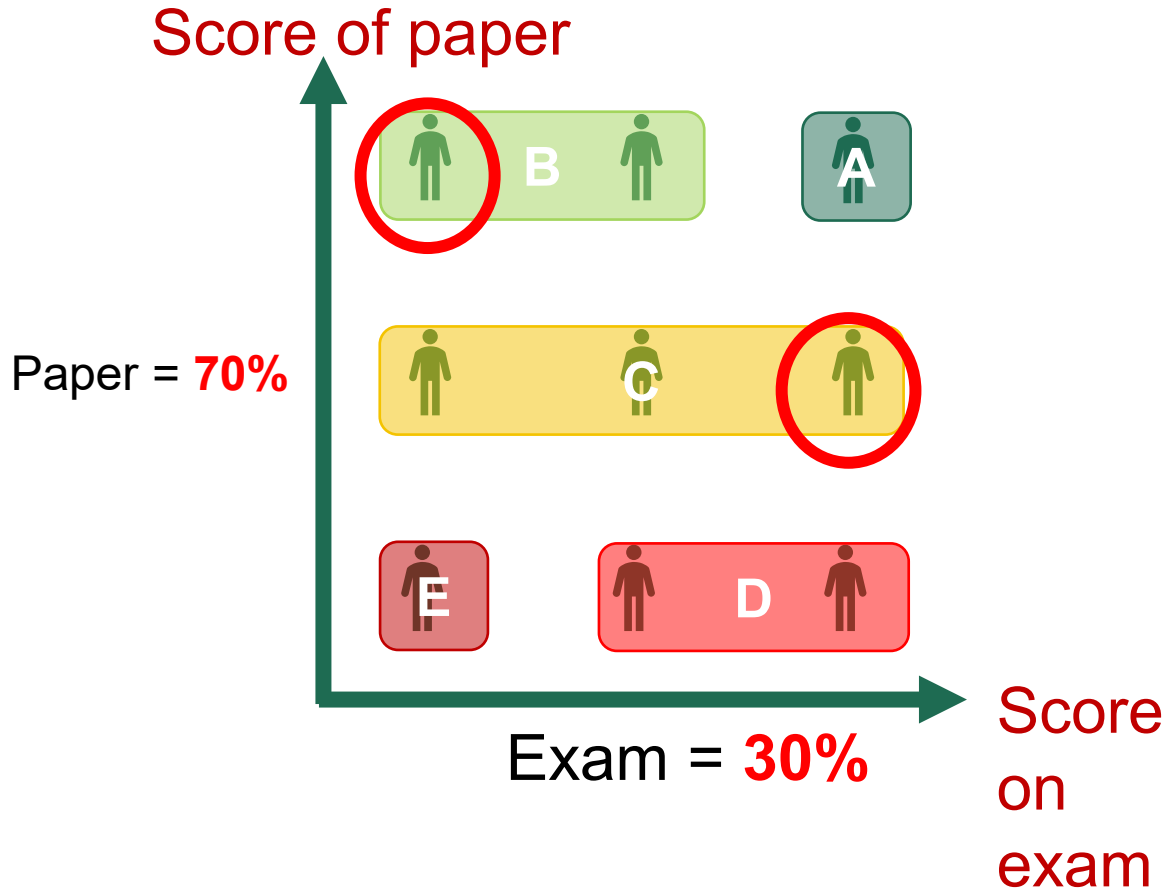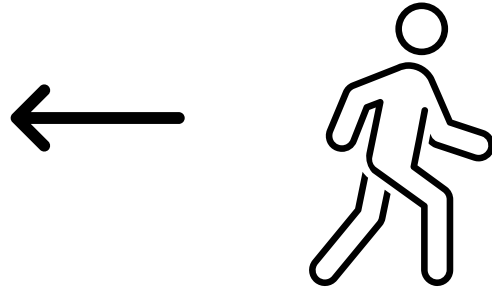# WHY USE SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

Score of paper

Paper = **70%**

Score on exam

Exam = **30%**

WHY USE SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

Score of paper

Paper = **70%**

Exam = **30%**

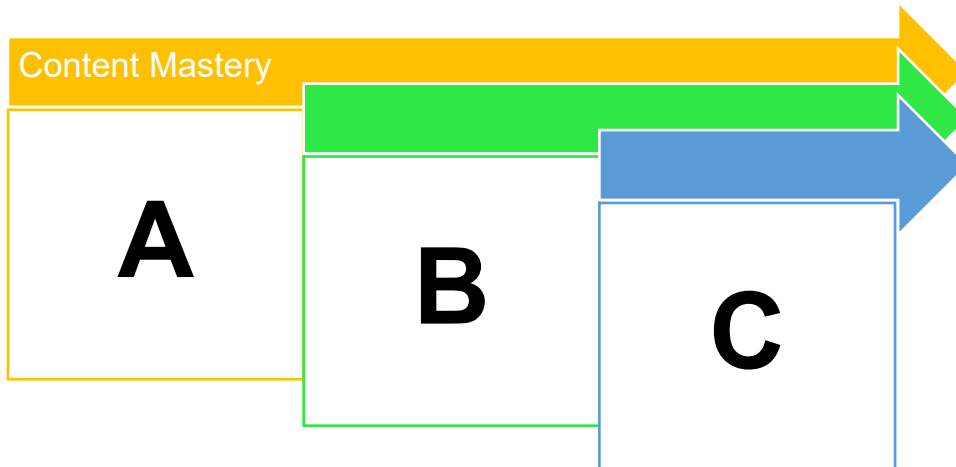Score on exam

A B C D E

IMPLEMENTATION

- Build bundles based on course objectives
- Work backwards from desired outcomes
- Modify existing assignments

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of NUR 452L the student will be able to:
1. Demonstrate professionalism in role as a member of a research team.
2. Present a scholarly written and oral presentation of the experience to peers, mentors, agencies and communities of interest; and to respond to questions related to the project.
3. Collaborate with research mentor to apply findings to nursing science.
4. Critically evaluate progress on learning objectives.

WHAT IS SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

| Bundle	Class Participation*	Peer Review Activities	Application Exercises	Final Project	Presentation
A	Attends all classes (10); volunteers responses to discussions; contributes to discussions in a meaningful and substantive manner **AND** Attends DNP Intensive	Peer review of abstract draft **AND** Peer review of poster draft	Abstracts – the good, the bad, and the ugly **AND** Re-create the Graphic **AND** 15 Hours Enrichment Activities	Reflective Paper in APA Format	Final Presentation in class, upload of poster and abstract to Expo site, documentation of approval from mentor.

WHAT IS SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

Bundle	Class Participation*	Peer Review Activities	Application Exercises	Final Project	Presentation
B	Attends at least 8/10 classes; contributes to some discussions, always in a meaningful and substantive manner **AND** Attends DNP Intensive	Peer review of abstract draft **OR** Peer review of poster draft	Abstracts – the good, the bad, and the ugly **OR** Re-create the Graphic **AND** 10 Hours Enrichment Activities	Reflective Assignment (GoReact Video)	Final Presentation in class, upload of poster and abstract to Expo site, documentation of approval from mentor.

WHAT IS SPECIFICATIONS GRADING?

Bundle	Class Participation*	Peer Review Activities	Application Exercises	Final Project	Presentation
C	Attends ≤ 6 of 10 classes; contributes to some discussions, always in a meaningful and substantive manner **DOES NOT** Attend DNP Intensive	Completes abstract and poster without participating in peer review	Abstracts – the good, the bad, and the ugly **OR** Re-create the Graphic **AND** No Enrichment Activities	N/A	Final Presentation in class, upload to of poster and abstract to Expo site, documentation of approval from mentor.

- Specific to Honors
  - Group projects – how to handle?
    - Team member evaluations
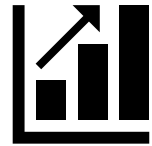   - Individual contributions
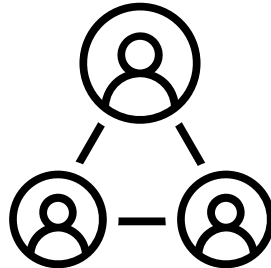
EVALUATION

34 students participated in the 3 post-implementation courses.

Average IDEA scores increased from 4.5 to 4.7 out of 5.0.

Students demonstrated self-driven mastery of course objectives, with 32 (94%) selecting A bundles.

EVALUATION

"Specs grading provided me with so much peace of mind about this class. I see this program as something that benefits me through the BSN program and into the future."

"I firmly believe that specs grading is a huge contributor for me to reap every benefit this class has to offer."

LESSONS LEARNED

Faculty

1. Need clear rubrics for assignments
2. Clearly explain grading system and bundles
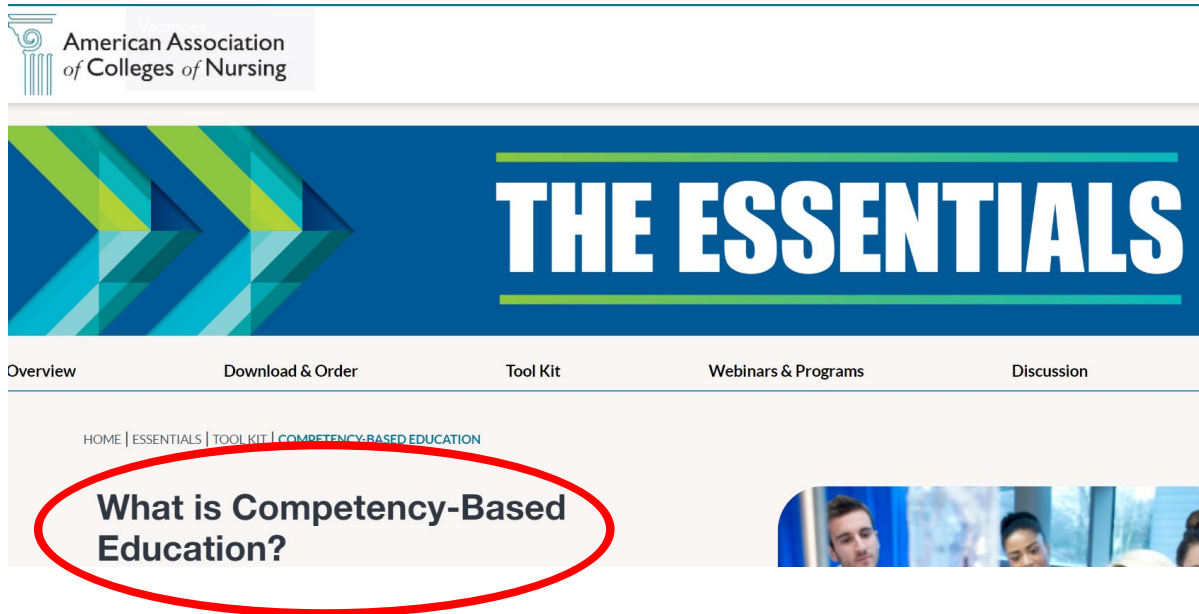3. Time and effort saved with grading

Students

1. Enjoyed flexibility with bundles
2. Felt more ownership over course grade
3. Focused more on content than grade

ALIGNS WITH ESSENTIALS

- Supports transition to competency-based learning

CONCLUSION

- Specs grading is a creative alternative to traditional grading
- Benefits both students and faculty
- Reinforces content mastery with less focus on grades
- Allow time for bundle development and implementation

Thank you!

Questions?