

# Tips for improving grading efficiency

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This resource provides tips for streamlining grading and making student assessment and feedback more efficient.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Consider this list of tips to help faculty grade more efficiently without teaching assistant support. You may also wish to consult this CET resource for considerations when developing [alternative assessments](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/alternative-assessments/). To discuss individual pedagogical strategies, [contact CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/) for a consultation. For support with automating grading or LMS integration, [contact ITS](https://blackboardhelp.usc.edu/) or reach out to your school’s instructional design department.

### Tips for efficient grading

#### Use rubrics to make grading and providing feedback more efficient and equitable.

* When producing rubrics for the first time, consider adapting existing rubrics from colleagues, or from other publicly available sources. You might also consider [generating a starter rubric using AI](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/ai-tools-for-course-design/) that can then be modified to suit your course and assignment.
* Create a rubric in the LMS to automatically calculate grades and reduce the amount of feedback you need to provide.
* When creating a rubric, It can be helpful to review samples of student work, and the feedback you provided, on similar assignments from past semesters to identify characteristics of high quality submissions and of those that need improvement.
* Consider using rubrics or other standardized lists of criteria, even for short written responses. A [holistic or single-point rubric](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-different-rubric-types/) may be most appropriate in these cases.

#### Use automated grading approaches wherever possible. Consult with [your school’s IT](https://itservices.usc.edu/contact/school-list/) or instructional design team to identify educational technology options.

* Convert all or a portion of any quizzes, tests, or exams to question types that can be graded automatically in the LMS. Question types that can be graded automatically include multiple choice, matching, or fill-in-the-blank questions.
* Use scantrons or bubble sheets to automate multiple choice grading for exams administered in onground classes.
* Create rubrics directly in the LMS to automate grading. Keep in mind that [different types of rubrics](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-different-rubric-types/) will be more or less suitable for different assignments.
* If you have course policies that include grade reductions for late assignments, consider automating this in the LMS.

### Efficient Feedback Strategies

* Use the automated feedback feature for quizzes in the LMS, so students receive just-in-time feedback on their answer selection.
* Use feedback banks, which allow you to cut and paste common, repetitive feedback. Review CET’s [checklist for effective feedback](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/a-checklist-of-considerations-for-effective-student-feedback/).
* Use tech tools, such as [Gradescope](https://www.gradescope.com/), which is available to all USC faculty in the university supported LMS.
* Provide feedback on early drafts of assignments, or opportunities for students to engage in self- or peer-assessment using your rubric in order to improve the quality of final submissions and make grading easier.
* When grading written responses on a quiz or test, grade one question at a time on all student submissions to reduce the cognitive load of switching between topics.
* Make a schedule for grading and providing feedback that is feasible for you, and take breaks to rest.

### Course policies to support efficient assessment

* Review any [assignment descriptions](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/assignment-description-template/) to ensure that you have provided sufficient clarity to allow students to submit work that meets expectations the first time. Review assignment descriptions with students before due dates to ensure that submissions are of the highest possible quality.
* Consider adding more office hours or creating a dedicated discussion forum in your learning management system (LMS) before assignment due dates to allow students to ask questions in time to complete work before submission.
* When feasible, set submission deadlines for assignments to allow enough time to grade and give feedback before the end of the semester, or before the next assignment is due.
* Review any course policies regarding assignment resubmission or contesting grades and consider whether they are feasible under the current conditions. You may wish to add additional constraints on when and how students may request grade reviews, for example only within one week of receiving the grade or feedback, only during office hours, or only in writing.
* [Communicate](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/communication-strategies-for-instructors/) transparently with students about assignments and expectations.

### CET resources

* [Test question design](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/test-question-design/)
* [Types of rubrics](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-different-rubric-types/)
* [A collection of rubric examples](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/rubric-examples/)