

Classroom Assessment and Grading at Kohala High School

In accordance with the move to standards-based education in Hawaii and across the nation Kohala High School has transitioned to a system of classroom assessment and grading that evaluates student work and tracks student progress on a 0-4 scale instead of using points or percentages. How does this system work, what are the benefits to students, and how does it accommodate the need colleges and universities, as well as many parents, have for traditional measures of student performance; in particular, course grades, grade-point averages, and class rank?

The 0-4 scale used at Kohala High School and at many other schools across the country is based on rubrics or scoring scales for major topics or standards taught during the grading period that describe, in some detail, what students must demonstrate that they know or can do to meet (3) or exceed (4) state standards. A "2" on the scale indicates the student has not yet met the targeted standard but is approaching that level of performance, and a "1" indicates the student has not met the standard and has significant work to do to reach proficiency. Zeros are recorded when students simply don't do the work.

As explained in the companion piece to this document ("STANDARDS-BASED GRADING") a rating of "Meets State Standards" means the student is equipped to be successful in subsequent units, courses, or levels that build on that knowledge or skill. Seniors who consistently meet or exceed expectations across standards and courses at Kohala High School are college and career ready.

Research shows that the rubric-based 0-4 scale increases accuracy and consistency in grading and facilitates and encourages student learning in several ways.

- Academic content, skills, and performance expectations are consistent across teachers of the same course.
- Students know what is expected of them--no surprises on "the test."
- A missing assignment or single poor performance doesn't destroy a student's grade as the intervals between scores on the 0-4 scale are equal. (In the percentage system the 60 or more point range below the lowest passing grade and 10 or fewer point range between passing scores multiplies the effect of a zero or low score on final grades.)
- Academic expectations are aligned with college and career content, skills, and cognitive rigor.
- Grades are honest representations of academic achievement.
- Students are encouraged to master academic content and skills at high levels through feedback on their work and more than one opportunity to demonstrate mastery.
- Grades are based on where students ended up on a standard at the end of instruction rather than on an average of performances during learning, thereby encouraging persistence and continued growth.
- Instruction can be individualized to some extent by implementing flexible in-class grouping according to where students are in their learning on that topic (not met, emerging, meets state standards, exceeds state standards).
- Rubric-based assessment and grading encourages students to take ownership in their own learning through monitoring progress and self-assessment—"Where am I now?" "Where do I need to go?" "What do I need to do to get there?"

In addition to the 0-4 grading scale standards-based grading calls for course grades to be based on actual demonstrated performance on course standards (via tests, quizzes, projects, papers, demonstrations, et cetera) rather than on a mix of performance measures, behaviors (attendance, discipline, work ethic), and practice activities (homework and in-class learning activities). Work ethic, homework, and participation in classroom activities are still valued, expected, evaluated, and recorded for student, teacher, and parent review but will not be included in the calculation of students' final course grades.

Although the system of classroom assessment and grading used at Kohala High School has a significant impact on day-to-day classroom learning as well as on preparation for life after high school it has virtually no effect on progress reporting to post-secondary institutions and employers. Through a simple conversion process final topic or standard rubric scores can be combined and reported as traditional letter grades (A-F), which are then recorded on report cards and transcripts (see "STANDARDS-BASED GRADING"). Grade point averages and class rank are computed as they always have been based on these grades.

Kohala High School is committed to a system of classroom assessment and grading that maximizes consistency across teachers, ensures the accuracy of grades vis-à-vis college and career readiness standards, and supports and encourages learning. Standards-based grading enables us to fulfill that commitment.