Creating Grading Criteria
Establish grading criteria can make the process of grading more efficient and consistent. Providing these criteria to students can help students perform better and prevent confusion or frustration about their grades. The syllabus is a useful location to include the information. Remember to consider the learning goals of the assignment as you develop the criteria by which you will grade. The following are questions to consider as you establish grading criteria:

- What's important in the assignment? (Content? Style? Creativity? Rigor? Clarity? Precision? The reasoning process or the end product?)
- Will you be grading on a curve?
- Will you be giving letter or number grades (or ✓ / ✓- / ✓+ or credit/no credit)?
  - For letter grades: will you include plusses and minuses?
  - For number grades: What is the scale? What do these numbers signify?
- Will you use different grading scales for different assignments?
- Will you be giving partial or only full credit?
- Is there a penalty for late work?

Rubrics are useful tools to keep grades consistent because they explicitly identify grading criteria and tie grades to these criteria. They can also be shared with students to guide their process as they complete an assignment. **TAs should talk with the course faculty about rubrics they develop.**

Grading Strategies
**Grading Tips for Helping Students Learn:** Use your comments to teach, not only to justify an assigned grade.

- Link your comments and feedback to the assignment goals.
- Adhere to established grading criteria and refer to them in your comments.
- Provide constructive comments that help students understand how to improve.
- Focus on what's most important rather than trying to comment on everything.
- Comment on patterns (representative strengths & weaknesses).
- Ask questions that will guide further student inquiry.
- Praise students for improvement.
- Give multiple assessments so that students can learn your grading strategies and evaluate their own performance.

**Tips for Grading Fairly and Efficiently:**

- Grade anonymously
- Be consistent
  - Read through several, if not all responses, to a particular question, before you begin grading so you can get a sense of the range of responses.
  - Grade exams and problem sets by questions, and not by complete exams or individual submissions.
  - After you finish grading, review the first few responses you graded.
  - If grading in a course with other instructors/TAs, you may wish to:
    - ask that everyone review exams/papers together.
    - divide up questions so that one person grades all response each.
- Be time-efficient
  - Identify common problems and provide the class with collective feedback.
Provision the class with an answer key, with indications of how responses were assigned grades/points.

**Tips for Dealing with Grading Disputes**
- Wait 24 hours before discussing grades with students so that the students can read comments and reflect on the grading.
- Set up a time when you can give the student/matter full consideration.
- Tell the student that it is possible that the new grade could be lower.
- Consider asking the student to write out his or her side of the story, i.e., explain why the assigned grade was wrong. Review this explanation before your meet.
- Ask the student to read the disputed answer or section aloud.
- Listen attentively and patiently to students concerns, so that he or she feel heard.
- Remind the student that the grade reflects work on a particular task and is not a judgment about them.
- Help the student understand how to earn a higher grade in the future.

**Resources for Grading at Brown**
- **Brown’s Grading System**: In most courses a student may be graded on a basis of either Satisfactory/No Credit or A/B/C/No Credit.
- **Course Performance Reports**: Students who elect to take a course on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis may request that the instructor complete a Course Performance Report form.
- **Students in Academic Difficulty**: Contact the Office of the Dean of the College with your concerns.
- **Brown’s Academic Code**: All Brown students are responsible for understanding and following Brown’s academic code.

*See “Grading at Brown” on the Sheridan Center’s website to learn more:* [http://brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning/assessing-student-learning/grading-brown](http://brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning/assessing-student-learning/grading-brown).

**Sheridan Center Resources for Grading**
- **Workshop on Designing Grading Rubrics**: At this regularly offered workshop, you will learn how to create an effective rubric and how to assess the quality of a rubric you create. See “Upcoming Events” on the Center’s website to learn when this workshop will next be offered: [http://brown.edu/sheridan/upcoming-events](http://brown.edu/sheridan/upcoming-events).
- **Lecture on Grading and Evaluation – Measuring Your Students’ Learning**: This public lecture, the fourth of five in the yearlong Sheridan Teaching Seminar Lecture Series, will be held at 5:30pm on January 27th, 2014.
- **Online Resources: Assessing Student Learning**: This section of the Sheridan Center’s website contains many useful resources to help you learn about the workshop’s topics:
  - Assessment Overview & Best Practices
  - Grading Assessments
    - Grading Strategies
    - Grading Criteria & Rubrics
    - Grade Disputes
  - Grading at Brown