

Minimizing grade complaints



Students complaining about their grades is a fact of university life. But you can reduce grade complaints significantly by being proactive — and making sure students have no reason to complain.

Try out these **best practices**:

- **Post clear expectations, guidelines and/or rubrics for assignments.** (Learn more: [Posting Class Policies](#).) These criteria provide clear standards against which students' work can be measured. Without this, grades can seem arbitrary or confusing to students.
- **Rubrics** help both in clarifying standards and in communicating feedback to students. If your class does not already include rubrics, you can take advantage of [our many resources for creating rubrics](#) for your assignments.
 - *Discuss the rubric* with your students before you use it.
 - Even better, let them try *reviewing a sample assignment using the rubric*; then discuss that process with them and answer any questions. Did they reach a consensus about the work?
- Some instructors find it helpful to provide additional **tips and guidelines** for each assignment. Something that can be especially helpful is to include an **estimate of the amount of time required** to complete the assignment successfully. How to do this?
 - You could create an **Instructor Update** (in a course topic).
 - You could **post a weekly video!** (Learn more: [Connecting with your students via video](#))
- Ask students to **break down a complex assignment into its component tasks**, assign a time estimate to each task, and then **schedule** each of these tasks.
 - You might create a discussion topic in which they post and discuss their task breakdowns and schedules.
 - The first time around — especially with beginning students — you might provide a sample task breakdown, which students can use to schedule their work.
- Ask students to complete **process questions** for each assignment, to encourage them to recognize and reflect on the steps required for completing successful work. (Learn more: [Assignment Process Sheets](#))
- **Grade early and regularly.** Students are more likely to hit the target if they have more than one shot. Give students an early opportunity to learn your standards early and keep them informed of their progress throughout the semester. Don't wait until midterms, or worse, the end of the semester, to let students know where they stand on the core skills and ideas being taught in your class. **Learn more:** [Fair, Transparent & Meaningful Grading](#)

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So you've done all these things, and some students are *still* complaining?

- Check out these ideas and resources for responding effectively: [When Students Complain About Grades](#).
- And take a look at our guidelines and email template for [Responding to Challenging Students](#).

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