

1 Notes on Grading Papers
2 July 5, 2011
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5 **When** I have a chance I like to review papers that students receive back from their faculty
6 members. This is what I often see:

- 7 • A number of grammatical corrections throughout the paper.
- 8 • Cryptic and hard to read hand-written comments in the margin of the paper.
- 9 • A grade at the end with some general comments.

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11 My own view is that this is not the most useful way to give students feedback on their papers.
12 Generally speaking, I feel that extensive grammatical and spelling corrections are a waste of time
13 for the faculty member and not especially helpful for the student. Maybe some students learn
14 better grammar from looking at their errors, but I think most students just see a field of red
15 marks. My suggestion would be to correct the grammar errors on the first page and then explain
16 that the student needs to proofread papers more **carefully**.

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18 My observation is that the first thing that students look at when they pick up their paper is the
19 grade. From what I can tell, that is often *all* that they look at, especially if the comments are
20 hard to read or confusing. Also, students often receive the evaluated paper significantly *after* it
21 was submitted. Given the chaotic lives of students, however, students have often forgotten much
22 of their own paper by the time they get it back (especially if they wrote it at the last minute in the
23 wee hours of the morning).

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25 Here is another approach.

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- If you like to get physical copies, have the students submit their papers with line-numbers as you see in this document. To insert line-numbers, all the students have to do (in Word) is go to Page Layout>Line Numbers>Continuous.
- As soon as you read each paper, e-mail comments to the student, **keyed to** line numbers in the student's paper. Do *not* put a grade on the paper. The students are much more likely to read your comments if there is no grade on the paper, since they will be trying to figure out what the grade will be. Assuming that you type faster than you write, you will probably type better comments in the same period of time. Many of the students will get their comments sooner since you are going to return papers as you comment on them rather than all at once in class.
- When you have finished ing all of the papers and a few days after you have sent out the comments, put the grades on BlackBoard or whatever classroom management software you are using.

Comment [S1]: This comment was produced using the MS Word review feature. As you see, the line numbers are very easy to produce. If students give you electronic copies of their papers, you can write them an e-mail and key your comments to the line number in their paper.

Comment [S2]: Again, these comments are very easy to insert in MS Word.

From here, all the comments were done with Adobe pdf.

The pencil tool makes free form comments

Click on the yellow sticky note!

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- Another possibility (even better) would be to have the students submit their papers electronically either as word files or as pdf files (from Word, they have the option to produce pdf files by going to the “save as” function and selecting “PDF or XPS”).
- Embed the comments in the paper either using the comment feature in Word or the sticky notes in pdf.
- This is even faster if you do it on your iPad using iAnnotate or Goodreader, since as you finish each paper you can e-mail the annotated paper directly to the student.

