What is the purpose of grading?

What is the purpose of assessment?

“Generally, the goal of grading is to evaluate individual students’ learning and performance. Although grades are sometimes treated as a proxy for student learning, they are not always a reliable measure. Moreover, they may incorporate criteria – such as attendance, participation, and effort – that are not direct measures of learning. The goal of assessment is to improve student learning. Although grading can play a role in assessment, assessment also involves many ungraded measures of student learning. Moreover, assessment goes beyond grading by systematically examining patterns of student learning across courses and programs and using this information to improve educational practices.” (https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/grading-assessment.html)
In this example we see that these 3 students all have the same course grade at the end of the semester. While student Z has relatively consistent performance across the three items, Student Y needs work on writing and Student X is somewhat weak in content knowledge as measured by the exam.
Another thing you see here is that the course grade may be made up by other items that are not related to a course outcome or a program student learning outcome such as participation. That brings us to the difference between grades and outcomes.
Grades vs. Outcomes

- A course grade is usually a combination of many factors
  - Exams
  - Projects
  - Assignments
  - Attendance
  - Participation
Grades vs. Outcomes

• Even an exam grade or project grade may be made up of several factors
  – Knowledge
  – Skills
  – Timeliness (was everything turned in on time)
  – And so on...
Grading vs. Outcomes

- Course student learning outcomes are clear and concise statements that describe what your students are expected to learn by the end of the course.

- Program student learning outcomes are clear and concise statements that describe what students are expected to learn in their major by the time they graduate.

Course student learning outcomes can be directly related to program student learning outcomes.
## Grades vs. Outcomes

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<tr>
<th>A course grade may =</th>
<th>A course outcome may =</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
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<td>Projects</td>
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<td>Assignments</td>
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Office of Academic Assessment  
RADFORD UNIVERSITY
What we have here is a grading sheet from a class of 10 students. The final grade is comprised of the scores from writing and applied assignments, exams, and presentations. By looking at each of the factors that make up the final grade we can get a fuller picture of our students and of our course.

What does this grade sheet tell us, first about the individual students in the course? E.g., Betsy seems to have struggled with most everything in the course, whereas Jerry mostly struggled with the applied assignments.

What does the grade book tell us about the course?

Applied assignment 3 may have an issue (either with the assignment itself—not a good assignment or students did not grasp the concepts necessary to successfully complete the assignment).
There also appears to be an issue with the first exam (either a bad exam or it may be an indicator of how much students improved over the semester) and with the presentation.

Even though looking at scores on individual assignments and exams gives us more information we can gather even more information about our students and our course by using rubrics.
How many of you use rubrics in your courses?
We will look more closely at the students skills in this course by looking at a rubric used to obtain the presentation scores.
Oral Communication Outcomes

Presentation grade is based on the number of points students score on the rubric.

**Course Student Learning Outcome**—Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills related to the field of Horticulture.

**Program Student Learning Outcome**—Upon graduation from the Horticulture program, students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
We’re not going to spend a lot of time talking about how to create a rubric in this workshop, but you can see from your handout that the score on this presentation activity is made up of several factors. Everything in gray is what is tied directly to the course SLO and the program SLO. You can see that while use of technology and timeliness is a part of the course grade, it is not part of the SLOs.
Here is an example of the rubric used to score Alfred’s presentation. You can see his grade is based on his score of 75 points out of 100 and he scored “proficient” on the oral communication learning outcome.

So this gives us some good information on Alfred’s skills on this presentation. We can see he was proficient in his organization, vocal delivery and non-verbal delivery. He was highly proficient in communicating the content and his use of visual aids.

We can also combine the results of these rubrics to look at how our students are doing overall.
We can also combine the results of these rubrics to look at how our students are doing overall.

This next form is used by the instructor to tally the number of students who scored at each proficiency level for each of the elements. Although “Use of Technology” and “Timeliness” are included on this sheet they won’t be used for determining how well students met the learning outcome.
Here is a completed sheet with the scores from all ten student rubrics. What information does this tell us?

- 70% of students were proficient or highly proficient on this learning outcome
- Strengths were seen in students ability to communicate content, in their organization skills and their ability to use visual aids.
- Weaknesses overall were seen in their vocal and non-verbal delivery.

- In terms of non-SLO factors, students also seemed very proficient in their use of technology.

How can the instructor use this information?
- The instructor can spend some time in class (or by other means) instructing students on how to build their vocal and non-verbal delivery skills.

Information from this course SLO can now be used when the program assesses the oral communication skill at the program level.
Some Resources

- Creating and Using Rubrics (U. of Hawaii at Manoa)
  https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/rubrics.htm

- AAC&U Value Rubrics - https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics

- Creating a Rubric (U. of Denver)
  http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/index.htm

- How is Assessment Different from Grading? (U. of Denver)
  http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Assessment%20Matters%20Nov%202016.pdf
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