

Teaching French On-line to 250+ students: Fair and engaging grading strategies

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A bit about FREN 107

FREN107 is an online course offered by the French Department to students wishing to supplement their language skills by enabling them to engage in everyday interactions.

It is mandatory for about one third of students, and about another third are professionals seeking a certificate in French.

The course typically attracts between 100 and 350+ students per term with anywhere between 3-7 TAs to manage. With a very fast-paced timeline, the online learning environment takes place on three platforms including onQ, Pearson MyLab and Feedback Fruits. Paying attention to fair and engaging grading strategies can sometimes end up at the bottom of the priorities list.

Final Assignment – Two Years of Adjustments toward Fairness and Transparency

First time teaching FREN107
250 students; 5 TAs
No grading grid for Final Assignment worth 35%
Lots of student complaints

FALL 2019

In the summer of 2020, FREN107 was redesigned
100 + students; 3 TAs
New, improved Grading Grid
Assignment worth 30% instead of 35%
No student complaints

FALL 2020

300+ students; 7 TAs
Developed first Grading Grid midway through semester
No student complaints

WINTER 2020

200+ students; 5 TAs
Same grid as before

WINTER 2021

Forthcoming changes to how students will be evaluated for oral French over Zoom: spontaneous conversation with TAs

Winter 2020 Grading Grid



Fall 2021
Grading
Grid

Future changes: off-the-grid grading

- Problems with academic integrity violations: some students hired third party to write their scripts. As a result, we were not grading their true language capacities and efforts.
- Student pre-record scripts and didn't speak spontaneously – also a form of academic integrity violation. We don't know their French proficiency if they aren't speaking in the moment.
- In order to get a sense of their true level of French, Future FREN107 TAs will:
 - Ask students a simple question such as “How are you” in French;
 - Students can pass one question but must answer the second;
 - TAs will be able to determine their level (B + or A -) with better accuracy.
 - This will also (hopefully) discourage academic integrity violations.