



Redesign of a Pharmacy Self-Care Elective Using a Specifications Grading Approach

Erika L. Kleppinger, PharmD, BCPS
Auburn University Harrison College of Pharmacy



Specs grading simplifies
grading and allows more
time to provide feedback.



Scan for the course syllabus &
detailed assignment specs

References

1. Nilson LB, Stanny CJ. *Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time*. Stylus Publishing; 2015.
2. Leslie P, Lundblom E. Specifications grading: what it is, and lessons learned. *Semin Speech Lang*. 2020;41(4):298-309. doi: 10.1055/s-0040-1713781
3. Kleppinger EL. Specifications Grading: A step towards competency-based education? *Pulses*. Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning Scholarly Blog. May 25, 2023. <https://cptlpulses.com/2023/05/25/specifications-grading-a-step-towards-competency-based-education/>

What is Specs Grading?



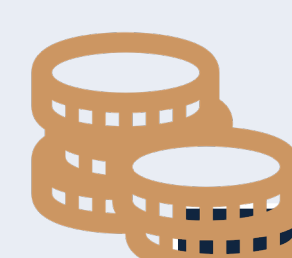
Assignments

- Aligned with learning outcomes
- Graded pass/fail
- Clear “specs” provided in advance
- Specs correlate to at least B-level work
- Feedback relates to performance on specs



Grade Bundles

- Assignments grouped into bundles for each letter grade
- Higher grades require more skill or content mastery
- Advanced learning options offered for self-motivated students
- Students decide their desired letter grade



Tokens

- Limited opportunity to revise assignments
- Instructor-defined ways of earning or usage
- Allows for flexibility in completing assignments

Objective

Describe the redesign, implementation, and outcomes of a pharmacy self-care elective course incorporating specifications grading.

Methods

Self-Care and Nonprescription Pharmacotherapy
1 credit hour, 6-week elective for P2 and P3 students
Synchronous Zoom classes (2 hours, once per week)

Prior to 2023

Traditional grading structure
Each assignment associated with points
Grading rubrics provided to students in advance

Spring 2023

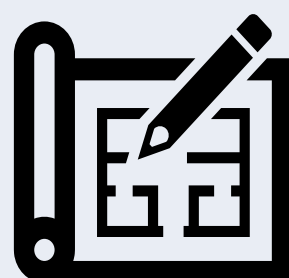
Utilized specs grading
Class session topics remained the same
Some adjustments in assignments
GOAL: have students focus more on learning than grades

COURSE DESIGN

- The only ‘grade’ is the final course letter grade
- Assignments graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory
- All assignments in a specific grade bundle must be marked ‘satisfactory’
- Assignments are bundled into 3 tiers (A / B / C)
- Final grade determined by which bundle of assignments is completed

ASSIGNMENT GROUPS

Presentation Objectives
Group Presentation
Exam Questions
Patient Handout
Peer Feedback
Final Exam
Engagement



A Bundle Example

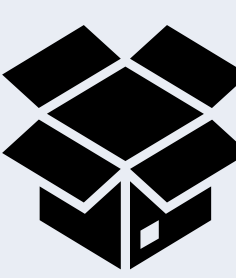
Group Presentation:
B&C bundles + Create a written patient case summary & grading checklist
Patient Handout:
Create a handout unrelated to presented topics
Final Exam: Score $\geq 85\%$

B Bundle Example

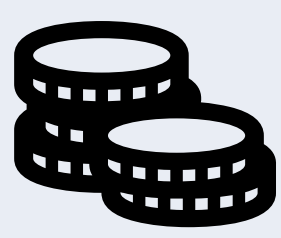
Group Presentation:
C bundle + Present a self-care patient case simulation role-play
Patient Handout:
Create a handout related to presentation topic
Final Exam: Score $\geq 75\%$

C Bundle Example

Group Presentation:
Present a self-care condition overview & summary of treatment options
Patient Handout:
Not required
Final Exam: Score $\geq 65\%$



Results

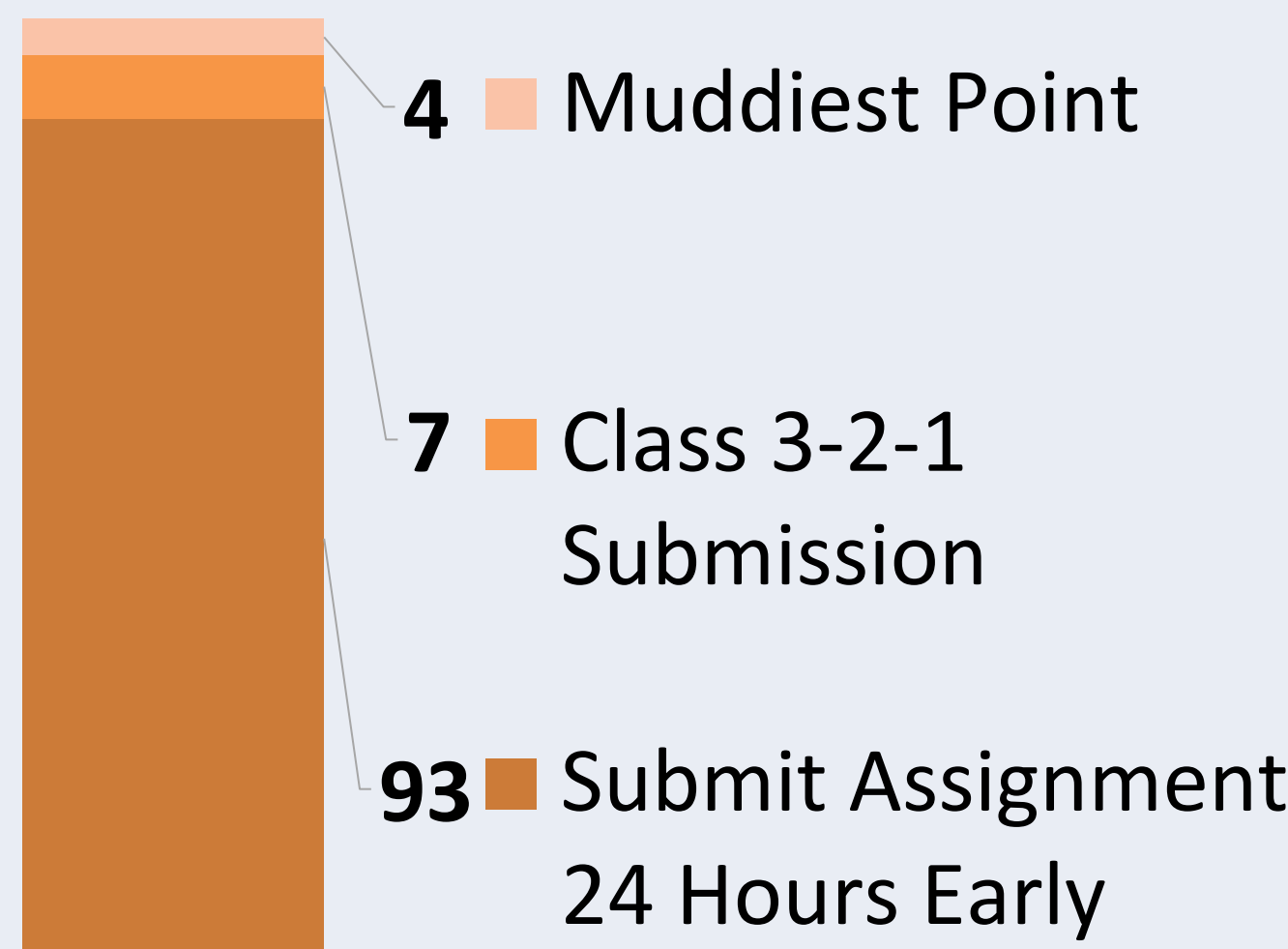


TOKENS

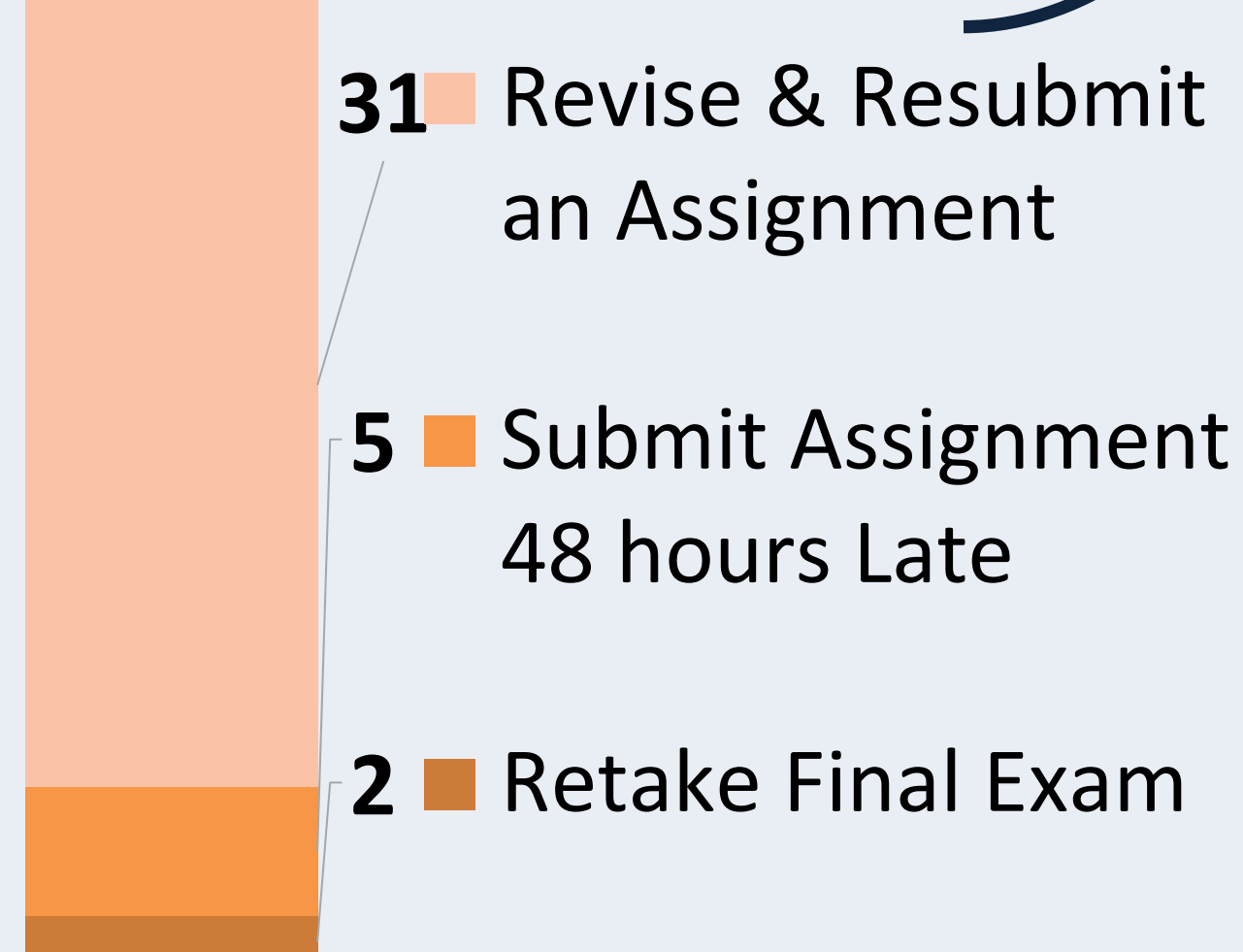
All students started with 1 token
21 students (95.5%) *earned* at least 1 token
19 students (86.4%) *used* at least 1 token
At course conclusion, token average/student = 4 (range 0-9 tokens)

January 9 – February 17, 2023
22 students enrolled
4 P3 students, 18 P2 students
Grade Distribution: 17 As, 4 Bs, 1 C

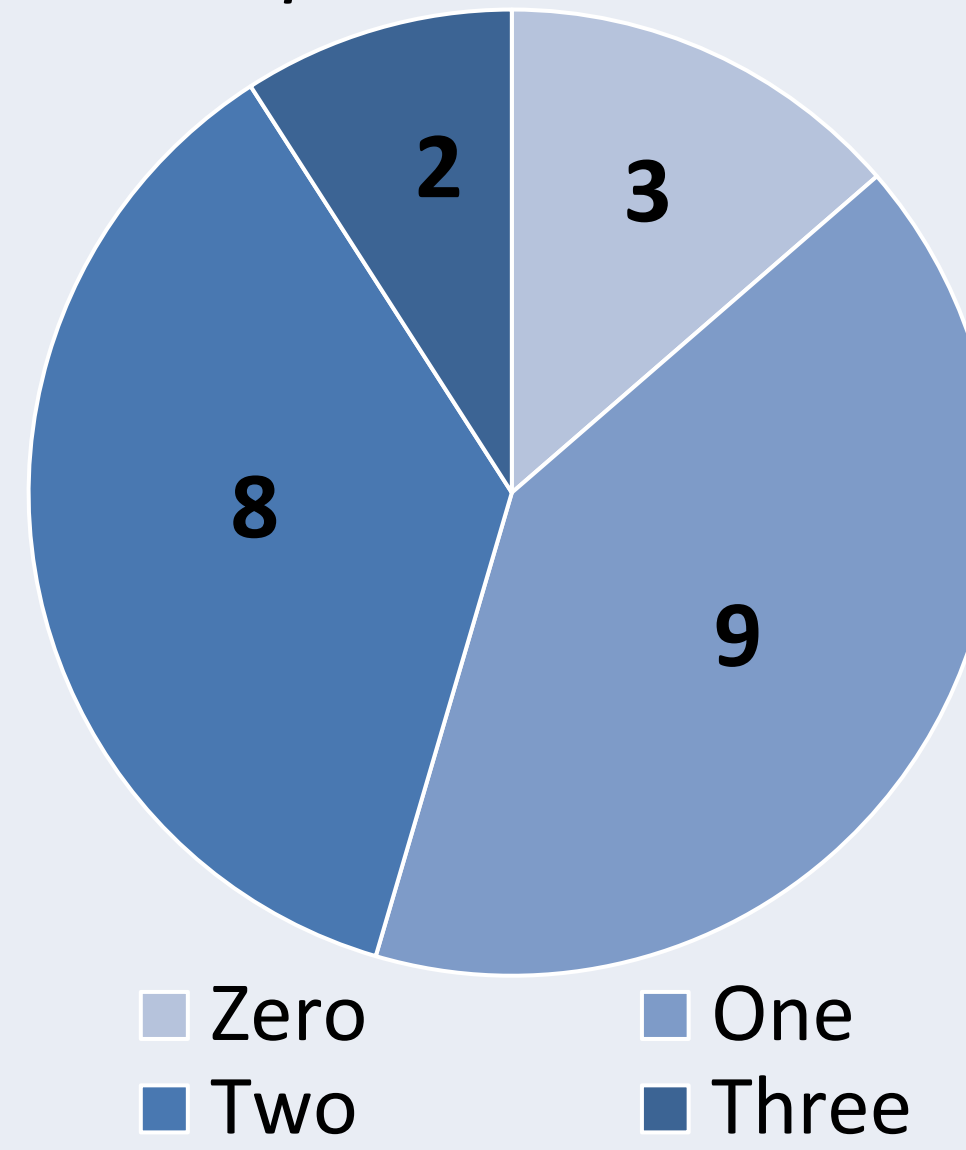
Tokens Earned



Tokens Used



Assignment Resubmissions per student



Conclusion

- Considerable time was spent redesigning the course, but overall specs grading worked well for this elective.
- A streamlined grading approach allowed the instructor to provide more feedback to students instead of focusing on allocating points.
- Students seemed okay with specs grading, although they were sometimes confused with what grade they had in the course.
- Most assignment resubmissions were due to minor technical errors.
- Communication with students about specs grading throughout the course was key.
- Challenges: (1) keeping track of tokens & assignment resubmissions
(2) integration with the LMS grade book