

Love of Teaching Conference 2021

Answers to Chat Questions

(Professor Ray Gonzales and Dr. Alla Webb)

Q: How to avoid embarrassing slow students in class by not calling on them?

A: This involves your class participation expectations. In the SRT environment, some students are more self-conscious and more likely to be reluctant to speak. One overall strategy is to make it clear that you understand not everyone enjoys getting called on in class for many reasons (e.g. home environment issues, shyness). This is information you can explore in a “Getting to Know You Survey” or in a one-on-one meeting during office hours. If you believe a student is struggling with a particular concept or with the class material, in general, you could “build confidence” by asking this student “simpler” questions at first and then more and more challenging questions as the student gains more confidence. You could also have her/him come to your office hours, which you would want to do with struggling students anyway, to go over the material and practice answering questions orally in this less “anxiety-producing” environment. In addition, you can make clear that participation includes using Chat, writing answers on the Zoom white board, etc. This way, students you are not calling on very much intentionally (for good reasons) are less likely to feel embarrassed.

Q: Will you discuss how to hold students to the same standard and be culturally responsive when grading grammar/spelling?

A: CRT is about maintaining high standards and helping students meet those standards (for example, through all of those great strategies and supports you all mentioned during the Scenario Analysis table discussions). Therefore, holding all students to the same standard is culturally responsive (and remember that holding certain students to a lower standard is actually a microaggression, i.e. not culturally responsive). It then becomes a question of the supports we can give students to meet your standards for grammar and spelling. Of course, in-class essays and other in-class writing tasks should be graded differently for grammar and spelling than take home assignments, when students can take advantage of MC’s excellent WRLC tutors as well as online grammar sites and other resources. Providing clear and specific feedback about the areas of grammar in which a student needs to improve, both on the assignments and during office hours, is a must. Having a list of grammar resources to provide students at the start of the semester would be helpful. The faculty and instructors in MC’s English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP), American Pre-Academic and Professional English (APPE) program, and English Department can point you to many language-related resources to help your students.

Q: Providing Multiple Avenues to Success is great – how do we do this without compromising quality and accountability?

A. Providing multiple avenues to success can be very challenging when we have major departmental assignments or final exams that determine a large part of the final grade. We have to work within the limitations of how grades are calculated in a given course. However, to the extent we control how a student can be assessed, as individual instructors, it’s ideal if we provide students with different ways to succeed based on their strengths, learning styles, preferences, etc. We can maintain quality by making sure any alternative avenues to success meet the course outcome criteria established by the discipline. If a student can demonstrate proficiency or mastery of a given objective through a video rather than through written answers, quality is not compromised. It’s just a different way of measuring quality.