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Teaching Matters Column

Exam Wrappers: Using Reflections on Study Habits to Support Student Learning

Appendix: Midterm Reflections & Opportunity for Dropped Exam (Directions for Students)

I. Rationale & Scoring:

Part of your job as a student is to learn how you learn best. You may find it helpful to explicitly track your study procedures and hours, and then reflect after the exam on how well it worked for you. Doing this often will help you hone your personal approach to studying for exams.

To encourage this beneficial study habit, we will offer a guided Exam Reflection assignment on Canvas after each Midterm exam. By completing **both** of these optional reflection activities, you can earn the opportunity to drop 100 points from the total 400 exam points (each Midterm is 100 points, the Final Exam is 200 points). This means the exam portion of the final grade would use the best performances out of 300 points instead of the 400 total exam points. So, for example, if Midterm #1 did not go well and Midterm #2 and the Final Exam were much stronger performances, by completing **both** Exam Reflections the Midterm #1 score would not be included in the final grade calculation. Similarly, if performances on both Midterms were strong but the Final Exam did not go as well, the Final Exam would only be weighted as out of 100 points in the grade calculation instead of 200. Some more specific examples of how this would work are below. The exam that is dropped is automatically determined by instructors to maximize the exam component in students' final grade.

Scenario #1: Midterm 2 and Final are stronger performances than Midterm 1

Original scores (normalized against each exam average):

Midterm 1	72%
Midterm 2	82%
Final	79%

Calculated Average before Exam Drop:

$$(100 pts \cdot 0.72) + (100 pts \cdot 0.82) + (200 pts \cdot 0.79)$$

$$= \frac{312 pts}{400 pts}$$

$$= 78\% weight exam average$$

Calculated Average after Exam Drop:

$$(100 \ pts \cdot 0.82) + (200 \ pts \cdot 0.79) = \frac{240 \ pts}{300 \ pts}$$

= 80% weight exam average

Scenario #2: Midterm 1 and Midterm 2 are stronger performances than Final

Original scores (normalized against each exam average):

Midterm 1	85%
Midterm 2	82%
Final	73%

Calculated Average before Exam Drop:

$$(100 pts \cdot 0.85) + (100 pts \cdot 0.82) + (200 pts \cdot 0.73)$$

$$= \frac{313 pts}{400 pts}$$

$$= 78.25\% weight exam average$$

Calculated Average after Exam Drop:

$$(100 \ pts \cdot 0.85) + (100 \ pts \cdot 0.82) + (100 \ pts \cdot 0.73)$$

$$= \frac{240 \ pts}{300 \ pts}$$

$$= 80\% \ weight \ exam \ average$$

II. Deadlines:

It is important for this reflection process to happen soon after taking the exams to get the most benefit. For that reason, the Exam Reflections must be completed by the deadlines below to earn the dropped 100 points.

- Midterm #1 Exam Reflection Deadline XX, at most one week after exam results are released
- Midterm #2 Exam Reflection Deadline XX, at most one week after exam results are released

III. Format:

The Midterm Reflection assignment will be posted in the Assignment Tab on Canvas after each exam. Below are examples of questions that will be asked; some responses will be multiple choice, and others will be free response. Please take the time to consider these prompts carefully. The exam reflections will be assessed for completion and effort to earn the dropped exam points. You may be asked to do the reflection again if the responses are not thoughtful enough and you'd still like to earn the dropped exam (one chance for a do-over for each reflection).

IV. Example (Answer options in italics)

PART I. Review Exam Results:

1.	I verify that I have reviewed my exam in Gradescope. (Note that you will be asked to review your
	exam in Gradescope in order to receive credit for this reflection)

- o Yes
- o No
- 2. Before completing this reflection, have you taken the time to compare your responses to the posted solutions and identify why you answered individual problems incorrectly? If not, it may be worth using the list of possible reasons below to guide this type of analysis.
 - I did not know of could not recall the concept needed to answer the question
 - I had a partial understanding of the concept, but not enough of the details
 - I learned the concept incorrectly
 - I misread the question or overlooked key facts given in the question
 - I did not understand the language or precise meaning of the question despite careful reading
 - I understood the concept but did not write an effective short answer response
 - I changed my answer from the correct answer to an incorrect answer
 - I did not answer the question
 - I ran out of time
 - o Yes
 - o No

PART II. Study Strategies & Time Management:

- 3. When did you start specifically preparing for this midterm?
 - o I did not study for the midterm
 - The day before the midterm
 - o 2-3 days before the midterm
 - o 4 or more days before the midterm
- 4. How much total time did you spend preparing for this midterm?
 - o None
 - Less than one hour
 - o 1-2 hours
 - o 3-4 hours
 - o 5-6 hours
 - o 7-8 hours
 - o 8+ hours
- 5. What activities or strategies did you use to prepare for this exam? Select all that apply.

List of 20+ examples including:

- o reading the textbook,
- o reviewing in-class examples,
- o attending the midterm review session,
- o completing the provided previous exams,
- attending office hours,
- o (etc.)
- 6. If you answered "other" in the previous question, please elaborate on what other tools or strategies you used to prepare for the midterm. If you did not select "other" please write "N/A".

PART III. Reflect on Exam Preparedness & Results:

7. How prepared did you feel coming into the midterm?

Ratina 1-5:

- 5 Extremely prepared
- 4 Very prepared
- 3 Somewhat prepared
- o 2 A little prepared
- 1 Completely unprepared
- 8. How stressed did you feel coming into the midterm?

Rating 1-5:

- 5 Extremely stressed
- 4 Very stressed
- 3 Somewhat stressed
- 2 A little stressed
- 1 Not stressed at all

	Rating	
		5 – Extremely confident
		4 – Very confident
		3 – Somewhat confident
		2 – A little confident
	0	1 – Not confident at all
10.	Did you perforn	n as well as you <u>wanted</u> to on the midterm?
	0	Yes
	0	No
11.	Did you perforn	n as well as you <u>expected</u> to on the midterm?
	0	Yes
	0	No
12.	Did the questio	ns on the exam feel similar to ones you have seen before in problem sets,
	in class problem	ns, or the previous midterms?
	0	Yes
	0	No
	0	Maybe
		the midterm did you feel unprepared to answer, if any? Perhaps identify specifi
		e exam as an example. (Open Response)