

# Implementing Alternative Grading Practices

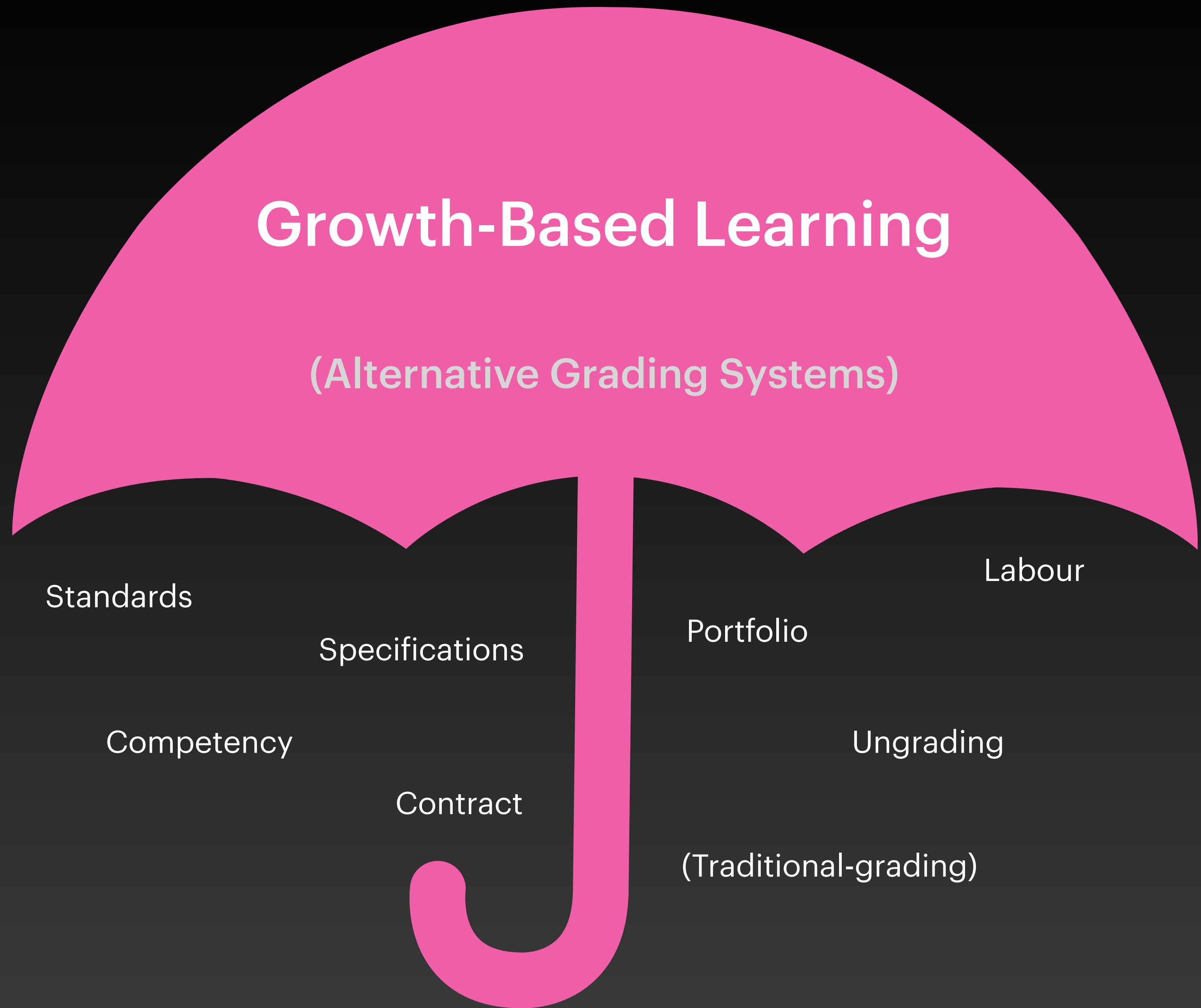
# Reviewing some common Alternative Grading systems

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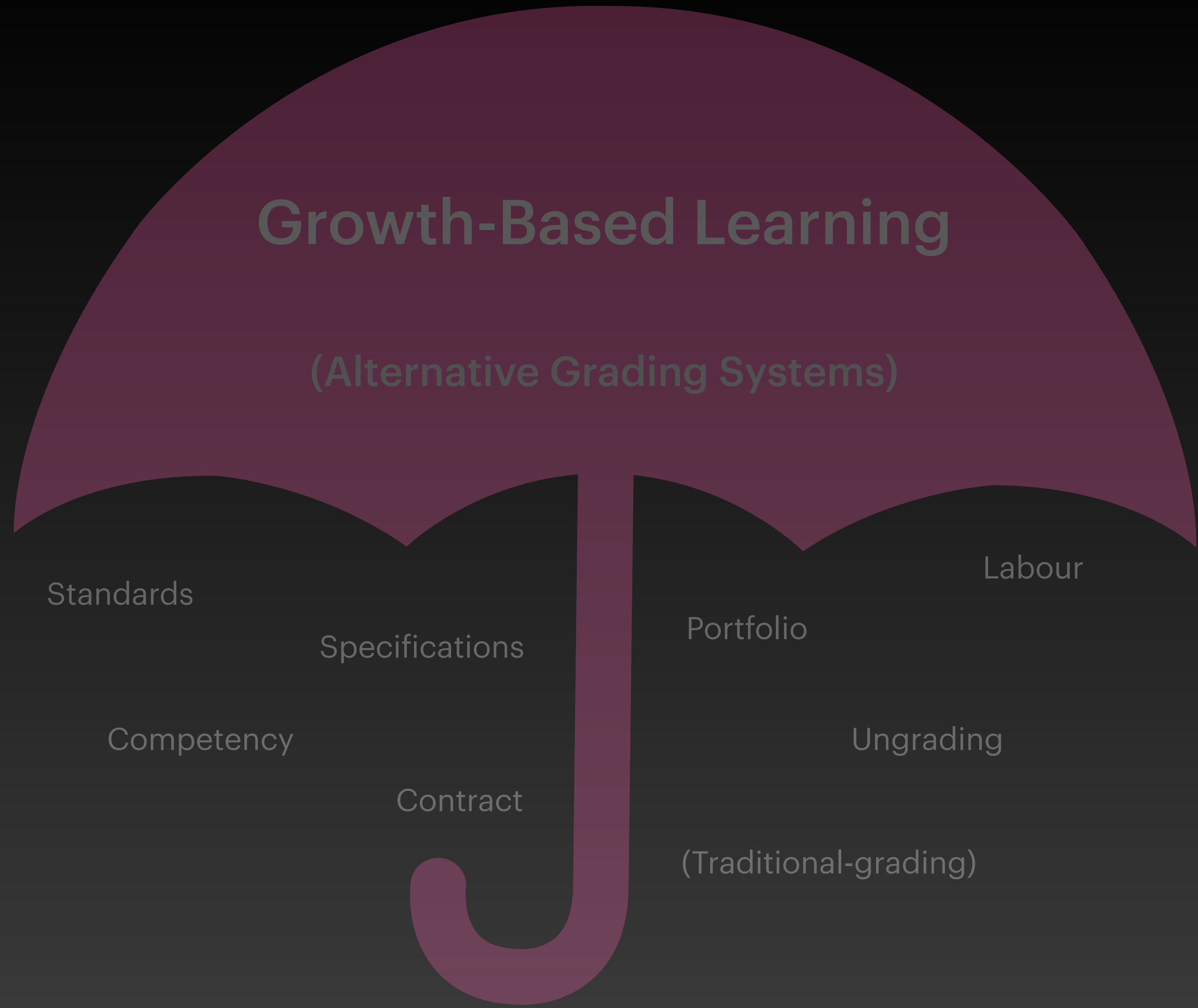
# Defining “Traditional” Grading

1. Assigning **weights** to each activity, awarding **marks/points/letter-grades, tallying** it all in a spreadsheet.
2. Rubrics, rigid deadlines, late-penalties, extra credit assignments, regrade requests, etc...
3. Using **tests, quizzes, midterms, and exams** as summative assessments.
4. All of the above in the name of **fairness** and **rigour**.

# Overview



# Overview



\*NOT\* growth-based

Grading on a Curve

Competitive Grading

Forced Distribution

Relative Grading

Norm-referenced Grading

# Standards

1. Standards-Based Learning (SBL) involves assessing students based on their **proficiency on explicit and previously defined standards**.
2. Students have **different** (and often, **multiple**) **opportunities** to **achieve proficiency** and behaviour is not considered in the grade, only their eventual proficiency in the specified standards.
3. SBL reports usually **describe students' performance on each standard** and includes information on the extent to which students have achieved standards.

# Standards - Example

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## Linear Algebra Standards

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**Module E:** How can we solve systems of linear equations?

- E1. Systems as matrices.** I can translate back and forth between a system of linear equations and the corresponding augmented matrix.
- E2. Row reduction.** I can put a matrix in reduced row echelon form.
- E3. Systems of linear equations.** I can compute the solution set for a system of linear equations.

**Module V:** What is a vector space?

- V1. Vector spaces.** I can explain why a given set with defined addition and scalar multiplication does satisfy a given vector space property, but nonetheless isn't a vector space.
- V2. Linear combinations.** I can determine if a Euclidean vector can be written as a linear combination of a given set of Euclidean vectors.
- V3. Spanning sets.** I can determine if a set of Euclidean vectors spans  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .
- V4. Subspaces.** I can determine if a subset of  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is a subspace or not.
- V5. Linear independence.** I can determine if a set of Euclidean vectors is linearly dependent or independent.
- V6. Basis verification.** I can determine if a set of Euclidean vectors is a basis of  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .
- V7. Basis computation.** I can compute a basis for the subspace spanned by a given set of Euclidean vectors.
- V8. Dimension.** I can compute the dimension of a subspace of  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .
- V9. Polynomial basis computation.** I can compute a basis for the subspace spanned by a given set of polynomials or matrices.
- V10. Basis of solution space.** I can find a basis for the solution set of a homogeneous system of equations.

# Standards - Example

✓ **Meets Expectations (3/3pts):** The Outcome is recorded as Mastered.

★ **Requires Revisions (2/3pts):** You may submit a Quiz Revision to correct any errors, which will be re-marked for credit.

☁ **Shows Progress but Further Study Needed (1/3pts):** You may a take Quiz Reattempt (if available), which will include submitting corrections for this Quiz.

✗ **Insufficient Evidence of Progress (0/3pts):** Same as "☁".

*Note that only results of ✓ Meets Expectations can improve your final grade for the course; other results require you to revise or reattempt the Outcome.*



# Competency - Example

1. Competency-Based Learning (CBL) involves assessing a combination of **skills, abilities, attitudes, values, and knowledge** needed to perform **particular tasks** by the student.
2. The key differentiator of CBL and SBL:
  - SBL: Demonstrating understanding of **concepts**.
  - CBL: Demonstration of practical **skills or tasks**.
3. CBL permits students to progress through the material **at their own pace**.

# Competency - Example

## Skills Checklist



### CPR for an Adult or Child

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Skill	Skill Successfully Demonstrated		
		Yes	No	Supporting Comments
1	Perform a scene survey			
2	Apply personal protective equipment			
3	Determine unresponsiveness			
4	Open Airway			
5	Check Breathing and Circulation for a maximum of 5 to 10 seconds (no circulation found)			
6	Place hands in appropriate position			
7	Give 30 compressions (at a rate of at least 100/minute)			
8	Give 2 ventilations with barrier device and supplemental oxygen			
9	Repeat cycle of 30 compressions and 2 ventilations			
10	Continue CPR until AED can be applied, more advanced care takes over, or local protocol dictates otherwise			
11	If there is any change in patient's condition, stop CPR and check ABCs			

**NOTE: Shaded steps are critical actions. If a critical action is not successfully demonstrated, the skill is incomplete. If the skill is incomplete, supporting comments are required.**

# Specifications

1. Specifications Grading involves assessing students' work in a rigid, binary fashion: **full-credit**, or **no-credit**:
  - Full-credit: **meets (all) carefully and thoughtfully written specifications.**
  - No-credit: **anything else.**
2. **Flexibility** and **redemption** is typically achieved using a **virtual "token" economy** where students are given a limited amount of second chances at resubmissions.
3. Course grades are determined by **pre-set bundles** that **students pick** from:
  - Bundles that require more work, or more challenging work (or both) earn students higher grades.

# Specifications - Example

## Grade Bundles

Course Grade	A	B	C
<i>Assignments (total #)</i>	<i># Completed Satisfactorily</i>		
Exams (2)	≥90% average	≥80% average	≥70% average
Lab Tests (2)	2	2	1
Lab Projects (3)	3	2	1
Lab Tutorials & Pro Course (20)	20 (Ch. 3-13, 15-19; Pro 1-4)	16 (Ch. 3-10, 15-19; Pro 1,3,4)	13 (Ch. 3-10, 15-17; Pro 1,4)
HLM Responses (3)	3	2	1
GIS Articles (2)	2	2	1
Map Critiques (2)	2	1	1
Material Responses (14)	11	9	7
Objectives Achieved	#1-8	#1-7	#1-5

# Contract

1. Contract Grading involves a **shared process of assessment** between students and instructors:
  - Based on self-assessment of **strengths and limitations**, and will determine **what students need to do** to achieve a certain grade.
2. Contract grading **can be used** for a specific **assignment** or **task**, or for an entire **course**.

# Contract - Example

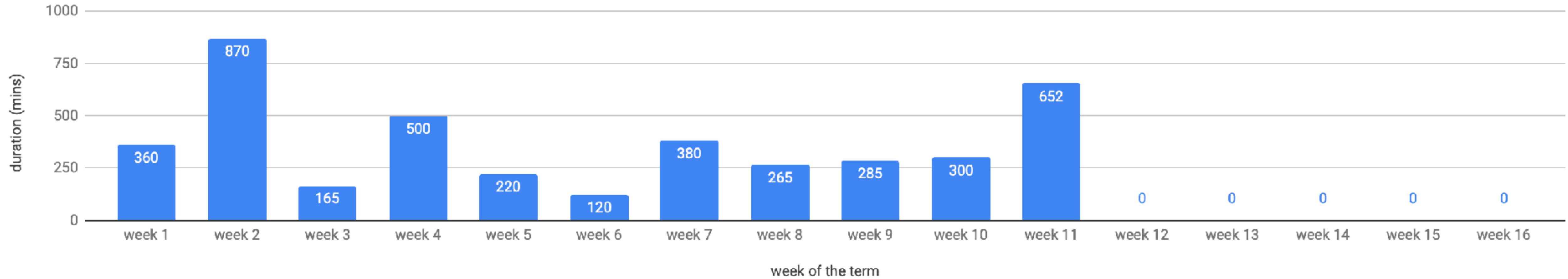
<b>Number of texts read / blogposts written</b>	<b>Percentage Grade</b>	<b>Final Letter Grade</b>
4 (Proust, Bombal, Perec, and Bolaño) / 6	60-63	C
5 (the basic four plus one) / 7	64-67	C+
6 (the basic four plus two) / 8	68-71	B-
7 (the basic four plus three) / 9	72-75	B
8 (the basic four plus four) / 10	76-79	B+
9 (the basic four plus five) / 11	80-84	A-
10 (the basic four plus six) / 12	85-89	A
11 (the basic four plus seven) / 13	90-100	A+

# Labour

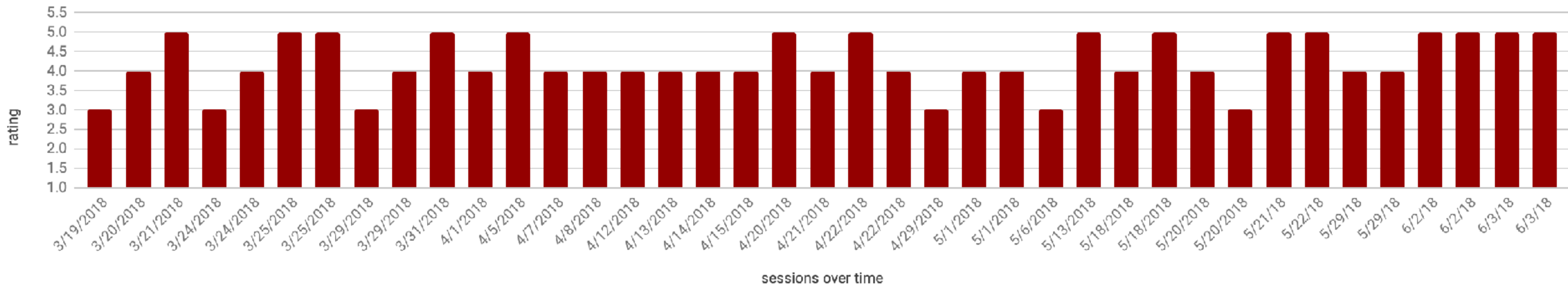
1. Labour Grading is a set of **social agreements** among **everyone** in a classroom that determine how much **time and work (labour)** it will take for any student to get an agreed upon grade.
  - There is only one “agreement” for the entire class.
2. The entire **ethos** of Labour Grading is to pay no attention to judgements of “quality” writing and to **deemphasize White Language Supremacy**.
3. Labour grading was **intentionally designed for language and literacy classes**.

# Labour - Example

How much labor have I produced by week over time?



How engaged have I been in my labor by session over time?





# Portfolio

1. Portfolios grading is a holistic process that involves **careful and purposeful curation of artifacts** weaving a particular **narrative**.
2. Students must also **reflect on their learning processes**, rather than just document or collect previously submitted work.
3. Final course grade is awarded based on the instructor assessing the **quality of the portfolio and the reflections** against a **set of standards and requirements**.

# Portfolio - Example

Growth Portfolios: What samples might be included?	
Purpose	Some possible inclusions
a. to show growth or change over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>early and later pieces of work</li> <li>early and later tests/scores</li> <li>rough drafts and final drafts</li> <li>reflections on growth</li> <li>goal-setting sheets</li> <li>reflections on progress toward goal(s)</li> </ul>
b. to help develop process skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>samples which reflect growth of process skills</li> <li>self-reflection sheets accompanying samples of work</li> <li>reflection sheets from teacher or peer</li> <li>identification of strengths/weaknesses</li> <li>goal-setting sheets</li> <li>reflections on progress towards goal(s)</li> <li>see more detail below under <b>Process</b> below</li> </ul>
c. to identify strengths/weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>samples of work reflecting specifically identified strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>reflections on strengths and weaknesses of samples</li> <li>goal-setting sheets</li> <li>reflection on progress towards goal(s)</li> </ul>
d. to track development of one or more products or performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>obviously, drafts of the specific product or performance to be tracked</li> <li>self-reflections on drafts</li> <li>reflection sheets from teacher or peer</li> </ul>

Showcase Portfolios: What samples might be included?	
Purpose	Some possible inclusions
a. to showcase end-of-year/semester accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>samples of best work</li> <li>samples of earlier and later work to document progress</li> <li>final tests or scores</li> <li>discussion of growth over semester/year</li> <li>awards or other recognition</li> <li>teacher or peer comments</li> </ul>
b. to prepare a sample of best work for employment or college admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cover letter</li> <li>sample of work</li> <li>reflection on process of creating sample of work</li> <li>reflection on growth</li> <li>teacher or peer comments</li> <li>description of knowledge/skills work indicates</li> </ul>
c. to showcase student perceptions of favorite, best or most important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>samples of student's favorite, best or most important work</li> <li>drafts of that work to illustrate path taken to its final form</li> <li>commentary on strengths/weaknesses of work</li> <li>reflection on why it is favorite, best or most important</li> <li>reflection on what has been learned from work</li> <li>teacher or peer comments</li> </ul>
d. to communicate a student's current aptitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>representative sample of current work</li> <li>match of work with standards accomplished</li> <li>self-reflection on current aptitudes</li> <li>teacher reflection on student's aptitudes</li> <li>identification of future goals</li> </ul>

# Ungrading

1. Ungrading is a series of **practices and pedagogies** that aim to **dismantle** existing historical **power dynamics and hierarchies** in education.
2. The **role of points and grades** is de-emphasized where possible, and instead there is a higher **focus on feedback, intrinsic motivation, and growth**.
3. When grades are necessary, **student agency is prioritized**, and **grades are determined/negotiated collaboratively** with a lot of reflection and justification.

# Ungrading - Example

## "Biology 342 Self Assessment Form, Fall 2021"

Your name:

Your lab section:

Congratulations!! You have made it through the term. We have shared a long and involved journey this semester as you have experienced what's it's like to be a scientist. I hope you have enjoyed this experience and were successful in meeting your learning goals. Because you are the one who has spent time learning this term (and I am not), you are best able to authentically evaluate your progress.

Gather your stuff from this course. The stuff you have created constitutes your portfolio of learning. This includes your lab notebook, your City of Vancouver mini-report, your salmon letter, your term project, and feedback for oral presentations. Grab some tea/coffee/water/a snack and settle in for some reflection. Plan to spend 30-60 minutes or so.

1. The most important thing. Think back to before the term started. Look through your entire portfolio. You accomplished a lot! What is the one most important thing that you will take away from this course? (Your most important thing may be broad or it may be very specific.)
2. Scavenger hunt (looking at specifics). Each week you set learning goals for yourself. Choose your 3 favourite things you accomplished (learning goals) and write them here.
3. Read through all of your self-assessments that you made at the end of each lab. Critically

# Ungrading - Example

11. Please suggest a grade for yourself, with comments. One of the key components of this exercise is for you to learn how to be a good judge of your own work. Be careful not to under-estimate your score in the way of “modesty”, “humbleness”, laziness, or out of fear. Similarly, be careful not to over-estimate your score out of overconfidence, laziness, arrogance, pride, or a false sense of ability.:

Grade:

Explain how you arrived at this grade:

If your suggested grade is very different from how the TAs and I perceive your learning, I will set up a meeting with you to discuss your grade. I reserve the right to raise or lower your grade. Note on how grades will be entered: If we agree that a B best reflects your learning in this course, I will enter the median within the B range. (A letter grade of B +/- goes from 71-79, so I would enter a 75.) If your honest reflection puts you somewhere outside of this median, you can certainly suggest a more precise number – **with justification**. For example, you may suggest a 78 because you went to the Museum of Anthropology and spent 2 hours learning how salmon are important to our first nations, and your learning was significantly enhanced by that extra effort.)

12. Do you have any other comments?

# Comparing Alternative Grading systems

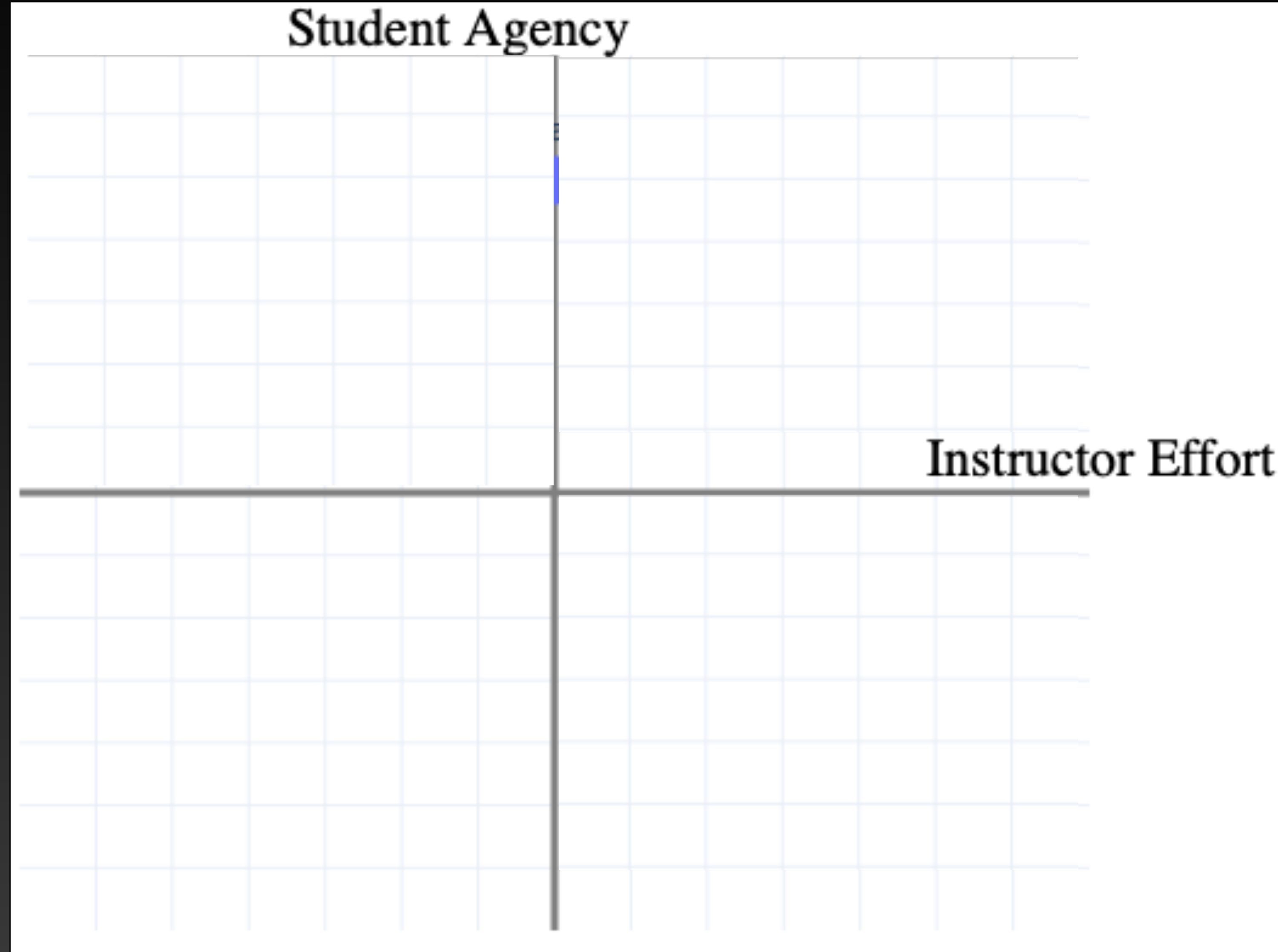
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# Dimensions to compare Alternative Grading Systems

	Description
Flexibility	Accounting for diverse learners and varying starting points - how “personalized” is the course?
Structure	What students have to submit and when...
Learning	An admittedly nebulous concept that is hard to measure...
Competition	Propensity for students to fight each other for grades.
Student Agency	Capacity or ability for students to have a say in their learning.
Instructor Effort	Degree of instructor effort handling, managing, evaluating, <i>during the course.</i>
Instructor-Student Collaboration	Degree of collaboration between instructors on students during the course.
Student Effort	Degree of student effort doing the assigned work.

# Dimensions to compare Alternative Grading Systems

## Where are you?



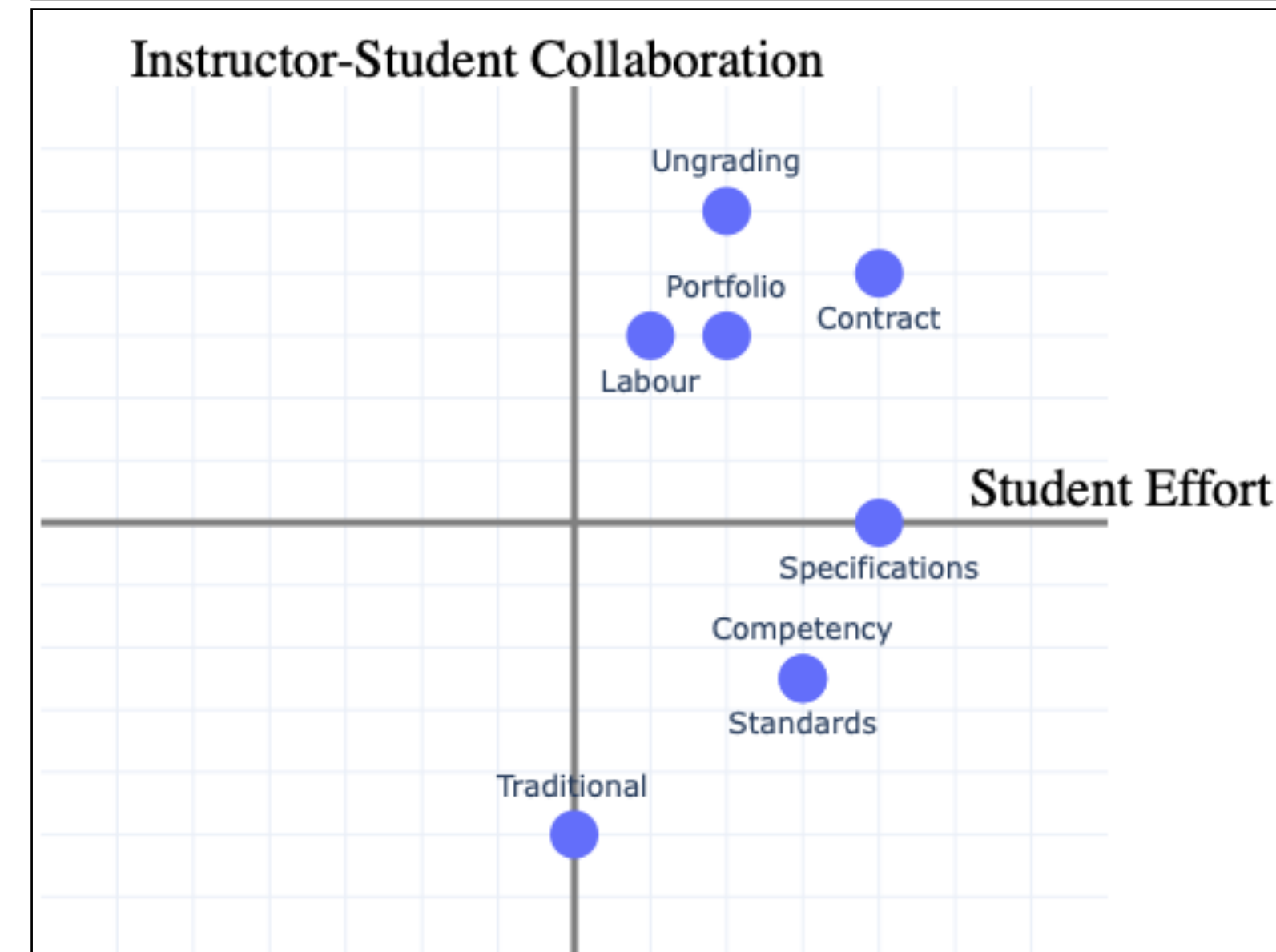
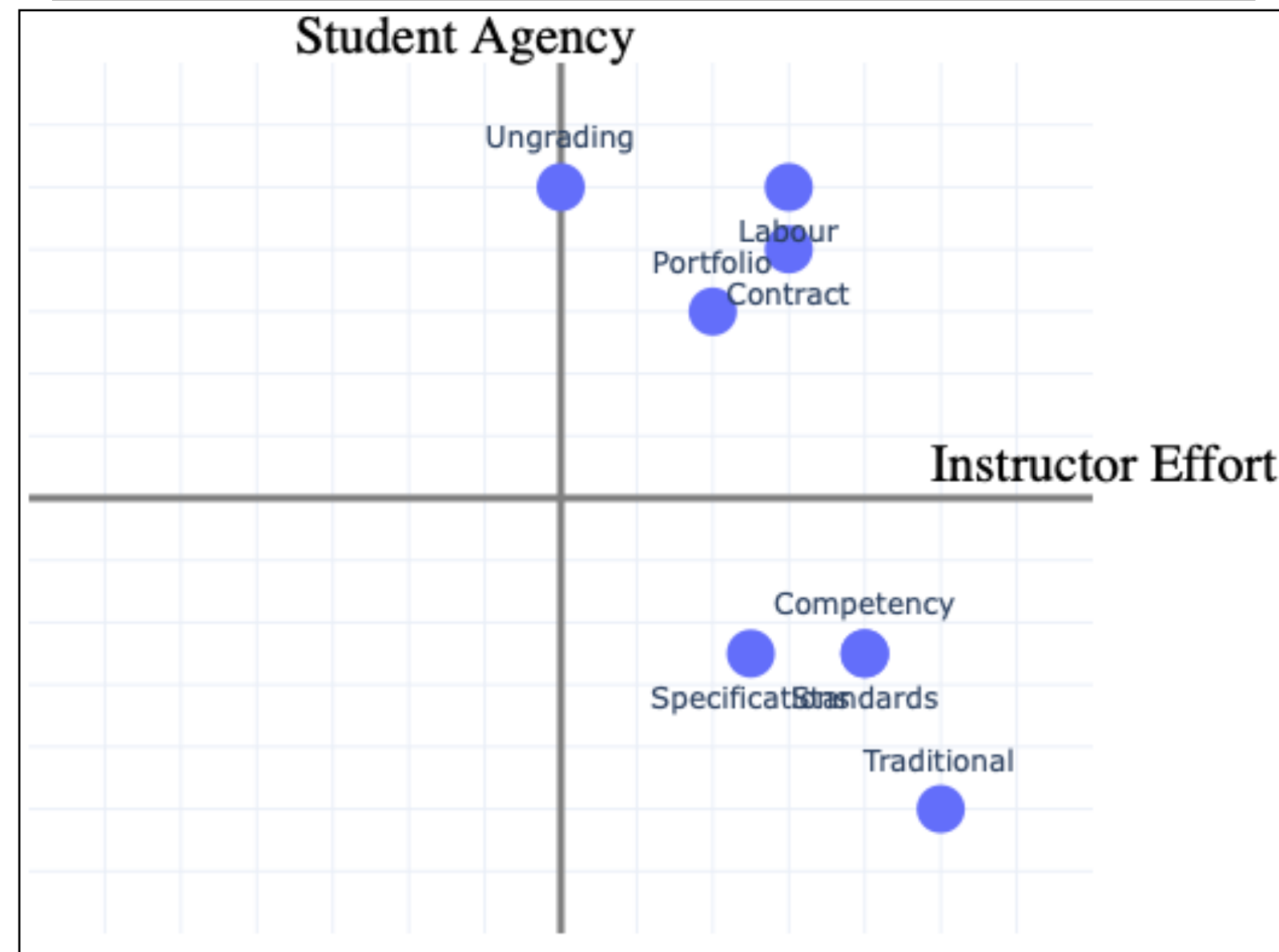
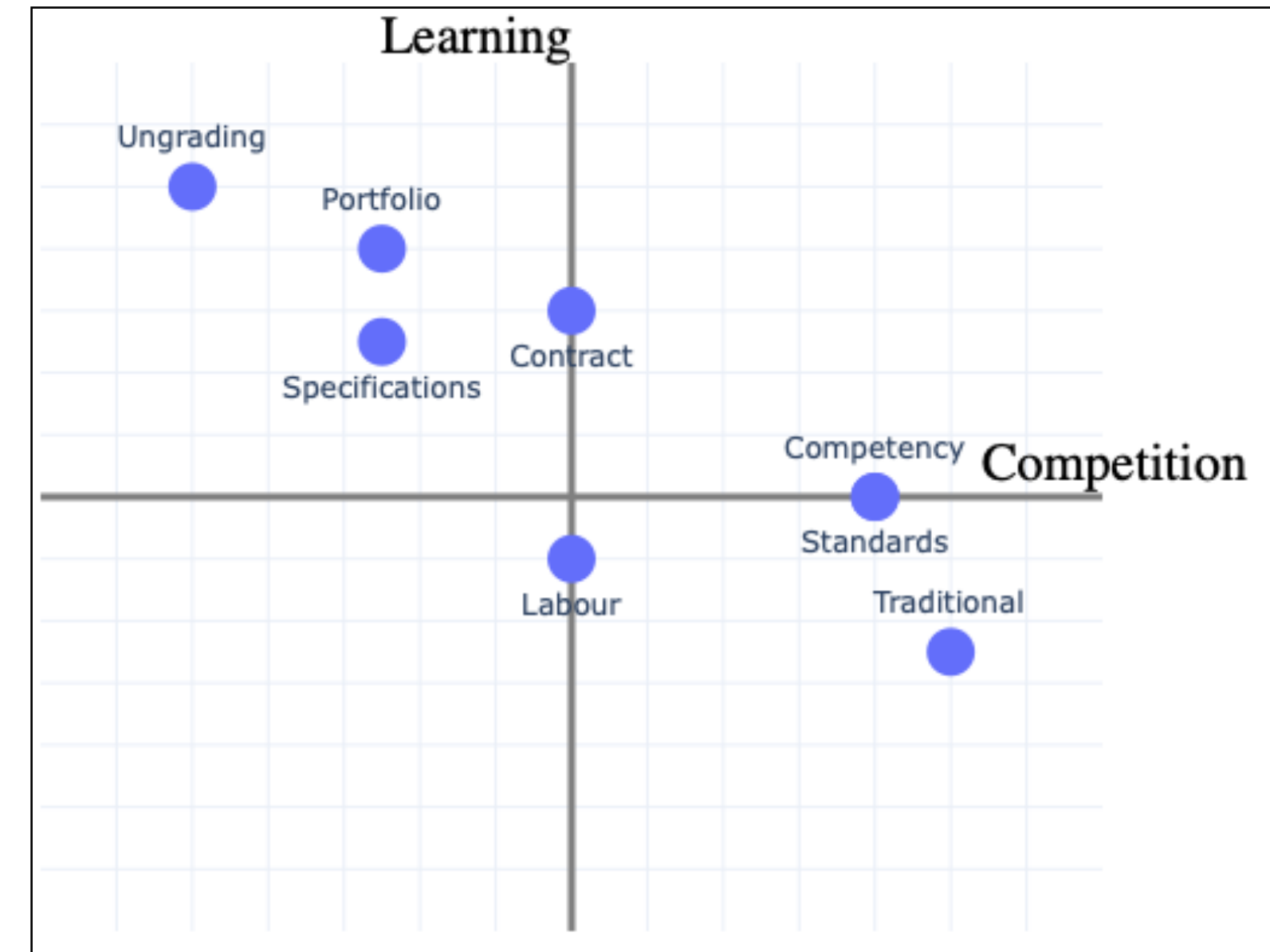
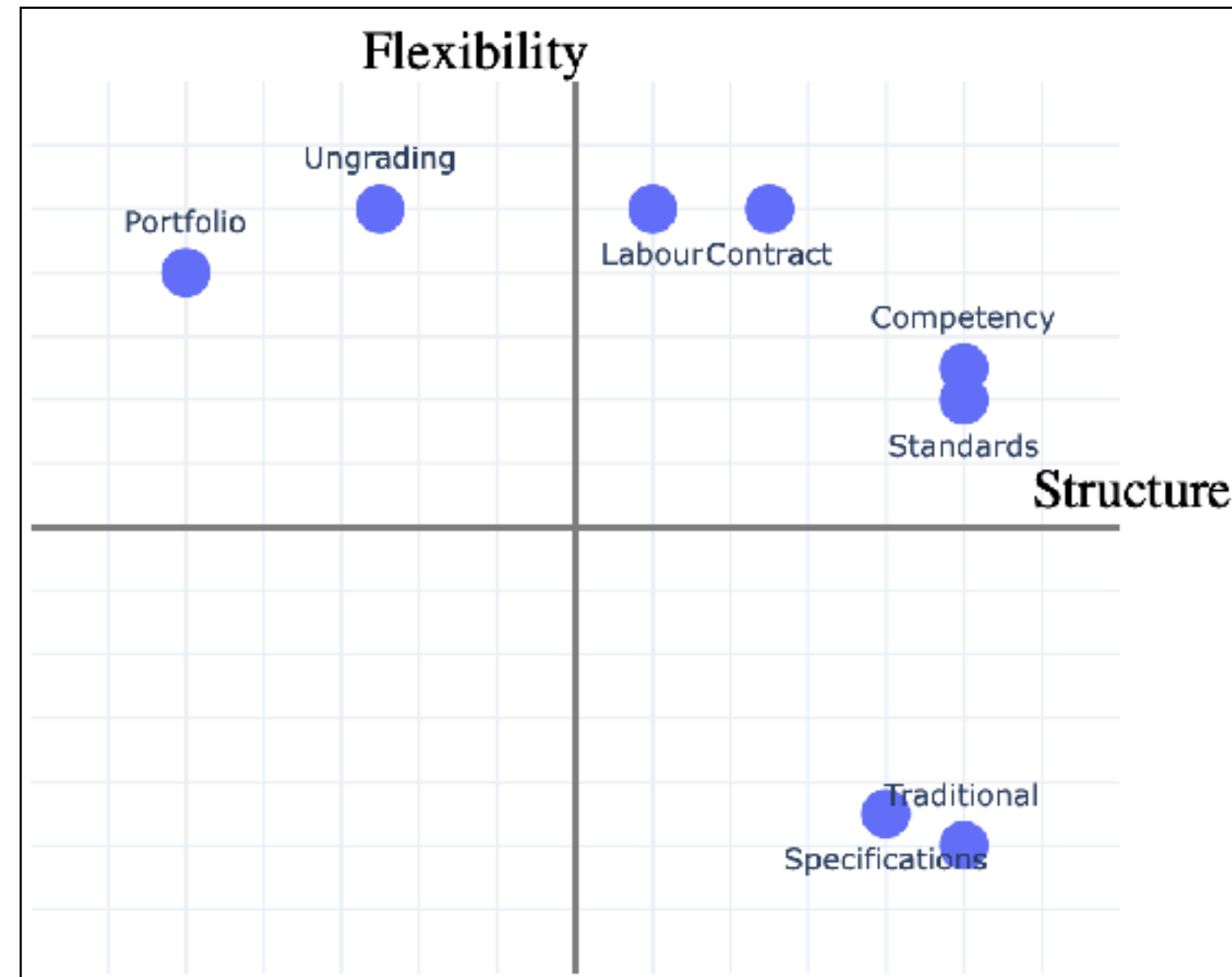


# Dimensions to compare Alternative Grading Systems

**Warning: The next slide is in Beta, and very opinionated!**

# Dimensions to compare Alternative Grading Systems

Unionated!



What **can you do** next?

A photograph of a mountain peak at night with the aurora borealis in the sky. The aurora is a vibrant green light that stretches across the sky, with a bright band of light passing over the mountain peak. The sky is dark blue and black, filled with numerous stars. The mountain peak is dark and rocky, with some snow or ice visible on its surface.

# What can you do next?



Skeptical?



Want to know more?



Ready to dive in?



Have questions?

# What can you do next?



Skeptical?



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CBE—Life Sciences Education  
Vol. 13, 159–166, Summer 2014

## *Feature*

### *Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning*

## **Teaching More by Grading Less (or Differently)**

**Jeffrey Schinske\* and Kimberly Tanner†**

\*Department of Biology, De Anza College, Cupertino, CA 95014; †Department of Biology, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132

# What can you do next?



Skeptical?



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Have questions?

## What to expect when you're alternatively assessing

Things to be ready for when you jump in to alternative assessments.



David Clark

Dec 6



## The Case Against Grades

By Alfie Kohn

[This is a slightly expanded version of the published article.]

*"I remember the first time that a grading rubric was attached to a piece of my writing....Suddenly all the joy was taken away. I was writing for a grade — I was no longer exploring for me. I want to get that back. Will I ever get that back?"*

— Claire, a student (in Olson, 2006)

## Standards and Contracts and Competencies, oh my!

A review of some common forms of alternative assessment



David Clark

Aug 23



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Ready to dive in?



Have questions?

# What can you do next?



Skeptical?



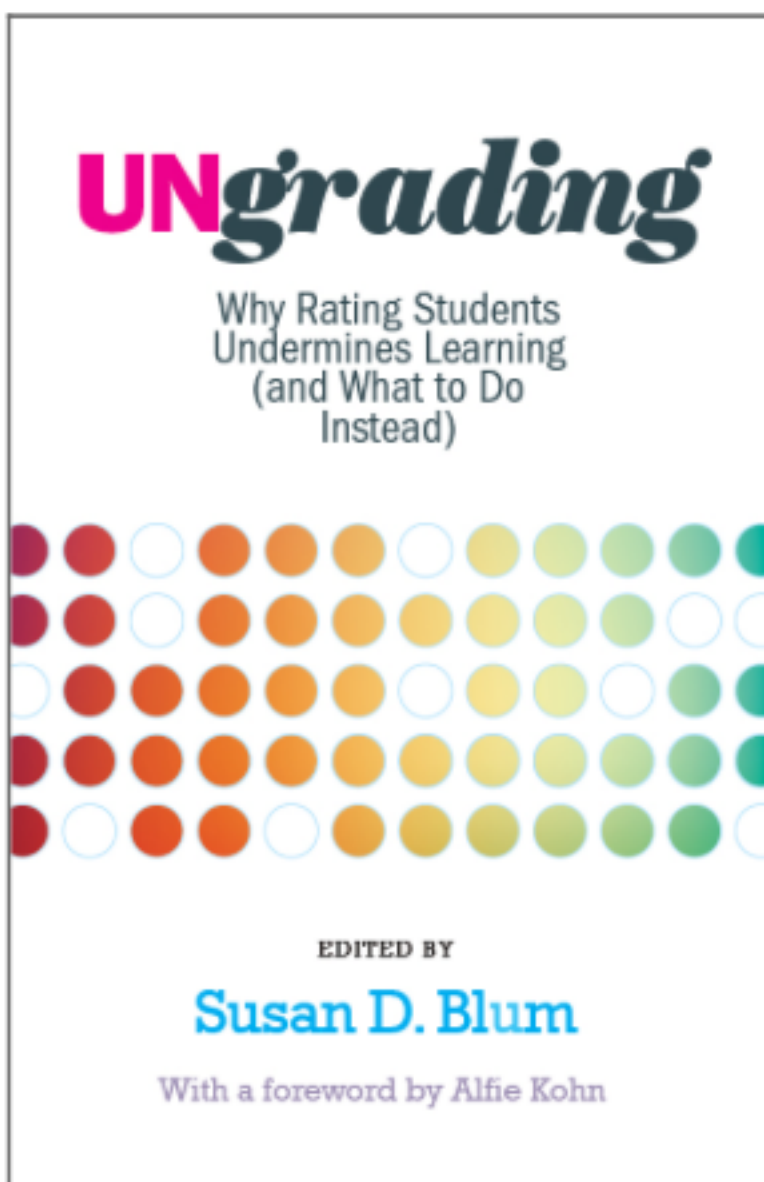
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## Ungrading

Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)

Summary	Contents	Author	Reviews
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## Summary

The moment is right for critical reflection on what has been assumed to be a core part of schooling. In *Ungrading*, fifteen educators write about their diverse experiences going gradeless. Some contributors are new to the practice and some have been engaging in it for decades. Some are in humanities and social sciences, some in STEM



# What can you do next?



Skeptical?



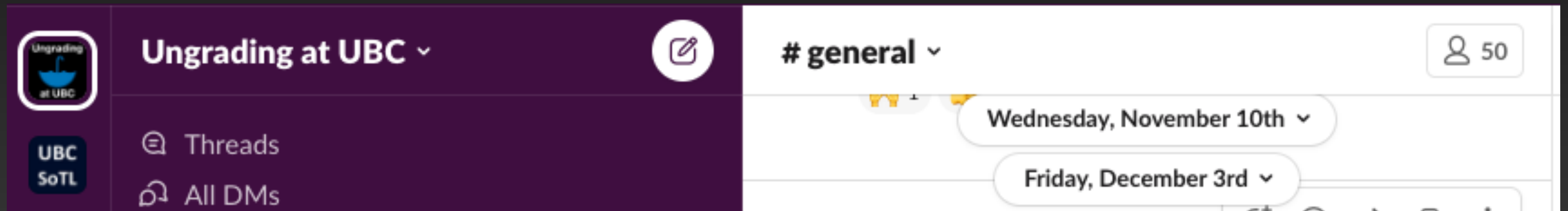
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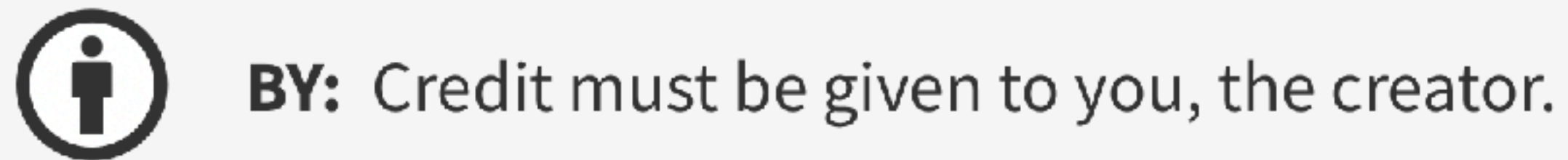
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