

Midterm Crite Sheets and Grades: Tips + Resources

The midterm crite sheet is an opportunity to let students know how they are doing in class and to communicate expectations for the second half of the course. For many students, our task is fairly straightforward, but for a crucial few, this is an important opportunity to intervene while there is still time to change course.

There is no template or general agreement on how to write crite sheet comments, but many faculty use them (1) to provide grades from assignments and/or a general sense of how the student is faring in the class, (2) to highlight one or two things that the student is doing well, and (3) to draw attention to areas where we hope the student will especially lean in, either because they need attention (e.g. absences, missing work, poor quality of work, etc.) or because they offer an apt challenge for the particular student (e.g. encouraging a good writer to begin thinking about a final project, encouraging a shy but engaged student to explore alternate means of participating in the class, etc.)

The midterm crite sheet is especially important for students who for any reason are not doing their best work. With half the semester remaining, including (typically) more than half of the graded assignments, there is ample time for struggling students to connect with needed resources/support and recommit to the class. More generally, a student's four (or three, or five) crite sheets across all of their classes provide important information to advisors and to our colleagues in the Center for Student Life and Advising.

As one colleague likes to say, the midterm crite sheet should indicate for students their "pathway to success." If we keep in mind that students are always in the process of learning how to learn and of figuring out how to do their best work, we are well-positioned to give them the feedback they need.

Some Crite Sheet tips:

- Be sure to tell students what they are doing well and what they ought to continue doing in the second half of the course. Don't assume they already know this.
- Depending on the student, different aspects may come to the fore: number of absences; tardiness or leaving class early/often; participation in classroom activities or performances; quality of written work; preparation for class; progress over the first 7-8 weeks; etc.
- While each crite sheet should be personalized to each student, many faculty find it convenient to create either a template or a set of frequently used phrases. There is no need to make each crite sheet completely unique.
- One tool that can make the process easier for us and more effective vis-a-vis student learning is to distribute a [Mid-Semester Student Questionnaire](#). Or you might simply ask each student to submit a paragraph in which they reflect on

their progress in the course, articulate what they are learning, and/or point out which aspects of the class are going especially well and which are more challenging.

- Some faculty find it easiest to do crites right after grading a paper or quiz. (That is, immediately after reading/grading an assignment, quickly draft the crite sheet for that student before reading the next assignment). Others report success in completing 5 or so immediately following each class meeting over the course of a week or two. Both approaches capitalize on moments when students are vividly present in our minds.
- Many faculty find it useful to give themselves a bounded amount of time (per crite sheet, per batch of 5). There is no rule against combining the crite-sheet-writing process with coffee or chocolate.

Midterm grades can be an important reality check for some students, and the paragraph we write to accompany it gives us a chance to contextualize this grade. Note that midterm grades are not part of a student's permanent record. (Similarly, crite sheets are used only within Bard and are not included when transcripts are sent out.) As such, they are set up to be useful to us as faculty as we seek to be helpful to students.

Struggling Students

If a student is consistently struggling, and especially if something non-academic seems to be interfering with a student's ability to do the work required, the crite sheet may not be the best place to go into detail. Faculty are always welcome (indeed encouraged) to reach out to the office of the Dean of Student Affairs with any questions or concerns: [<dosa@bard.edu>](mailto:dosa@bard.edu).

After the Crite Sheet

To make sure students get the most out of your comments, you might assign a short (1-2 paragraph) paper in which you ask students to respond to what you have written, to reflect on their own goals (as learners, as writers, as artists, as scientists, as humans, etc.), and/or to make a few resolutions for the remainder of the semester.