

SAMPLE BREAKDOWN OF COURSE MARKS (OUT OF 100%)

“Assessment should have a positive effect on students’ motivation and self-efficacy.”

Attendance and Participation: 20%

- Attendance (10%): The syllabus might say, “If you came to class **on time** 75% of the time, your attendance mark will be 7.5%. If you know you are going to be absent for a legitimate reason, let me know beforehand. If you are sick, provide a doctor’s note.”
- When you calculate the attendance mark, don’t count excused absences in the equation. For example: if a class met 25 times and a student has 3 excused absences, his mark should be out of 22. If he was late twice and had one unexcused absence, he should get $19/22 = .8636 \rightarrow 8.5\%$.
- Participation (10%): Based not on instructor opinion but on a student self-evaluation. The form for the self-evaluation will be shown to students in the first week of the semester so that it guides students’ study habits. Here is what it might look like:

1. Day-to-day homework: How consistently did you do day-to-day homework assignments such as readings? (2 marks)

1	1.5	2
Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always

2. Graded assignments: How much effort did you put into graded assignments? (2 marks)

1	1.5	2
Careless work	Sufficient effort	Beyond expectations

3. Being on task: How often did you pay attention and stay on task during class? (2 marks)

1	1.5	2
Rarely	Some of the time	Most of the time

4. Teamwork: How did you do on group projects? (2 marks)

1	1.5	2
I let others do most of the work.	I did my part.	I did my part and coached others.

5. Actively seeking to understand: If you didn’t understand something, how often did you email the instructor, make an appointment with the instructor, ask a classmate for help, organize a study session, or get help in any other way? (2 marks)

1	1.5	2
Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always

Day-to-day homework (36%)

In my “ELI 082: Advanced Reading” class, I designed 2 kinds of day-to-day homework, vocabulary quizzes and chapter/article summaries.

- Each vocab quiz was a Pass/Fail. Pass = 1%; Fail = 0%. There were 16 quizzes, worth 16%.
- They also had to summarize readings for their content-based courses. Each 1-2 page summary was rated either satisfactory (2%), unsatisfactory (1%), or not turned in (0%). There were 10 summaries over the course of the semester, for a maximum of 20%.
- Whatever you choose to do in terms of day-to-day homework assignments, **let this section be worth the most marks**. Split it into 1% and 2% pieces, and make students do a lot of work/study for every little piece, but make every piece a relatively easy Pass as long as the student does work that is of good quality.
- This should be the formative assessment from the student’s point of view, allowing him/her to assess whether his/her learning or homework strategies are working.
- Let these day-to-day tasks reflect day-to-day practices in the discipline. For academic reading, that’s note-taking on course readings and studying vocabulary.

Small assignments (24%)

- Small assignments let students practice discipline-specific skills that are not required from day-to-day, but are very important skills nevertheless.
- In “ELI 082: Advanced Reading”, students should be able to write a paragraph or 1-page paper in response to a reading. I had them practice this task 6 times over the semester:
 - Twice in groups of five (with all groupmates getting the same mark);
 - Twice in pairs (with both partners getting the same mark);
 - Twice individually.
- **The first stage:** Working in groups encouraged collaborative problem-solving in the early stages of learning. I graded strictly to show students the need for improvement, but each response was only worth 3%, with groups usually getting 1.5/3 or 2/3. I also gave a lot of feedback to each group.
- **The second stage:** When they did it in pairs, I made the response worth more, i.e. 4%.
- **The third stage:** Individual responses were worth 5%. I graded these generously, focusing on what students had learned during the semester, not what they still lacked.
- $3 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 5 + 5 = 24\%$ for small assignments
- **60% of the course grade depends on day-to-day work (36%) and small assignments (24%). Students must work hard for every percentage point, but points are attainable.**

Final project (20%)

- The final project is the only time when **quality of the work** counts more than **effort put into the work**. By this point, all students will have been given a fair chance at learning and becoming proficient in the course outcomes (criterion-based assessment).
- The day-to-day practices and small assignments should prepare students for the final project: they should be based on the same skills and knowledge.
- Make instructions for the final project clear, check that students understand, and let them show you what they’ve learned.