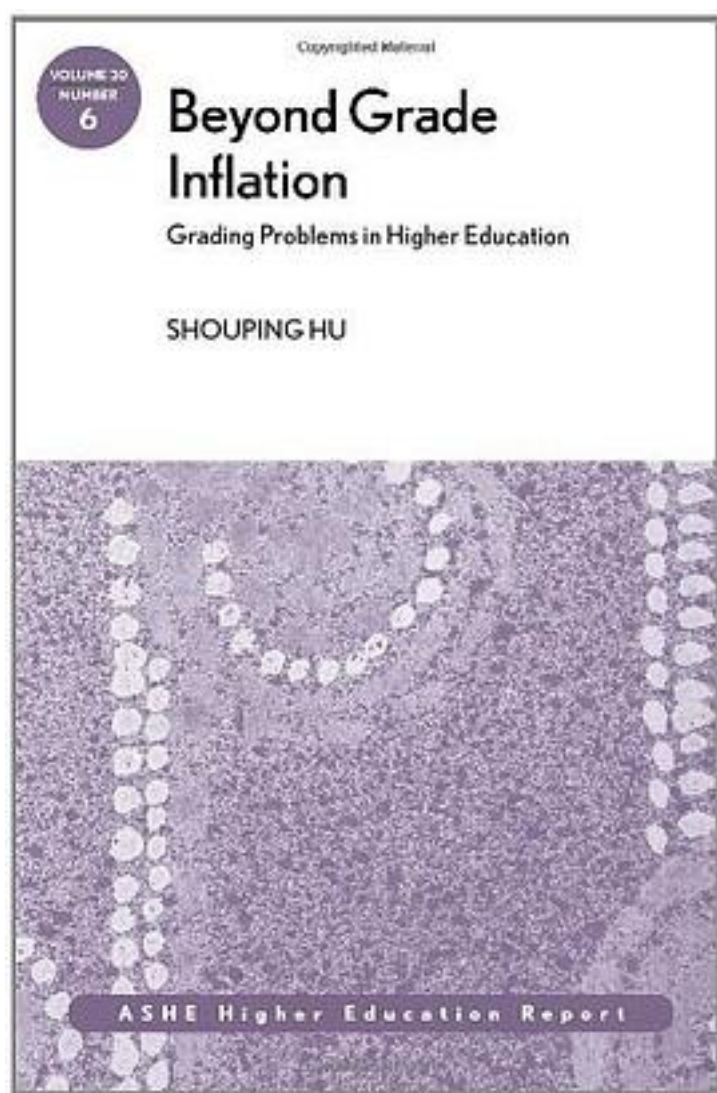


Beyond Grade Inflation



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As calls for accountability of student learning intensify, colleges and universities need to reexamine their grading practices and restore public confidence in college grades. This report presents a conceptual framework that can aid in understanding the complexity of grading problems in higher education. It takes into account individual course-grading philosophy, students' choice of coursework, changes in composition of the faculty, and changes in the student population, among other factors. The conceptual framework helps professionals to understand that grading practices need to be examined at multiple levels, not just in the aggregate at the institutional and national levels. Practices and problems vary by discipline, institutional type, faculty rank, and other such conditions. The framework also provides advice about where policymakers and leaders can target efforts (state aid policy) and other areas where they can have little or no impact (student demographic shifts). Capitalizing on the knowledge that senior faculty have related to grading, this monograph examines changing institutional practices, fluctuations in departmental and school norms, and various strategies for grading. It argues for the need for institutional policies related to grading and more discussion on campuses about standards and norms. The primary message of this monograph is that grading is a shared responsibility among members of the institution and external players such as accreditation bodies, state governments, and boards of trustees. Systematic work across these various groups is necessary to change the context that rewards lenient grading. This is Volume 30 Issue 6 of the "ASHE Higher Education Report" series, published by Jossey-Bass, An Imprint of Wiley.

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