THE VALUE OF EXAMINATIONS AND TESTS FOR GRADING STUDENTS IN AGRONOMY

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A TRADITION of evaluating students with respect to each other has developed in American educational institutions to the extent that a grading system is a virtual requirement in colleges and universities. This necessitates methods for distinguishing between the achievements of the various students. The distinction is usually made on the basis of some system of examinations or tests.

In addition to their use for grading students, examinations and tests are a teaching tool that has value in affording a stimulus for review on the part of the student. They can be made to help develop healthy attitudes, creative thinking and good judgment on the part of the individual student. They provide a medium for the teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of his instruction. It is also possible to learn from the use of these tools the basic needs and abilities of the student. The student may learn from them the areas of his weaknesses and thus concentrate his emphasis and study where it is most needed.

THE MEANING OF GRADES

In general, there are two methods commonly used in grading students. One is based on individual effort and advancement in a given field of knowledge; the other is based on the attainment of certain levels of knowledge. Both methods have desirable and undesirable characteristics.

When grading is done on the basis of individual effort and advancement in a given field of knowledge, the student is graded on the basis of progress that he makes or the effort that he puts forth rather than upon the ultimate level of knowledge that he may attain. This system of grading is used more extensively in primary and secondary schools than in colleges and universities.

Some system of grading that indicates the attainment of a level of knowledge in a field of learning is used by most institutions of higher learning. These methods can be divided into two groups for the purpose of discussion. The first group includes the methods based directly upon the relative accomplishment of each individual with respect to the others in his immediate class. The other group includes those methods that are based upon attainment of the recognized set of standards with no regard for other members of the class.