3.0 OBJECTIVES

We shall continue the description of the experiment which we introduced in unit 2, and report on the five exercise in grading which the trainees were involved in. The purpose is to acquaint you with:

i) how a collectivity of uninitiated distance teachers may grade assignment-responses,

ii) the problems that a distance teacher may have to face while assessing assignment-responses, and

iii) what possible solutions we may work on to resolve these problems.

After working through this unit, you should be able to:

i) avoid the pitfalls one faces while grading an assignment-response, and

ii) reduce the harm those pitfalls are likely to cause.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Unit 2 has been devoted to identifying some of the crucial tasks of the distance teacher, the difficulties that may arise while performing such tasks, and the possible ways of overcoming these difficulties. In the main, we focused on:

i) pre-teaching tasks such as studying the lessons/units thoroughly before one starts working on the responses;

ii) the need for guarding against some of the common fallacies and biases which can stand in the way of effective distance teaching; and

iii) the teaching task of writing purposeful comments.

In this unit, we shall elaborate on the theme of teaching tasks with our focus on grading. In talking about grading, you will notice that we have to refer to the issue of comments as well.
In order to make the exposition clear, we shall introduce a few new concepts here and there in our discussion. We shall explain those concepts along with the main text to avoid any unnecessary difficulties.

### 3.2 DISTANCE TEACHING-2

Whether you consider learners at the primary level, the secondary level, the university level, or those adults who take in-service courses, bright learners or ordinary learners, all of them appear to show immense interest in what their teachers think of their performance.

Invariably, if a learner receives a corrected assignment-response (of whatever type) his/her first reaction is to look for the grade/mark scored. Having taken a look at the grade, one may then look for the remarks which the teacher has written. It is not unusual for a learner to get upset if the grade scored is below his/her expectations, and these expectations are not always well-placed.

In a classroom situation, the teacher concerned explains, in most cases, what may have gone wrong with an answer because of which it scored a low grade, or else, the learners themselves satisfy their curiosity by comparing their performance with those of their peers. Neither of these possibilities is available in the system of distance education. The distance teacher has to provide such possibilities as a matter of routine. How is this done? There appear to be three answers or solutions to this question:

i) the distance teacher’s grading be 'perfect';

ii) the comments reflect the grades appropriately; and

iii) the distance teacher explain the grades awarded.

Any combination of these three, we believe, must satisfy the distance learner. Consequently, he/she remains motivated and keeps improving his/her performance. However, it is not an easy task to achieve any of the three solutions suggested above. We shall discuss them one by one.

### 3.3 PERFECT GRADING

By perfect grading we mean flawless grading which implies that a response is awarded the grade which it actually deserves. Even if there be a way of effecting ‘perfect’ grading, it is very difficult to convince, or even tell, the distance learner that the score is what he/she deserved. Added to this problem are the problems of mass involvement in distance education systems in which a large number of distance teachers are involved in assessing a large number of assignment-responses. To appreciate the dimensions of these problems we take you back to the group of trainees we introduced to you in Unit 2.

Please turn to Unit 2, sub-section 2.4.3. You will find that after the trainees prepared their individual AIRs, they were asked to assess and write comments on the first three of the nine responses which we had given them. In sub-section 2.4.3 we talked about the comments they wrote, now we shall talk about the grades they awarded. See Table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Grades awarded in Exercises 1 and 2 — a profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response No.</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Grading (Exercise 1)</th>
<th>Range of Dispersion</th>
<th>Dispersion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regrading (Exercise 2)</th>
<th>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</th>
<th>Range of Dispersion</th>
<th>Dispersion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before we talk about the table, we need to explain a few terms we have used in it.

**Norm**: ‘Norm’ is the grade awarded to a response by the best judgement available for the purpose. For the nine responses which we used in this experiment, the NORMS were decided by a panel of four experts. Three of them presented their views on and awards for each of the nine responses, and the fourth, after a consideration of these views and awards decided on the most appropriate grades for the nine responses under consideration. In other words the NORM for a response implies its ‘perfect’ grade, the grade it actually deserves, or the grade it scores under the best judgement available.

**Dispersion**: Dispersion is the scattering of grades away from the NORM. For example, let there be a response which deserves a C grade. Its NORM then is C. A particular assessor may award it an A; then, we shall say that in his/her grading there is a dispersion of 2 points above the NORM, i.e., the dispersion is +2. Similarly, if the award made is E instead, then the dispersion is 2 points below the NORM, i.e., — 2. In the former case, we say, the awarded grade is +2 points away from the NORM, and in the latter case it is — 2 points away from the NORM. Accordingly,

i) the RANGE OF DISPERSION = Σnd, [where ‘n’ is the number of grades (or the number of assessors), and ‘d’ is the distance of ‘n’ from the NORM], and

ii) the percentage of DISPERSION = (Σnd × 100) + the maximum possible Σnd.

**Note**: If you are not ‘mathematically inclined’ you need not bother about the last two notions presented above, till you find them interesting enough to work through.

Now, let us turn to Table 3.1 to see what it depicts. Of the 45 trainees who participated in the exercise, 12 awarded A to response no. 1, 28 awarded it B, 1 awarded it C, and 4 awarded it D. Obviously, most trainees, i.e., 28 of them, identified the NORM. Similarly, in the case of response no. 2 most trainees identified the NORM. But in the case of response no. 3, the grades awarded ranged from A to E on a five point scale, and the NORM was identified by a small number of assessors.
Check Your Progress 1

What inferences do you draw from the above data?

Note: a) One does not need to be a trained distance teacher to draw inferences from these data.
b) Please do not proceed till you have answered the above question in the space provided below.

The range of dispersion in the case of response no. 1 is from +12 to -9 points, i.e., 21 points, for response no. 2 it is 15 points and for response no. 3 it is from +24 to -26 points, i.e., 50 points. It is both interesting and disturbing that the same response is awarded an A by one evaluator, and E or D by another. Imagine a hundred distance teachers assessing the responses of 20,000 distance learners (i.e., at the rate of 200 responses per distance teacher). In such a situation there does not seem to be any certainty that all the responses will be awarded the grades they actually deserve. This is a very disturbing problem which one has to face time and again when responses are given for assessment. Assignments consisting of the objective kind of question will in all probability be marked/assessed by the computer so the problem is one of the tutor-marked assignments. We must pause a moment and ask ourselves — why does such a thing happen?

To answer the above question, we bring in the notion of ‘discrimination factors’. We may define ‘discrimination factors’ as the factors, which when favourable, help the distance teacher in discriminating between a weak response and a good one, and between a good one and a better one; and when these factors are not favourable, they affect the teachers judgement adversely. Some of these factors appear to belong to the distance teacher (assessor):

i) perception of the lesson/unit;

ii) perception of the assignment;

iii) a tendency towards being lenient or strict;

iv) ideal response to an assignment; and

v) attention span.
One could add to this list. For example, we could say that indifference and absolute carelessness on the part of the assessors can cause dispersion. True, but we are considering only those factors which have pedagogic relevance. Indifferent and absolutely careless people shouldn't have any place in the systems of distance education, indeed, in any other system. Besides, we are looking into factors suggested by our data. We shall discuss these factors one by one.

3.3.1 Assessor's perception of the lesson/unit

We have discussed this issue in detail in Unit 2, where we suggested that the first task of the assessor is to study the unit carefully and see what the course-writers want to convey through it, and that while assessing an assignment-response he/she should not be carried away by his/her own knowledge of the subject-matter but should instead see what the learner is expected to achieve, and judge the learner’s performance accordingly. In our experiment we had taken care of this factor by making the trainees go through the unit individually, and then in groups making sure that they knew for certain what the unit was intended to achieve. So, in this situation we rule out any dispersion because of this factor.

3.3.2 Assessor’s perception of the assignment

You may recall that the exercise on grading was taken up when the trainees had prepared their individual AIRs (see sub-section 2.4.3). At this stage we did not talk about the assignment — its strengths and weaknesses. A faulty perception of the assignment may cause errors in assessment. To overcome this difficulty we have suggested (see sub-section 2.4.2) two ways — (i) guidance from the course writers, and (ii) appropriate orientation for the assessors to help them look through the assignment clearly.

In this particular case we used the second alternative by looking for the weaknesses of the assignment — its language, components or the difficulties it may cause for the learners. Having analysed the assignment and identified its weaknesses/defects (we need not talk about them here), we suggested that assessors could compensate for those defects by treating the responses somewhat leniently, i.e., not punish a learner for errors or faults which may be there in the responses because of defects in the assignment. This was agreed to by all the trainees.

Following this agreement, we started the second exercise in grading — the trainees were asked to regrade responses 1, 2 and 3 and grade responses 4, 5 and 6.

The results of regrading responses 1, 2 and 3 are indicated in the right hand part of table above (see Table 3.1), and those of grading responses 4, 5 and 6 in the left hand part of the table on page 37 (see Table 3.2).

Notice that in the regrading exercise (Exercise 2) the dispersion in all the three cases (response nos. 1, 2 and 3) was reduced as shown below (also see Table 3.1).

i) Response No. 1: Range of dispersion reduced from 21 points to 13 points.
   Response No. 2: Range of dispersion reduced from 15 points to 12 points.
   Response No. 3: Range of dispersion reduced from 50 points to 44 points.
ii) The proximity movement of grades is towards the NORM in all the three cases, but it is weak in the case of response no. 3.

At this stage, we must explain what we mean by ‘proximity movement’.

Proximity movement is a concept that helps in assessing whether or not a particular group of trainees has collectively improved their techniques of assessment of responses. It is independent of the range of dispersion, and is measured (in a repeated exercise) in terms of the number of grades that move toward or away from the NORM. Movement toward the NORM implies an improvement in the collective assessment of the response(s) under consideration.

With the narrowing down of the range of dispersion and proximity movement toward the NORM in all the cases we infer that the quality of assessment improved in the regrading exercise. Thus, we may conclude that a better understanding of the weaknesses of the assignment will result in better assessment in terms of grading a response.

### 3.3.3 Tendencies towards being lenient and/or strict

Again, take a look at Table 3.1. Notice that there can be assessors who may award an A, B or C for an assignment-response which deserves an E or D; and similarly, there are assessors who may award lower grades, i.e., E or D for a response that deserves higher grades such as A or B.

Table 3.2 also confirms the observations made above, as in the case of responses 4 and 5, assessors awarded grades ranging from A to E for what deserved a C grade.

A superficial inference may be that some assessors can be very lenient and some very strict. But we need to disclose some vital information at this stage.

On the basis of the assessment of responses 1, 2 and 3, we had identified 10 trainees who could be labelled 'lenient' or 'strict' as they had awarded grades quite far away from the NORMS. If being ‘lenient’ or ‘strict’ were an absolute attribute of an assessor, he/she should have displayed that attribute in the second exercise as well. But, interestingly, those who showed themselves lenient or strict in assessing responses 1, 2 and 3, did not appear to be so in assessing responses 4, 5 and 6 except in one case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Nos.</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Grading (Exercise 2)</th>
<th>Regrading (Exercise 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</td>
<td>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</th>
<th>Range of Dispersion</th>
<th>Dispersion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</th>
<th>Range of Dispersion</th>
<th>Dispersion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Grades awarded in Exercises 2 and 3
Obviously, then the notion of being inherently lenient and strict need not worry us as assessors. The broad deviation in grading by these trainees seems to have its base in other factors.

3.3.4 Assessor’s ideal response

Having made sure that the trainees studied the unit (see section 2.3) thoroughly, and also the assignment (see sub-section 3.3.2), we now turned to their individual ideal responses which we had collected from them earlier (see sub-section 2.4.3). Differences among individual AIRs could be the cause for a dispersion in grades, as every assessor will mentally use his/her AIR as the yardstick for assessing a response. We tried to do away with this ‘discrimination factor’ in the following way.

We took up all the AIRs for discussion in an open session which was attended by all the trainees. Once again we discussed the assignment, its components, its relative significance and what weight it may have, how the assignment was related to the lesson/unit concerned, and what might be expected from the learners keeping in view the objectives of the lesson/unit, the weaknesses of the assignment and the lesson/unit, and the types of learners taking the course.

In the light of the discussion each trainee made the required changes in his/her AIR. In other words a commonly agreed upon, and, therefore, more valid, AIR was arrived at.

Now the trainees were requested to regrade responses 4, 5 and 6, and grade responses 7, 8 and 9. The results of this third exercise of regrading responses 4, 5 and 6 are presented partly in the right hand part of Table 3.2 and partly in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Grades awarded in Exercise 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Nos.</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Grades awarded on 5 point scale</th>
<th>Range of Dispersion</th>
<th>Dispersion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us take a look at Tables 3.2 and 3.3 once again, and study the differences in the pattern of the grades awarded (responses 4, 5 and 6) during the second and the third grading exercises (see sub-section 3.3.2), and those awarded during the third exercise (in the case of responses 7, 8 and 9 in this very sub-section). What do we notice? And what could be the possible inferences?

- Once again, the range of dispersion decreased when the responses were regraded. The inference is that a better understanding of what the responses should be does lead to an improvement in the quality of
grading. Accordingly, not only did the dispersion decrease, but the 'proximity movement' was also towards the NORM, except in the case of response no. 6.

- The range of dispersion is broadest in the case of response no. 6. It was so in the case of response no. 3 as well. We shall comment on this phenomenon in the following sub-section.

### 3.3.5 Assessor's attention span

The three exercises in grading, as indicated above, show yet another interesting result. In all the three cases (see Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3), the range of dispersion is the broadest in the case of the third response, i.e., responses 3, 6 and 9. It might be so because of the assessor's 'attention span', which is one of the possible discrimination factors (see section 3.3). It is worth noting that this factor may be measured in terms of the number of responses an assessor can assess accurately in a single stretch of assessment activity. It does not appear to have any correlation to the period of time spent on the activity.

One possible conclusion is that in this particular group of trainees (assessors in this case), mostly had an 'attention span' of two responses, since they could work with good concentration/attention for the span of just two responses. By the time they took the third response for assessment, their attention became weaker, which resulted in broader ranges of dispersion in all the three exercises.

### 3.3.6 Summative comments

We notice that grading an assignment-response, which is one of the major tasks of a distance teacher, is quite a complex task, and to achieve 'perfect grading' is almost impossible (see sub-section 2.3.4 also). Discrimination factors will always remain major hurdles for the distance teacher to overcome. Obviously, the most successful distance teacher is the one who consciously controls these factors.

#### Check Your Progress 2

Suggest ways to control the five discrimination factors which have been discussed in this section.

**Note:** Please do not proceed before you have written your suggestions in the space provided below.

.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
.........................................................................................................
It is obvious that the study units have to be studied thoroughly by the
distance teacher and s/he must see what their weaknesses and strengths as
self-instructional materials are. Secondly, s/he must study the assignment
critically to see whether or not it matches the objectives of the study unit,
(whether it is too demanding etc.) and compensates for its defects by
attitudinal adjustments, i.e., not penalise learners for errors caused by the
weaknesses of the assignment itself. Thirdly, the distance teacher needs to
decide what s/he may expect from the learners as responses. Such a step will
ensure uniformity in his/her assessment of varied responses, and keep
him/her closer to the NORM most of the time. Lastly, s/he must find ways
to increase his/her ‘attention span’ — this is possible through constant
practice and a deliberate effort at achieving this aim.

However, this study of group grading throws up a serious question which
should be of great concern to us.

### 3.4 COMMENTS IN RELATION TO GRADES

We have discussed comments in detail in unit 2, and grades in section 3.3.
Earlier we suggested that commenting and grading put together become a
dependable means of two-way communication between the distance teacher
and the distance learner. Since the objective of both these activities is the
same, i.e., effecting distance teaching, the two need to have a strong
relation between them. To appreciate this point we need to go to our data
once again, which we present below in a different form.

**Notice** the following facts from Table 3.4.

- A high percentage of lower grades (54.1%) in relation to a low
  percentage of teaching type comments (3.6%) indicates that teaching has
  not taken place, as all those who have scored low grades need a
  sufficiently large number of teaching type comments.

- A low percentage (3.2%) of postive comments does not go well with a
  relatively higher percentage (45.9%) of higher grades, as all those who
  score higher grades should be given positive comments.

The inference is that there is no correlation between the comments written
and the grades awarded. Of course, here we are talking about commenting
and grading practised in a group exercise, but the same also applies to

**Table 3.4: Comment types and grade-types correlated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment-Types Give (Table 1)</th>
<th>Grades Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-teaching type</td>
<td>Higher grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Teaching type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Hollow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
individual cases. The comments written should reflect the grades, and the grades awarded should suggest the kind of comments one may expect. The above data shows that it is not easy to achieve this correlation.

**Check Your Progress 3**

Now take a look at Table 8 given below:

**Table 3.5: Comment types and grade-types correlated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment-Types Given</th>
<th>Grades Awarded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher grades</td>
<td>Lower grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try to see whether the grades awarded and the comments written display any correlation between them. Our answer to the question is that they do display some improvement in the correlation of the kind we have been talking about. But, we would like you to use the space given below to jot down the improvements, in comparison with the data in table 3.4, which are indicated in Table 3.5 above.

Having talked about the necessity of correlation between the grades awarded and the comments written, we would like to talk about yet another difficulty which the distance teacher may have to face in effecting this correlation.

Very often, in the initial stages of their orientation, distance teachers show a complete disregard for 'appropriateness'. For example, a grade A is accompanied by exactly the same comment which accompanies a grade C. The comments themselves may be relevant and useful in their places, but
when one looks at them in relation to each other one would expect a grade A and a grade C to be accompanied by different types of comments. Evidently, distance teaching is much more than writing teaching type comments. The distance teacher must be careful about the relationship between the comments s/he writes and the grades s/he awards—a really difficult task, which nevertheless, can be learnt and mastered.

3.5 QUERIES ABOUT THE GRADES/COMMENTS

If not many, there certainly are some cases when on receiving the evaluated response the distance learner would like to know the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the grades s/he was awarded and/or the comments that were written on the response. It is the duty of the distance teacher to answer such questions with great understanding and sympathy. Personal comments (see Unit 1) can be written on the assignment responses, but such comments can be written more effectively in response to the queries about grades etc.

To look for the general nature of responses to such queries, we had distributed some dummy letters among those trainees who were found to have failed to assess the responses properly. The letters were passed on to them after the assessment exercises were over. Most letters asked for an explanation or a discussion on the grades awarded. In Unit 4, we have presented a detailed discussion on this issue along with the sample of these letters and also those of the responses which were written by the respective assessors (distance teachers). As answering such letters is a task that is naturally taken up after the teaching-task, i.e., after grading and commenting are over, we may call these activities post-teaching tasks.

However, here we need to highlight the point that this exercise brought to our notice what may be called the ‘clash of egos’. Most of the trainees (assessors in this case) said that their awards need no revision. Many of them defended their stand (i.e., the comments they had written and/or the grades they had awarded) by whatever arguments they could think of, which included attacking the distance learner concerned. It appears that once a grade is awarded or a comment written by an assessor, s/he finds it difficult to change his/her stand even if s/he is convinced of the weakness of his/her stand. Thus, professional honesty gets sacrificed in a clash of egos. This clash of egos (the ego of the distance teacher on the one hand and that of the distance learner on the other) stands as a barrier between the teacher and the learner, as the two fail to reach each other and the process of distance teaching/learning as a whole, ends in failure.

In this connection, we must suggest that it is desirable on the part of the distance teacher to give up being egoistic, and, thus, weaken that barrier right from the very beginning. But, then, s/he needs to learn to do so. Personal comments promote academically purposeful communication between the teacher and the learner; they also help in reducing the possibilities of clashes caused by egoism.
To view clearly what we achieved in this unit we need to turn back to sub-section 2.2.2 (Unit 2). We said that the experiment/workshop which these units (Units 2 & 3) are based on, was divided into three phases.

- Pre-teaching tasks (Phase I) — problems therein and solutions thereof were taken up and covered in unit 2 itself.

- Teaching tasks (Phase 2) — it was suggested that these tasks have two components — commenting on responses, and grading the responses. Of these two, **commenting** was taken up and covered in Unit 2. The second component, i.e., **grading** has been the theme of this unit, i.e., Unit 3.

- Post-teaching tasks (Phase 3) will be taken up in unit 4 which is to follow.

**Grading** being the theme of this unit, we outline here what it is all about.

- Grading, besides being an indication of what the teacher thinks of an assignment-response, is a pedagogic tool to help the learner to improve his/her learning effort and techniques.

- In order to make this tool really effective pedagogically, it needs to have three qualities:
  
  i) grading should be ‘perfect’;

  ii) grading should agree with the corresponding comments; and

  iii) the communication that follows (after grading etc.) should be helpful to the learner.

- There are at least four difficulties (called discrimination factors) which lie in the way of making grading ‘perfect’. These are:
  
  i) imperfect knowledge (on the part of the assessor) of what the unit presents and aims at;

  ii) imperfect understanding (on the part of the assessor) of the assignment and of the learner’s abilities;

  iii) assessor’s own view of a good/ideal response/answer to the assignment; and

  iv) assessor’s short or inconsistent attention span.

Ways and means of overcoming these difficulties have been suggested and discussed in the relevant sub-sections. We must remind you here that though we discussed the assessor’s tendencies towards being lenient or strict, we decided not to give any importance to this factor.

Towards the close of the unit, we discussed two other significant issues:

- For bringing about the required agreement between the grades awarded and the comments written, we have suggested that the distance teacher has to go about it consciously with deliberate effort and care. S/he may do it naturally after a lot of experience but to begin with, one has to work consciously to master this technique.
Leaving the theme of post-teaching communication for unit 4, we have only suggested that such communication may have the tendency of turning into a clash of egos between the distance learner and the distance teacher, and that it is the duty of the latter not only to eliminate that clash but also to make such communication interesting and purposeful. For a fuller discussion/exposition of this theme please turn to unit 4 now.