

## Grading Guidelines – effective up through the Winter 2013 semester

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### Guidelines for Determining Course Grades Only

In determining course grades, members of the faculty refer to the percentage guidelines adopted by the faculty and set forth below. For each grade, there is a target percentage and also a range of recommended minimum and maximum percentages. In addition, there is a target mean for the entire class.

Grade	Target %	Minimum and Maximum %
A+ and A	10 %	0 to 3 % for A+ 7 to 11 % for A
A-	15 %	13 to 17 %
B+	30 %	26 to 34 %
B	25 %	21 to 29 %
B-	10%	8 to 12 %
C+	7 %	5 to 9 %
C and below	3 %	0 to 5 % for C 0 to 4 % for C-, D+, D, E

Mean    3.19    3.13 to 3.25

GPA values:

A+	4.3	B+	3.3	C+	2.3	D+	1.3
A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0	D	1.0
A-	3.7	B-	2.7	C-	1.7	E	0.0

In all first-year courses and upper-level courses in which there are 40 or more students enrolled, faculty will turn in to the Registrar's Office the mean GPA for the class along with their final grades. In instances where the mean GPA is outside the target mean range of 3.13 to 3.25, the Registrar's Office will accept the grades once they are accompanied by a written statement from the Associate Dean authorizing the deviation from the range. If the faculty member discusses the matter with the Associate Dean and attests that, in his or her considered academic judgment, the deviation is justified, the Associate Dean will approve it. The professor's representation that a particular class of students performed exceptionally well or poorly can constitute a valid reason for deviation from the range. These standards are not mandatory in upper-level courses in which fewer than 40 students are enrolled, but faculty should treat them as guidelines and try to comply with them. Teachers of first-year courses should depart from the guidelines for the aggregate of A+, A, and A- grades (20-31%) only if justified by some unusual circumstance related to the particular class.

Especially at the extremes, a faculty member should feel free to apply his or her own judgment of outstanding (A+) or deficient (D+, D, and E) student performance. Grades at the lowest end of the curve represent a judgment that if the student's work in one other course (in the case of an E) or in several other courses (in the case of D's or D+'s) is evaluated the same way by other teachers, the student should be excluded from school because of failure to meet minimum academic standards. No teacher should view these extreme categories as an affirmative expectation. At these levels, the guidelines are suggested maximums; this interpretation is indicated by stating these categories in terms of a range between zero and the suggested maximum.

In calculating the ranges for individual grades, round to the nearest whole number. Suppose, for example, that you have 132 students in a class. To calculate the highest number of A's you can give under the

guidelines, multiply .03 by 132. The product is 3.96. Rounded to the nearest whole number, this means you can give as many as 4 A+'s and still remain within the guidelines.

In calculating the mean for the entire class, round to the nearest hundredth. Thus, means of 3.1251 and 3.2549 would be rounded to 3.13 and 3.25, respectively, and would comply (just barely) with the guidelines.

Following each grading period, the Office of the Registrar will report variations from the guidelines to the Academic Standards Committee.

#### Guidelines for Determining Seminar Grades Only

No formal statement of seminar grading practices has been adopted by the faculty. The only method used to define the meaning of any particular letter grade in a seminar is by looking at past seminar grading patterns. Traditionally, seminar grades are more generous than course grades. During a typical term, the average grades for all seminars hover between a B+ and an A-, with the majority of seminars reporting class averages closer to A-. Because our practices for grading seminars are based on traditional usage rather than on any formal policy, new members of the faculty, visitors, and all others seeking clarification are invited to contact the Associate Dean for additional information.

#### Guidelines for Determining Clinical/Practical Course Grades Only

Contact the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs for information about clinical grading practices.

#### Graduate Student Grading Guidelines

The Graduate Committee has expressed the view that graduate student status is irrelevant to the determination of grades for course work and research work. The Committee strongly suggests that graduate students, both non-English speaking and English speaking, be held to the same substantive standards for grading purposes as J.D. students. The faculty may, of course, wish to be tolerant with non-native English speaking graduate students on matters such as spelling and grammar.

The Committee feels that it is important for a number of reasons to convey to the faculty its views on grading standards for graduate student work. First, if graduate students are held to a lower substantive standard than J.D. students, the value of the M.C.L. and LL.M. degrees is undermined. Second, graduate students have raised concerns that grading standards for graduate students vary among faculty (e.g., some are lenient to graduate students, others are not), and therefore their results and the degree they qualify for may be affected by which section of a first-year course they happen to end up in. Third, there are certain types of evaluation, such as multiple choice exams, where no accommodation is made for graduate student status; and, accordingly, it is not logical to make accommodations on other types of exams where it is perhaps easier to tell that the author is a foreign student. (In addition, the faculty should be aware that there may be foreign J.D. students, as well as graduate students, in each class.)

The Committee does not mean to suggest that faculty may not wish to know who the graduate students are after the assignment of preliminary grades in order to remove them from, for example, a first-year curve. However, while the Graduate Committee recognizes the unique difficulties facing students from different cultural and educational contexts who come here to study, we feel that any extra assistance given to non-native English speaking graduate students on examinations should be limited to the 50% extra time granted them in the Academic Regulations and should not include special dispensation in grading.

April, 2010