

Grading Guidelines – effective Spring/Summer 2013 semester and thereafter

NOTE: This document is intended for use only within the Law School Community and is not intended for publication or distribution outside the community. You are allowed to keep an electronic copy and print out a hard copy of this document for your own use. You may not, however, distribute electronic copies or hard copies of this document to anyone else.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING COURSE GRADES

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	11 %	0 to 3 % for A+ 8 to 12 % for A
A-	20 %	18 to 22 %
B+	35 %	31 to 39 %
B	25 %	21 to 29 %
B-	5 %	3 to 7 %
C+	4 %	2 to 6 %
C and below	0 %	0 to 5 % for C 0 to 4 % for C-, D+, D, E
Mean	3.325	3.25 to 3.40

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 30 or more students enrolled, faculty will turn in to the Registrar's Office (Office of Student Records) the mean GPA for the class along with their final grades. In instances where the mean GPA is outside the target mean range of 3.25 to 3.40, the Registrar's Office (Office of Student Records) will accept the grades once they are accompanied by a written statement from the Associate Dean for Academic Programming 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 may 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 30 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 (26-37%) 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.

Following each grading period, the Registrar's Office (Office of Student Records) will report variations from the guidelines to the Academic Standards Committee.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SEMINAR GRADES ONLY

Grades in seminars are consistently more generous than grades in traditional upper-level courses. The mean seminar grade ought to be in the neighborhood of 3.75. New members of the faculty, visitors, and all others seeking clarification are invited to contact the Associate Dean for Academic Programming for additional information.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING CLINICAL COURSE AND FIELDWORK GRADES ONLY

Grades in clinical courses are consistently more generous than grades in traditional upper-level courses. The mean clinical grade ought to be in the neighborhood of 3.75. In instances where mean clinical grades are below 3.7 or above 3.8, clinical faculty must consult with the Associate Dean for Experiential Education before final grades are entered. New members of the faculty, visitors, and all others seeking clarification are invited to contact the Associate Dean for Experiential Education for additional information.¹

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING PRACTICE SIMULATION COURSE GRADES ONLY

Grades in practice simulation courses are consistently more generous than grades in traditional upper-level courses. The mean practice simulation grade ought to be in the neighborhood of 3.75. New members of the faculty, visitors, and all others seeking clarification are invited to contact the Associate Dean for Experiential Education for additional information.²

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

¹ The "Guidelines for Determining Clinical Course and Fieldwork Grades Only" section is effective in the Fall 2016 term and thereafter.

² The "Guidelines for Determining Practice Simulation Course Grades Only" section is effective in the Fall 2015 term and thereafter.

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 2013; revised March 2015 and February 2016