



# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto

Governing Council

## **University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy**

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# University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy

## Statement of Purpose

The University's Assessment and Grading Practices Policy sets out the principles and key elements that should characterize the assessment and grading of student work in for-credit programming at the University of Toronto.

## Overarching Principles

The purpose of the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy is to ensure:

- that assessment and grading practices across the University are consistent and reflect appropriate academic standards
- that student performance is evaluated in a manner that is fair, accurate, consistent, and objective and in compliance with these academic standards.
- that the academic standing of every student can be accurately assessed even when conducted in different divisions of the University and evaluated according to different grading scales.

## Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the evaluation of student performance in for-credit programming at both the graduate and undergraduate level within all divisions/faculties of the University. For graduate programs and students, any reference to "division/faculty" should be understood to refer to the School of Graduate Studies, and any reference to department should be understood to refer to the relevant graduate unit. The School of Graduate Studies is the only division that may develop additional grading regulations and guidelines for graduate studies. Where undergraduate and graduate practices differ, this has been indicated explicitly in the text. Otherwise all clauses should be understood to apply equally to students at either level of study.

Divisions/faculties may wish to develop procedures for implementing these policies according to their needs. These procedures must be consistent with this policy. In case of conflict or lack of clarity, this policy will be understood to take precedence.

This policy is in three parts: Part A: Grades

Part B: Grading Practices

Part C: Designators and Other Non-Grade Symbols Approved for Use in Reporting Course Results

## Distribution of Policy

A copy of the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy as well as the description of the grade scales and any divisional regulations and guidelines must be published in full in the Academic Calendar of each division and made available to students and to all instructors and others, including teaching assistants, involved in the evaluation of student performance, either electronically or, upon request, in hard copy.

A current list of grade scales and reporting symbols in use at the University will be maintained by the Provost's Office with the support of the University Registrar and the Chief Information Officer [CIO]. This list will also record historical data on the use of grade scales and reporting symbols in each division.

## PART A: GRADES

### 1. MEANING OF GRADES AND GRADE SCALES

#### 1.1. Meaning of Grades

Grades are a measure of the performance of a student. They are an indication of the student's command of the content of the components of the academic program. In assessing student performance and translating that assessment into grades, the University's standards and practices should be comparable to those of our academic peers.

#### 1.2. Grade scales

Once an assessment of the performance of the student has been made, the following grade scales are to be used. This scale shows the corresponding Grade Point value which will appear on the student's transcript. divisions/faculties are encouraged to develop guidelines concerning the relative meaning of grades in the context of their division/ faculty.

##### 1.2.1. Undergraduate:

- i. the refined letter grade scale A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F;
- ii. the numerical scale of marks, consisting of all integers from 0 to 100 (that is, 0,1...99, 100).

<i>Undergraduate</i>		
Refined Letter Grade Scale	Grade Point Value	Numerical Scale of Marks
A+	4.0	90 - 100%
A	4.0	85 - 89%
A-	3.7	80 - 84%
B+	3.3	77 - 79%
B	3.0	73 - 76%
B-	2.7	70 - 72%
C+	2.3	67 - 69%
C	2.0	63 - 66%
C-	1.7	60 - 62%
D+	1.3	57 - 59%
D	1.0	53 - 56%
D-	0.7	50 - 52%
F*	0.0	0 - 49%

\*F = Fail

**1.2.2. Graduate:**

- i. a truncated refined letter grade scale A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, FZ (replacing C,D, and F);
- ii. the numerical scale of marks, consisting of all integers from 0 to 100 (that is, 0,1...99, 100).

<b>Graduate</b>	
Truncated Refined Letter Grade Scale	Numerical Scale of Marks
A+	90 - 100%
A	85 - 89%
A-	80 - 84%
B+	77 - 79%
B	73 - 76%
B-	70 - 72%
FZ**	0 - 69%

\*\*FZ = Fail

**1.3. Alternate Grade Scales**

In addition to the above, there are approved grade scales that are outside the standard grade scale system. These grades are assigned in some divisions/faculties for courses in which only broad evaluative distinctions in assessing the quality of student performance are judged appropriate. Any change to the grading scale for an existing course must be approved through governance as described in A 1.4 below. Approved alternate grade scales include:

- i. H (Honours), P (Pass), F (Failure).
- ii. HH (High Honours), H (Honours), P(Pass), LP(Low Pass), F(Fail)
- iii. CR (Credit), NCR (No Credit).
- iv. The final grades assigned in a graduate course must all be from the same scale.
- v. Normally, all grades in an undergraduate course must be from the same scale. However, divisions/faculties may establish procedures that allow individual students to elect to be graded within a limited number of courses using an alternate grade scale (ie. CR/NCR where the course uses the normal numerical/letter grades).

**1.4. Approval of Alternate Grade Scales**

**1.4.1.** A division/faculty wishing to employ a grade scale or reporting symbol that is not defined in this document must obtain the prior approval of the Academic Board, acting with the advice of the Vice-President and Provost, or designate, and the University Registrar.

**1.4.2.** To be approved, a proposed grade scale must be dictated by the particular circumstances of a division.

## PART B: GRADING PRACTICES

Individual divisions/faculties may wish to develop more detailed regulations and guidelines governing grading procedures. These must be consistent with this policy and the practices outlined below. In the case where there is any conflict between the two, this policy will be held to take precedence. All such divisional/faculty regulations must be approved by divisional/faculty council and brought forward to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs and, where required, to Academic Board for information or approval as appropriate. (The School of Graduate Studies is the only division/faculty that can develop additional grading procedures regulations and guidelines for graduate studies.)

### 1. COURSES

#### 1.1. Disclosure of method(s) of evaluation of student performance

For both undergraduate and graduate courses, as early as possible in each course (and no later than the division/faculty's last date for course enrolment) the instructor shall make available to the class, and shall file with the division/faculty or department, the methods by which student performance shall be evaluated. This should include whether the methods of evaluation will be essays, tests, class participation, seminar presentations, examinations, or other; the relative weight of these methods in relation to the overall grade; and the timing of each major evaluation.

#### 1.2. Consequences for late submission

For both undergraduate and graduate courses, instructors are not obliged to accept late work, except where there are legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control. In such cases, a late penalty is normally not appropriate. Where an Instructor intends to accept and apply penalties to late assignments, this must be set out clearly in the course syllabus

#### 1.3. Changes to the method of evaluation

For both undergraduate and graduate courses, after the methods of evaluation have been made known, the instructor may not change them or their relative weight without **the consent of a simple majority** of students attending the class, provided the vote is announced no later than in the previous class. Any changes must be reported to the division or the department, or in the case of graduate courses, the graduate unit. The only exception to this is in the case of the declaration of a disruption. [Please see the University's *Policy on Academic Continuity*.]

#### 1.4. Multiple assessments

##### 1.4.1. *Undergraduate.*

Student performance in an undergraduate course must be assessed on more than one occasion. No one essay, test, examination, etc. should have a value of more than 80% of the grade. Criteria for exemption may be determined by the division/faculty.

##### 1.4.2. *Graduate*

In graduate courses, there is no requirement for multiple assessments. However, if any one essay, test examination etc. has a value of more than 80% of the grade, this must be made clear in the information described in B.1.1 above. If participation forms part of the final grade it must not constitute more than 20%.

### **1.5. Timing of assessment**

#### **1.5.1. Undergraduate**

At least one piece of term work which is a part of the evaluation of a student performance and worth at least 10% of the final grade, whether essay, lab report, review, etc., must be returned to the student prior to the last date for withdrawal from the course without academic penalty.

#### **1.5.2. Graduate**

In graduate courses, there is no requirement for term work to be returned before the last date for withdrawal from the course without academic penalty. However, if no work is to be returned by this date, this must be made clear in the information described in B.1.1 above.

### **1.6. Access to commentary on assessed term work**

Undergraduate and graduate students should have access to commentary on assessed term work and the opportunity to discuss the assessment with the instructor.

### **1.7. Final Examinations**

#### **1.7.1. Undergraduate**

In courses that meet regularly as a class, there should be an examination (or examinations) conducted formally under divisional auspices and worth (alone or in the aggregate) at least one-third of the final grade. Criteria for exemption may be determined by the division. The relative value of each part of an examination should be indicated to the student. In the case of a written examination, the relative value of the exam should be indicated on the examination.

#### **1.7.2. Graduate**

There is no requirement for final examinations in graduate courses. Where examinations are used, the relative value of each part of an examination should be indicated to the student.

### **1.8. Final grades**

Final grades in undergraduate and graduate courses shall be recommended by the instructor, using the approved grade scales, to the Chair, Dean, or the Chair's or Dean's designate (and graduate Chairs in the case of graduate courses) on the basis of each student's overall performance and in conformity with the information described in Part B 1.1 above.

## **2. WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS IN COURSES**

### **2.1. Access to exemplars**

For all undergraduate courses and graduate courses where there is a final written examination, all divisions/faculties should provide access to copies of the previous years' final examination papers and other years' papers where feasible. Exemptions may be granted by an appropriate committee of the division or department.

### **2.2. Review of final examinations**

All divisions/faculties should provide students with the opportunity within a reasonable time to review their final course examination paper where feasible. Divisions/faculties may charge a cost-recovery fee (for review) consistent with *the Policy on Ancillary Fees*.

### **2.3. Re-reading of examinations**

#### **2.3.1. Undergraduate**

For undergraduate courses, all divisions should provide, in addition to the customary re-checking of grades, the opportunity for students to petition for the re-reading of their examination where feasible. Divisions/faculties may charge a cost-recovery fee (for re-reading) consistent with the *Policy on Ancillary Fees*.

#### **2.3.2. Graduate**

For graduate examinations, each graduate unit should provide students, upon request, with an opportunity for re-checking of marks. The rereading of graduate course examinations is governed by SGS procedures.

### **3. GRADE REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

#### **3.1. Responsibility and Oversight**

The Dean (which in the case of graduate programs is the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies) or designate is responsible for:

- administering the implementation of the Assessment and Grading Practices Policy at the divisional/faculty level and overseeing the general consistency of grading procedures within the division/faculty

#### **3.2. Review and approval of final grades**

Final grades for undergraduate or graduate courses will be reviewed and approved by the Chair, Dean or Dean's designate according to divisional review procedures. The Divisional review constitutes final approval of grades except where grades are changed on appeal.

#### **3.3. Adjustment of final grades**

The final grades recommended by the instructor in an undergraduate or graduate course should not normally be adjusted except where the Chair, Dean or Dean's designate judge that the consequences of allowing the grades to stand would be injurious to the standards of the University, or are not in keeping with divisional grading guidelines. Any adjustment of final grades should be made in consultation with the instructor. Divisional review processes may rely on past statistical data, including drop-out rates, mean arithmetic average, etc. as background information where available; however, this information should not be relied upon exclusively to judge whether a specific grade distribution is anomalous. Rather, the information should provide part of the basis for an overall review of grades in a division.

#### **3.4. Considerations in the review and approval of final grades**

##### ***3.4.1. Conformity with Policy***

For undergraduate and graduate courses, the fundamental criterion that any divisional/faculty final grade review process should employ is whether the instructor has followed this Assessment and Grading Practices Policy.

##### ***3.4.2. Distribution of grades***

The distribution of grades in any course, examination or other academic assessment must not be predetermined by any system of quotas that specifies the number or percentage of grades allowable at any grade level. However, a division/faculty may provide guidelines to instructors setting out a reasonable distribution of grades in the division or department. The division may request an explanation of any grades for a course that appear not to meet divisional guidelines, are not based on the approved grade scales, or otherwise appear anomalous in reference to the Policy. It is understood that this section will normally only be used when the class size is thirty students or greater.

#### **3.5. Informing instructors and students of grade adjustment**

For undergraduate and graduate courses where grades have been adjusted, by the Chair, Dean, or Dean's designate, the Chair, Dean or Dean's designate should ensure that the instructor as well as the students are informed. On request, the students or the instructor will be given the reason for the adjustment of grades and a description of the methodology used to adjust the grades. Students will be given a description of the divisional appeal process.

### **4. GRADE REPORTING**

#### **4.1. Use of the grading scale**

##### ***4.1.1. Undergraduate:***

- i. The refined letter grade and normally the numerical grade will be reported for courses using the standard grade scales.

- ii. The H/P/F and CR/NCR scales may be used instead in courses approved to use that scale or for individual students as set out in A 1.3.1.iii.
- iii. Where an undergraduate student has completed a fully graduate course the student will be assessed according to the undergraduate grading scale and the appropriate undergraduate grade will be reported on the undergraduate student transcript.

**4.1.2. Graduate:**

- i. For all graduate courses, final grades will be assigned according to the graduate grade scale referred to above.
- ii. The CR/NCR scale may be used instead in courses approved to use that scale.
- iii. Where a graduate student has completed a fully undergraduate course, the course will be clearly identified as an undergraduate course on their graduate transcript. The student will be assessed according to the graduate grading scale and the appropriate graduate grade will be reported on the graduate student transcript.

**4.2. Use of Non-grade designators**

For both undergraduate and graduate courses, all Designators and Non-grade Symbols used in reporting course results must correspond to the University-wide standard. A list of the currently approved designators and their meanings is given in the Part C.

**4.3. Transcripts** [Please see the University's Transcript Policy for full details on the required content of the official University transcript]

**4.3.1. Undergraduate:**

Undergraduate transcripts must include:

- a refined letter grade and normally the numeric grade, or the final grade using an approved alternate grading scale for each course completed
- a "grade point average" based on a 4-point scale for all undergraduate divisions as described in A 1.2.3 except where the division/faculty has secured formal approval to be exempted from this policy or where CR/NCR has been used.
- a comprehensive guide explaining all grades and symbols used on the transcript

**4.3.2. Graduate:**

Graduate transcripts must include:

- a refined letter grade or other grade or designator for each graduate course completed
- a comprehensive guide explaining all grades and symbols used on the transcript.

## 5. APPEALS OF FINAL GRADES

Every division/faculty shall establish divisional appeal procedures. (In the case of graduate programs this is the responsibility of the School of Graduate Studies.) Students may appeal grades regardless of whether marks have been altered by the review process or not. Divisional/faculty appeal procedures should be made available through the divisional/faculty academic Calendar, and available upon request at the Dean's and/or Faculty Registrar's Office.

## 6. OTHER ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

Appropriately qualified faculty members are responsible for the final evaluation of all assessments and grades for academic credit at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

**Graduate**

In graduate programs, graduate units may expect students to complete requirements for a degree other than course work, such as comprehensive or qualifying examinations, language examinations, field work or internships, major research papers, theses etc,. Evaluations of performance in these requirements and/or settings should



accord with the principles set out in this Assessment and Grading Practices Policy. Doctoral Final Oral Examinations (FOE) are governed by the regulations established by the School of Graduate Studies.

## **7. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN PLACEMENTS (eg., Clinical and Field settings)**

The assessment of the performance of students in clinical or field settings should be conducted in line with this Policy. Accordingly, where a student's performance in a placement, clinical, or field setting is to be assessed for-credit, the evaluation must encompass as a minimum:

- a formal statement describing the evaluation process, including the criteria to be used in assessing the performance of students and the appeal mechanisms available. This statement should be available to all students before or at the beginning of the clinical or field experience;
- in the case of undergraduate placements, a mid-way performance evaluation with feedback to the student and written documentation of the final assessment.

In addition, for such clinical and field placements, divisions must ensure that:

- clinical and field assessors are fully informed regarding University, divisional and course policies concerning evaluation procedures, including the specific assessment procedures to be applied in any particular field or clinical setting.

## **8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Situations where the instructor or a student is in a position of a conflict of interest, where there may be an appearance of a conflict of interest, or where a fair and objective assessment may not be possible, should be brought to the attention of the chair (the graduate chair in the case of graduate courses) or the Dean who is responsible for taking steps to ensure fairness and objectivity.

## **PART C: DESIGNATORS AND OTHER NON-GRADE SYMBOLS APPROVED FOR USE IN REPORTING GRADE AND ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

**AEG:** Aegrotat standing granted on the basis of term work and medical or similar evidence where the student was not able to write the final examination in the course. AEG is assigned by a division upon approval of a student's petition. It carries credit for the course but is not considered for averaging purposes. (undergraduate)

**DNW:** Did not write/did not attend/did little work. DNW is assigned by the instructor and must be changed to another symbol during the divisional grade review. It carries credit for the course prior to the review but is not considered for averaging purposes. (undergraduate)

**GWR:** Grade Withheld pending Review. GWR is assigned by the division (School of Graduate Studies in the case of graduate courses) in cases where a course grade is being reviewed under the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. It is replaced by a regular grade upon completion of the review. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes.

**INC:** Incomplete. INC may be assigned by the division or the instructor, according to divisional guidelines, normally as a final report, where work is not completed but where there are not grounds for assigning a failing grade. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes.

**IPR:** In Progress. IPR is assigned as the report for a course that is continued in a subsequent session. The final grade will appear only once and only for the last enrolment period. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes.

**LWD:** Permitted to withdraw from a course without academic penalty. The division may approve such an option and restrict the number of courses for which a student may exercise the option. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes. LWD is relevant only if a division wishes to show the course on the transcript. (undergraduate)

**NGA:** No grade available. NGA is assigned by the division in the extraordinary case that a grade is not available for one of its students enrolled in a course. It must be replaced by a regular grade assigned by the instructor or by another symbol assigned during the divisional review. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes. (undergraduate)

**SDF:** Standing deferred on the basis of incomplete course work because of medical or similar reasons. SDF is assigned by the division upon approval of a student's petition or an instructor's recommendation. It must be replaced by a regular grade assigned by the instructor before the expiry of a specific extension period. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes.

**TRF:** Program Transfer. Assigned by the School of Graduate Studies to a continuing research/seminar courses begun but not completed in the first program and not required in the new program to which the student has been officially transferred. (graduate)

**WDR:** Withdrawn without academic penalty. WDR is assigned by the division upon approval of a student's petition for late withdrawal from a course for compelling extenuating circumstances. It carries no credit for the course and is not considered for averaging purposes. WDR is relevant only if a division wishes to show the course on the transcript.

**XMP:** Exemption granted on the basis of credit for work done elsewhere. XMP is assigned by a division upon approval of a student's petition. It carries credit for the course but is not considered for averaging purposes.

*Approved by the Academic Board January 26, 2012, effective July 1, 2012*