

 <b>DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY</b> <i>Inspiring Minds</i>  <b>Grading Practices Policy</b>	<i>Policy Sponsor:</i> Senate	<i>Approval Date:</i> Senate - January 23, 2017 Board of Governors – February 14, 2017
	<i>Responsible Unit:</i> Registrar’s Office	<i>Revisions:</i>

*Related Policies: Policy on Academic Dates, Syllabus Policy*

A. **Background & Purpose:**

The University’s assessment and grading practices should be designed to ensure that:

1. Students throughout the University can expect assessment and grading practices that are valid, consistent, reliable, timely and reflect appropriate academic standards as defined by the academic discipline;
2. The evaluation of student performance is made in a fair manner congruent with academic standards and that adequate feedback on the student performance is provided to support student academic success;
3. Students receive meaningful feedback early enough in the term to facilitate student success, including the ability to make appropriate changes to their registration if necessary;
4. The levels of achievement indicated by given letter grades, while accommodating the particular circumstances of each Faculty, are consistent between Faculties and across levels of courses.

B. **Application:** This policy applies to all credit-bearing courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University.

C. **Definitions:**

1. In this Policy:
  - a. “Academic Unit Head” means the Department Head, Department Chair, School Director or, for Faculties without Departments or Schools, the Dean;
  - b. “Course” means a structured series of classes or a sustained period of instruction [traditional (face-to-face), on-line or blended] that is offered for credit in a particular term as part of an undergraduate or graduate program at the University;

- c. "Course Syllabus" means the course syllabus created and communicated by the Instructor for a Course in accordance with the Syllabus Policy;
- d. "Grade" means a final grade assigned to a Student for a Course under this Policy;
- e. "Instructor" means any faculty member (including part-time and sessional), instructor, or teaching assistant who takes on substantial responsibility for teaching a Course, as determined by the Academic Unit Head;
- f. "Student" means any individual registered in a Course;

**D. Policy:**

1. The official grading system at the University is a letter-grade system. Instructors shall convert all numeric scores to letter Grades using the conversion scale that has been approved for either undergraduate or graduate Courses by Senate (see Appendix for University Grading Scales).
2. All Grades are to be based on the Instructor's evaluation of the academic performance of the Students in the Course in question in accordance with the Course Syllabus. With the exception of the Faculty of Law, the distribution of Grades in any Course shall not be fixed by any system of quotas that specifies the number or percentage of Grades allowable at any one level.

***Grading During the Term***

3. Throughout the term, Instructors are expected to provide feedback to Students that clearly signals to Students their academic performance relative to the Course learning outcomes, and ultimately their Grade in the course. Note: Not all feedback needs to be part of a summative assessment that contributes to the final Grade.
4. In all Courses, this feedback *should* occur before the deadline to withdraw from the Course without receiving a 'W', (as published annually in the Dalhousie Academic Dates).
5. Particularly for all first year Courses taught in the Fall term, this feedback *should* occur before the deadline to withdraw from the Course without receiving a 'W'.
6. For Courses where there are no published withdrawal deadlines (due to the nature of when that Course is offered), the requirement for early feedback *should* occur before one third of the Course is completed.

***Submission of Grades***

7. Faculties may develop Grade approval procedures to be followed by Instructors as part of the Grade submission process, at a date set annually by the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee in conjunction with the Dalhousie Academic Dates for that year. These procedures should be guided by the three principles in D.8. Such procedures must be provided to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee for information when initially established and when any changes to the procedures are made.

8. In the absence of a Faculty procedure such as described in (D.7), the Instructor both submits and approves the Grades to the Registrar's Office at a date set annually by the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee in conjunction with the Dalhousie Academic Dates for that year. The date for the submission of Grades will normally be between seven and ten calendar days from the final day of the exam period, and will be based on three principles:
  - a. Transparency and timeliness for Students, to allow for informed Course planning and registration in future terms before the term starts;
  - b. Appropriate time for Instructors, to enable the effective and appropriate grading of examinations and term assignments; and,
  - c. Adequate time to provide necessary services to Students to enable timely academic standing assessments, advising, and convocation approvals.
9. The final possible date for the submission of Grades will be published along with the Dalhousie Academic Dates for each academic year.
10. In extenuating circumstances, an extension of the deadline for Grade submission may be granted by the Dean of the Faculty (or designate) that is responsible for the offering of the Course. The extension must be requested by the Instructor before the final date for the submission of Grades (as published annually), and an approved extension must be communicated to the Registrar's Office before the un-extended time limit. Such an extension should be communicated by the Instructor to all Students in that Course within 24 hours of the granting of an extension.
11. After submission to the Registrar's Office, Instructors may change Grades up to one month following the end of the term with the same approval review defined for the submission of their Grades, and thereafter may only change Student Grades where permitted under other Faculty or Senate Policies or academic regulations.
12. Grades are communicated officially to Students through Student access to their academic record.

### ***Review of Grading Practices***

13. Each Faculty shall conduct an annual Grade distribution review following procedures developed by the Faculty for that purpose. Each Faculty shall submit an annual report to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee with the results of the review together with a copy of the procedures.

### **E. Administrative Structure:**

1. Authority: This policy falls under the authority of Senate.
2. The Registrar's Office is responsible for:
  - a. Maintaining the official academic records for each Student;
  - b. Maintaining the IT infrastructure to support the Grade submission process;
  - c. Monitoring the timelines under this policy and assisting the Deans in ensuring Instructor compliance;

- d. Providing an annual report to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee concerning compliance with the Policy as it pertains to the submission of final Grades; and
  - e. Enabling each Faculty to have access to their Grade distribution information (including mean and median grades) to support their Grade review processes.
3. The Academic Unit Head is responsible for:
- a. Ensuring that all Courses within their academic unit are in compliance with the policy.
4. Dean (or designate) is responsible for:
- a. Approving any extensions to the deadline for Grade submissions, and communicating such extensions to the Registrar's Office as stipulated in this policy;
  - b. Ensuring that any extensions are communicated to Students by the Instructor receiving an extension; and
  - c. Ensuring that their Faculty conducts an annual review of Grade distributions, and submits a report on the annual grade review process to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee.
5. Senate Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for:
- a. Ensuring that this Policy is communicated to all Instructors annually;
  - b. With the intent to balance the three principles outline in D.8 (above); approving dates for the final submission of Grades concurrently with the setting of Academic Dates for the upcoming academic year;
  - c. Maintaining a record of Faculty procedures for Grade approvals and grade distribution reviews;
  - d. Receiving annual reports from Faculties regarding their annual review of Grade distribution; and
  - e. Reviewing and updating the Policy every 5 years, or earlier as required.

## Appendix : University Grading Scales

### Graduate Courses Grading Scale

The following table explains and defines Dalhousie's grading system for graduate courses<sup>1</sup>, and shows the GPA value that corresponds with each letter Grade.

Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Definition
A+	4.30	90-100	
A	4.00	85-89	
A-	3.70	80-84	
B+	3.30	77-79	
B	3.00	73-76	
B-	2.70	70-72	
F	0.00	0-69	
INC	0.00		Incomplete
W	Neutral and no credit obtained		Withdrew after deadline
ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained		Compassionate reasons, illness
P	Neutral		Pass
TR	Neutral		Transfer credit on admission
Pending	Neutral		Grade not reported

---

<sup>1</sup> Some programs use Pass/Fail grading system.

## Undergraduate Courses Grading Scale

The following table explains and defines Dalhousie's grading system for undergraduate courses<sup>2</sup>, and shows the GPA value that corresponds with each letter Grade.

Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Definition	
A+	4.30	90-100	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	4.00	85-89		
A-	3.70	80-84		
B+	3.30	77-79	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
B	3.00	73-76		
B-	2.70	70-72		
C+	2.30	65-69	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from his/her university experience.
C	2.00	60-64		
C-	1.70	55-59		
D	1.00	50-54	Marginal Pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of 'C' is required).
FM	0.00		Marginal Failure	Available only for Engineering, Health Professions and Commerce.
F	0.00	0-49	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.
INC	0.00		Incomplete	
W	Neutral and no credit obtained		Withdrew after deadline	
ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained		Compassionate reasons, illness	
P	Neutral		Pass	
TR	Neutral		Transfer credit on admission	
Pending	Neutral		Grade not reported	

<sup>2</sup> Some programs use Pass/Fail grading system