

Revise grading system from the traditional letter grade to the same 0 to 4.0 grading system reported by the Registrar on a students' transcript.

CURRENT CHALLENGE:

The current grading system based on letter grades as utilized at California State University, Fresno and many other universities is grossly unfair, and extremely inaccurate. Under the current letter grade system, a student who earns credit for 80% of the available content in a course and receives a grade of "B" is awarded 3.00 by the registrar. A student who earns credit for 79% of the available content in a course and receives a grade of "C" is awarded 2.00 by the registrar. This is a 25% difference in credit on their transcript for a 1% difference in performance. Conversely, a student who earns credit for 100% of the available content in a course and receives a grade of "A" is awarded 4.00 by the registrar. A student who earns credit for 90% of the available content in a course also receives a grade of "A" and is awarded 4.00 by the registrar. This rewards the lower performer with a 10% credit that they did not earn and provides an artificial inflation of their grade-point average. This is also patently unfair to the higher performer. The fact is that most students graduating with a "4.0 GPA" in fact have a 3.6 GPA.

In addition, grade point averages are reported to many significant digits such as 3.6225 which would imply a high degree of accuracy, and yet those numbers are based on very broad intervals for letter grades resulting in highly inaccurate and misleading grade reports. After all, a 4.0000 grade point average on a transcript could actually be based on a lot of classes where the true credit earned was 89.5% rounded up! In contrast, a student with a 3.0000 grade point average may in fact have several classes where they earned a credit of 89.4% which was rounded down! The only reasonable justification for the continued used of the current system is that it is simple! However, the implementation of technology such as PeopleSoft at myFresnoState has made that argument invalid and inapplicable.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

This proposal recommends that the grade reporting from the faculty to the Registrar (or equivalent) be revised from the traditional letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) to the same 0 to 4.0 grading system as recorded on a student's transcript. This would not only simplify the reporting system by using a single method for reporting and recording grades, it would provide a more accurate measure of the level of achievement and performance of each individual in the class. This would in many cases be based on a percent of the maximum level of achievement. This would allow for the accurate reporting of small differences in performance, and provides a very high level of precision. Grades can be calculated to one or even two decimal places if desired.

This would also return full control of grading in a class to the professor rather than allowing the registrar to recalculate grades based on a distorted and unfair system.

BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

This change would replace an inaccurate and unfair system with one that is fair, accurate, and under the control of the professor teaching the class. It would also be a bold step to the forefront with a change that truly needs to be made but no one wants to be the first to do so!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

One concern is that this change would place our students at a disadvantage in comparison to other institutions that continue to use the outdated grade reporting system since that inflates grade point averages. This is most notable at the high end where 90% is given the same 4.0 weight as 100%. To resolve this, the registrar would need to use two methods to calculate Grade Point Averages. One method would be accurate as noted above, and the other would use the previous method for external use where our students are compared to other institutions.