Grading - a Quick Guide for Staff

This guide has been prepared to help you to understand the changes recently implemented to grading structures. It sets out:

- ➢ Grade descriptors
- ➢ Grade scales
- ➢ The circumstances under which grades and marks should be used
- ➢ Instructions on grade aggregation processes
- ➢ Grade Point Values
- ➢ Exceptional grades (e.g. AU, W, IX)
- ➢ Resit grades (P, F, NG)
- ➢ Grading modules deemed not passable by compensation

For specific rules on Grading, please see the Academic Regulations on the UCD website at:
http ://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicpolicy/pol_regs.htm

Grading in the Modular Curriculum

In our modular curriculum, the overall result attained by a student in a module is reported as a GRADE.

Grade defined

A grade is a formal certification of competence and achievement of learning outcomes that should reflect as accurately as possible a student's performance in a module or in its elements.

A valid grading system should meet 3 criteria:

1. It should accurately reflect differences in student performance.
2. It should be clear to students so that they should be able to chart their progress.
3. It should be fair.

The award of grades is a matter of academic judgement against agreed criteria (learning outcomes and grade descriptors) and should not be simply a mathematical exercise. It is a way for you to communicate what you view as important for a student to learn and this should be backed up by what you teach. Clear grade descriptors will assist you in this effort.

UCD MODULE GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Grade descriptors act as guidelines for students and academic staff. The grade descriptors below have been approved by Academic Council as general guidance, and may be adapted to the particular needs of modules in the subject in which the Extern is examining.

Grade	Criteria more relevant to levels* 0, 1 and 2 Knowledge, understanding, application	Additional criteria more relevant to levels** 3, 4, 6 and 7 Analysis, synthesis, evaluation
A	**Excellent** A comprehensive, highly-structured, focused and concise response to the assessment task, consistently demonstrating • an extensive and detailed knowledge of the subject matter • a highly-developed ability to apply this knowledge to the task set • evidence of extensive background reading • clear, fluent, stimulating and original expression • excellent presentation (spelling, grammar, graphical) with minimal or no presentation errors	A deep and systematic engagement with the assessment task, with consistently impressive demonstration of a comprehensive mastery of the subject matter, reflecting; • a deep and broad knowledge and critical insight as well as extensive reading; • a critical and comprehensive appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • an exceptional ability to organise, analyse and present arguments fluently and lucidly with a high level of critical analysis, amply supported by evidence, citation or quotation; • a highly-developed capacity for original, creative and logical thinking
B	**Very Good** A thorough and well-organised response to the assessment task, demonstrating • a broad knowledge of the subject matter • considerable strength in applying that knowledge to the task set • evidence of substantial background reading • clear and fluent expression • quality presentation with few presentation errors	A substantial engagement with the assessment task, demonstrating • a thorough familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • well-developed capacity to analyse issues, organise material, present arguments clearly and cogently well supported by evidence, citation or quotation; • some original insights and capacity for creative and logical thinking
C	**Good** An adequate and competent response to the assessment task, demonstrating • adequate but not complete knowledge of the subject matter • omission of some important subject matter or the appearance of several minor errors • capacity to apply knowledge appropriately to the task albeit with some errors • evidence of some background reading • clear expression with few areas of	An intellectually competent and factually sound answer with, marked by, • evidence of a reasonable familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • good developed arguments, but more statements of ideas • arguments or statements adequately but not well supported by evidence, citation or quotation • some critical awareness and analytical qualities • some evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking

	• confusion • writing of sufficient quality to convey meaning but some lack of fluency and command of suitable vocabulary • good presentation with some presentation errors	
D	**Satisfactory** An acceptable response to [t]he assessment task with • basic grasp of subject matter, but somewhat lacking in focus and structure • main points covered but insufficient detail • some effort to apply knowledge to the task but only a basic capacity or understanding displayed • little or no evidence of background reading • several minor errors or one major error • satisfactory presentation with an acceptable level of presentation errors	An acceptable level of intellectual engagement [with the] assessment task showing • some familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • mostly statements of ideas, with limited development of argument • limited use of evidence, citation or quotation • limited critical awareness displayed • limited evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking

Grade	Criteria more relevant to levels* 0, 1 and 2 Knowledge, understanding, application	Additional criteria more relevant to levels** 3, 4, 6 and 7 Analysis, synthesis, evaluation
D-	**Acceptable** The minimum acceptable standard of response to the assessment task which • shows a basic grasp of subject matter but may be poorly focussed or badly structured or contain irrelevant material • has one major error and some minor errors • demonstrates the capacity to complete only moderately difficult tasks related to the subject material • no evidence of background reading • displays the minimum acceptable standard of presentation (spelling, grammar, graphical)	The minimum acceptable level of intellectual engagement with the assessment task with • the minimum acceptable appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • ideas largely expressed as statements, with little or no developed or structured argument • minimum acceptable use of evidence, citation or quotation • little or no analysis or critical awareness displayed or is only partially successful • little or no demonstrated capacity for original and logical thinking
E	**Marginal** A response to the assessment task which fails to meet the minimum acceptable standards yet • engages with the subject matter or problem set, despite major deficiencies in structure, relevance or	A factually sound answer with a partially successful, but not entirely acceptable, attempt to • integrate factual knowledge into a broader literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework

	focus • has two major error and some minor errors • demonstrates the capacity to complete only part of, or the simpler elements of, the task • an incomplete or rushed answer e.g. the use of bullet points through part / all of answer	• develop arguments • support ideas or arguments with evidence, citation or quotation
F	**Unacceptable** A response to the assessment task which is unacceptable, with • a failure to address the question resulting in a largely irrelevant answer or material of marginal relevance predominating • a display of some knowledge of material relative to the question posed, but with very serious omissions / errors and/or major inaccuracies included in answer • solutions offered to a very limited portion of the problem set • an answer unacceptably incomplete (e.g. for lack of time) • a random and undisciplined development, layout or presentation • unacceptable standards of presentation, such as grammar, spelling or graphical presentation • evidence of substantial plagiarism	An unacceptable level of intellectual engagem the assessment task, with • no appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • no developed or structured argument • no use of evidence, citation or quotation • no analysis or critical awareness displayed or is only partially successful • no demonstrated capacity for original and logical thinking
G	**Wholly unacceptable** • complete failure to address the question resulting in an entirely irrelevant answer • little or no knowledge displayed relative to the question posed • little or no solution offered for the problem set • evidence of extensive plagiarism	No intellectual engagement with the assessment task

Using Grades or Marks – Qualitative and Quantitative Judgements

The Academic Council has agreed that grades (rather than percentage marks) should be used as widely as possible in the assessment process, because of the greater validity and reliability of grading.

Where the judgement of students' performance is **qualitative** (such as in grading an essay) a grade (A+ to G-) should be awarded directly. The examiner may use a marking scheme or rubric to assist the grading process, and how such marks are translated into grades is a matter for the individual examiner.

There are a wide range of circumstances in which it is valid and appropriate to award percentage marks. This arises where the assessment naturally generates a numeric score (multiple choice assessments, problems with many components). The percentage scores can be entered into GradeBook directly, where they will be aggregated and finally converted to grades, using the percentage-grade conversion shown on page 7.

There may also be circumstances where an examiner wishes to convert percentage marks to grades using a different scale, for pedagogical reasons related to the form of the assessment, in which case the grades are entered into GradeBook directly. This grading scheme is a matter for the individual examiner. It is good practice to describe the grading scheme and the rationale to students in advance.

Aggregating Grades and Marks

Grades and percentages will be aggregated automatically in GradeBook to arrive at a final grade for the module in question. This involves the aggregation of the various component grades or marks.

Where a component is marked rather than graded then the overall component mark is retained in calculating the final grade.

Where a component is graded rather than marked the calculation point (as shown on the component grade scale on page 5) is used in calculating the final grade.

All calculations of a final grade take into account the weighting attached to the various components making up the module. The percentage ranges are shown on the component grade scale.

Aggregation of subcomponents, e.g. questions on an examination paper that have been graded individually may be calculated using the Grade Calculator. The calculator allows you to arrive at an overall grade for an assessment component and can be obtained on request from assessment@ucd.ie.

The component grade scale is different to the approved **module** grade scale shown on page 6.

Component Grade Scale, 40% Pass Mark

The following table depicts the UCD component grade scale with the pass mark set at 40%. This is the standard component grade scale that is used for UCD modules. (If a module coordinator has sound academic reasons for assessing a component with the pass mark set at 50%, the corresponding 50% component grade scale can be obtained by emailing assessment@ucd.ie)

Grade	Lower	Upper	Calculation point
A+	76.67	100.00	78.33
A	73.33	76.66	75.00
A-	70.00	73.32	71.67
B+	66.67	69.99	68.33
B	63.33	66.66	65.00
B-	60.00	63.32	61.67
C+	56.67	59.99	58.33
C	53.33	56.66	55.00
C-	50.00	53.32	51.67
D+	46.67	49.99	48.33
D	43.33	46.66	45.00
D-	40.00	43.32	41.67
E+	36.67	39.99	38.33
E	33.33	36.66	35.00
E-	30.00	33.32	31.67
F+	26.67	29.99	28.33
F (FM)	23.33	26.66	25.00
F-	20.00	23.32	21.67
G+	16.67	19.99	18.33
G	13.33	16.66	15.00
G-	0.02	13.32	11.67
NG	-	0.01	0.00

Module Grades and Grade Point Values

The final module grade has been determined and approved by the University. Each grade has a value attached to it for the purposes of calculating a Grade Point Average (GPA). The table on page 7 depicts the UCD approved final module grade scale:

Module grades	GP Values
A+	4.2
A	4.0
A-	3.8
B+	3.6
B	3.4
B-	3.2
C+	3.0
C	2.8
C-	2.6
D+	2.4
D	2.2
D-	2.0
E	1.6
F	1.0
G	0.4
NG	0.0

Distinction/Pass/Fail Grade Scale

Where module outcomes cannot be assessed to the level of module grades, the results may be returned as pass/fail, or distinction/pass/fail.

Grade	When awarded?	Credit	Grade Point
DS	Passed with distinction	Awarded	Neutral
P (PX)	Pass	Awarded	Neutral
F (FX)	Fail	None	1.0
NG	No grade	None	0

Passing Grades – As, Bs, Cs and Ds

As, Bs, Cs and Ds are passing grades that are awarded on satisfactory completion of the module assessments. The credits available for the modules are converted to credits earned.

Note: Passed modules cannot be repeated.

P (C) Grade (Pass by Compensation)

E grades are failing grades, which have a grade point value of 1.6. These E grades may convert to P (C) (pass with compensation) only where a student completes and obtains passing grades in modules accounting for 75% or more of the total credit required to successfully complete the stage (usually 9 modules) and the compensation GPA for the attempt at the stage is 2.00 or greater. Provisional E grades are then considered compensated and final grades of P (C) are awarded.

P (C) grades (pass with compensation) are awarded where E grades have been compensated. E grades are then converted to P (C) grades and carry the same grade point value of 1.6.

For compensation, a student must:

Have completed and obtained passing grades in modules accounting for 75% or more of the total credit required to successfully complete the stage (usually 45 credits or 9 modules).

Have a Compensation GPA for the attempt at the stage that is 2.00 or greater.

E (P) Grade (Not Passable by Compensation)

Some modules are designated as 'not passable by compensation', such as, for example, foundation modules that are pre-requisites for further study in some languages. Where this is the case, the E grades remain and are listed as E (P) and they still retain the grade point value of 1.6.

F, G, NG Grades

F, G and NG are failing grades. If a student receives a F, G or NG grade for a module, they will usually have to repeat this module assessment. Where modules are repeated and passed, the grade point is capped at 2.0, irrespective of the actual grade awarded, i.e. a B+ grade can be awarded for the repeat attempt, but the grade point value remains 2.0.

Grades followed by (R), e.g. A+(R)

Where grades are followed by (R) this indicates that the module was assessed in repeat mode. The grade A+ is awarded on the basis of the repeat assessment, but the grade point value is capped at 2.0 (equivalent to D-).

Repeats and Resits

Where a student is **repeating a module**, they would normally repeat all coursework, assignments and assessment associated with the repeat attempt. A grade of D- or better awarded for a repeat attempt at a module carries a grade point of 2.0, irrespective of the actual grade awarded.

A **resit assessment** is a simple pass-fail instrument, and need only be the minimum assessment required to determine whether or not the student has satisfactorily achieved the major learning outcomes of the module. While some Module Co-ordinators may opt to have multiple components, only a single component (P, F, NG – see below) is recorded in Gradebook

Each repeat or resit, and the corresponding grade, is shown on the student's record. The grade is suffixed (R), for example D+(R), B-(R) or P(R), to indicate it was obtained on a repeat or resit attempt at the module.

Resit Grades

There are three module grades available for a student who attempts a resit assessment. Component grades and exceptional grades are not available in this grade scale. Module Co-ordinators must make an overall determination about whether the student demonstrated that they satisfactorily achieved the major learning outcomes of the module.

Grade	When awarded?	Credit	Grade Point
P Pass	Student achieves a pass for the module	Awarded	2.0
F Fail	Student fails to achieve a pass for the module	None	1.0
NG No relevant attempt	Student shows no relevant attempt at the module	None	0

Exceptional Grades

There are a number of scenarios that require exceptional grades. Each has a specific set of consequences, which are outlined in the table below.

Grade	When awarded?	Credit	GPA	Subsequent Attempt
AU Audit	Student audits module, no assessment completed	None	Neutral	Treated as first attempt
W Withdrawn	Student withdraws from module within first 6 weeks	None	Neutral	Treated as first attempt
WL Withdrawn late	Student withdraws from module after first 6 weeks	None	0	Treated as repeat (capped grade-point)
WX Withdrawn extenuating circumstances	Student withdraws after week 6, Prog. Exam Board accepts extenuating circumstances	None	Neutral	Treated as first attempt
I Temporary incomplete	Assessments are passed overall, some compulsory element not completed or passed. Given time to complete (less than a calendar year)	Awarded if outstanding work is completed satisfactorily	Neutral	Not applicable
IX Incomplete, extenuating circumstances	Documented extenuating circumstances indicate that student unable to complete part of assessment and where satisfactory completion is needed to attain passing grade. PEB sets date for submission – not later than end of next semester.	Awarded when outstanding work is completed satisfactorily	Neutral	Not applicable
IP Permanent incomplete	Student was awarded temporary incomplete (I) and student does not complete work within time limit set.	None	Neutral	Treated as repeat (capped grade-point)

UCD Award Classifications

From UCD General Regulations, which can be viewed at
http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_regs.htm

AWARD	NQAI* LEVEL	AWARD TYPE	HONOURS CLASSIFICATION
University (Level 7) Certificate	7	Minor Award	Greater than or equal to 3.68 *Distinction* From 2.48 to 3.67 inclusive *Merit* From 2.00 to 2.47 *Pass*
University Diploma	7	Minor Award	
University (Level 8) Certificate	8	Minor Award	
Honours Bachelor Degree	8	Major Award	Greater than or equal to 3.68 *1st Class Honours* From 3.08 to 3.67 inclusive *2nd Class Honours, Grade 1* From 2.48 to 3.07 inclusive *2nd Class Honours, Grade 2* From 2.00 to 2.47 inclusive *Pass*
Honours Bachelor Degree (Professional)	8	Major Award	
Higher Diploma	8	Major Award	
Professional Certificate	7 or 8	Special Purpose Award	Greater than or equal to 3.68 *Distinction* From 2.48 to 3.67 inclusive *Merit* From 2.00 to 2.47 *Pass*
Professional Diploma	7 or 8	Special Purpose Award	
Certificate of Continuing Education	6 or 7	Special Purpose Award	
Diploma of Continuing Education	6 or 7	Special Purpose Award	
Certificate of Continuing Professional Development	8	Supplemental Award	
Professional Certificate	9	Special Purpose Award	
Professional Diploma	9	Special Purpose	

		Award	
Certificate of Continuing Professional Development	9	Supplemental Award	
Graduate Certificate	9	Minor Award	Greater than or equal to 3.68 1st *Class Honours* From 3.08 to 3.67 inclusive 2nd *Class Honours, Grade 1* From 2.48 to 3.07 inclusive 2nd *Class Honours, Grade 2* From 2.00 to 2.47 inclusive *Pass*
Graduate Diploma	9	Major Award	
Masters Degree (taught)	9	Major Award	

* The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) classifies all UCD awards on the National Framework of Qualifications ranging from level 6 to level 10.