

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval of a Plus/Minus Grading System

The following resolution was moved by _____
and seconded by _____.

Whereas, Faculty Senate Action 2-03/04, adopted May 8, 2003, called for the implementation of a plus/minus grading system at Missouri State University;

Whereas, Faculty Senate Action 2-03/04 received favorable comments from both the Vice President for Academic Affairs and President but was denied due to budgetary considerations (a cost of \$400,000 to implement);

Whereas, Faculty Senate Resolution 7-05/06, adopted November 10, 2005, again endorsed the implementation of plus/minus grading "...at the earliest possible moment that academic computing services and the Missouri State Records Office can accommodate the change in grade reports, official transcripts, and other reporting practices";

Whereas, the University has purchased and is implementing the Banner computer system (ERP project) that is pre-programmed for plus/minus grading;

Whereas, the Banner 'student module' (i.e., grading, transcripts, etc.) is scheduled to go online Fall 2009, and decisions regarding the addition of a plus/minus grading system must be communicated to the campus community in Fall 2008;

Therefore, be it resolved, That the plus/minus grading system be implemented by Fall 2009 (or at the earliest date possible, taking into account the technical considerations of bringing the Banner system online); and

Be it further resolved, That the definitions of grades within the Missouri State University catalogs be revised (see attached).

VOTE: AYE _____

 NAY _____

June 2008

Implementation of a Plus/Minus Grading System

Consistent with the Faculty Senate action of February 14, 2008, the following definition of grades will be implemented beginning with the Fall 2009 semester:

- A (4.0) Outstanding work.** Outstanding achievement relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. Performance was of the highest level. Excellence while meeting course objectives was sustained throughout the course. Not only was the student's performance clearly and significantly above satisfactory, it was also of an independent and creative nature.
- A- (3.7) Excellent work.** Excellent achievement relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. Performance was clearly and significantly above satisfactory, and was creative and independent.
- B+ (3.3) Near excellent work.** Achievement was significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Performance was clearly and significantly above satisfactory, and was creative and independent.
- B (3.0) Very good work.** Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Performance was very good, although not of the highest level. Performance was clearly and significantly above satisfactory fulfillment of course requirements (For undergraduates: B = meritorious: For graduates B = adequate).
- B- (2.7) Good work.** Achievement at a level just above that necessary to meet course requirements. Performance was notable.
- C+ (2.3) Slightly above satisfactory work.** Achievement that meets the course requirements. Performance was slightly more than adequate.
- C (2.0) Satisfactory work.** Achievement that meets the course requirements. Performance was adequate, although marginal in quality (For undergraduates: C = adequate: For graduates: C = inadequate).
- C- (1.7) Slightly below satisfactory work.** Achievement that barely meets the course requirements. Performance has been slightly below satisfactory and was marginal in quality.
- D+ (1.3) Passing work.** Achievement below satisfactory in meeting course requirements. Student demonstrated below satisfactory achievement in meeting course objectives, yet fulfilled a sufficient enough portion of the course objectives that repeating the course is not necessary unless required by the academic unit.
- D (1.0) Minimum passing work.** Achievement barely worthy of credit. Student demonstrated unsatisfactory achievement in meeting course objectives, yet fulfilled a sufficient enough portion of the course objectives that repeating the course is not necessary unless required by the academic unit.

F (0.0) Failed – no credit. A failure to meet course requirements. The work of course objectives were either: 1) completed but not at a level of achievement that is worthy of credit, or 2) have not been completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an “I” (incomplete).

The following recommendations (R), in response to the questions and concerns (Q), will also be incorporated into the plus/minus system:

Q1: Will all faculty members be required to utilize +/- grades?

R1: NO. The decision of whether to award plusses and minuses will rest with the individual faculty member, as will the decision of where percentile cutoffs for grades should be for the class (e.g., 90% or higher for an A, etc.)

Q2: Will +/- grades be allowed only for fall 2009 and subsequent semesters? (For example, when we implement +/- grades in the fall 2009 semester, would we prohibit grade changes to +/- grades for previous semesters as well as assignment of +/- grades as replacement for “I” grades?)

R2: YES. From both a practical standpoint (e.g., implementation of the new system for the registrar’s office) and for clarity (i.e., the policy that is presented in syllabi during the Spring of 2009) the system will not be retroactive. However, students who received an “I” grade in semesters prior to implementation will be held to the standards in place at the time the “I” grade was assigned.

Q3: Will we modify our transfer credit policy to accept +/- grades in transfer?

R3: YES, accepting +/- transfer credits will be the fairest and most accurate method for assessing the records of, and giving credit for work performed by, incoming students. Also, this will be consistent with the philosophy of adopting a plus/minus grading system.

Q4: Will we only award +/- in transfer for students who begin here on or after fall 2009?

R4: YES. This new policy will begin in fall of 2009. However, since many institutions award grades not recognized by Missouri State under this Action, the grade of A+ will count as an A, and D- will count as a D.

- Q5: **Since the C- grade will earn 1.7 grade points, will this impact our Academic Status policy that requires students to have a 2.00 GPA to be in good standing?**
- R5: **NO.** The definition of a C grade within this action states “Satisfactory work. Achievement that meets the course requirements. Performance was adequate, although marginal in quality (For undergraduates: C = adequate. For graduates: C = inadequate.” Students at Missouri State are expected to graduate with a GPA that is at, or above, a level that “meets the course requirements.” A C-, by definition, is “below average work” and therefore an overall GPA of less than 2.0 on a 4.0 scale is unacceptable. For graduate students, a GPA of less than 3.0 on a 4.0 scale is unacceptable.
- Q6: **If a course has a prerequisite of C or higher in another course, will C- be acceptable?**
- R6: **In general, NO.** A C- is not considered acceptable. However, since departments have the authority to assign prerequisite requirements this is a decision that must be left up to individual units.

In response to several issues identified by the students and faculty, the Office of the Provost will:

- **Create an appeals process for students whose eligibility for scholarship renewal is adversely affected by the plus and minus grades.** Students making an appeal will have their GPA re-calculated without the plus/minus distinctions to determine whether or not they are eligible to retain their scholarships.
- **Conduct a study of the impact of plus/minus grades after two years** of use to determine the impact the new system has had on:
 - a. GPA's
 - b. Scholastic honors at graduation (cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude). We will want to determine if the proportion of students receiving these honors significantly increases or decreases after the change. This information, in turn, should be used to determine whether or not the cut-off values used to award these honors should be adjusted.

The results of these analyses will be shared with both the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association.

- **Improve student access to information and processes pertaining to the existing grade appeals process both during a semester and after students have received their final grades.**