

TO: Deans, Department Chairs
FROM: Vice Provost Terri E. Givens
DATE: May 15, 2009
SUBJECT: Plus/Minus Grades Implementation: FAQs

As you are all aware, the new plus/minus grading system for undergraduate courses will be implemented beginning fall semester 2009. I have received a substantial number of requests for a memo to clarify how faculty and students will be affected by this change. The list of Frequently Asked Questions below was compiled with the aid of the Registrar's Office in response to these requests. I hope they will help to alleviate some of the confusion that still surrounds the new grading system. Please feel free to distribute this memo.

Plus/Minus Grading: What is it?

Starting in the Fall of 2009, the University will switch from its current system to a plus/minus system.

Current System:

Current System	
A	4.0
B	3.0
System for Fall 2009	
D	1.0
A	4.0
F	0.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
D-	0.67
F	0.0

The New System:

Why is the University Switching*?

1. Plus/minus grading allows for more accurate representation of students' performance.
2. Plus/minus grading makes it easier to assign grades in borderline cases
3. Plus/minus grading may be used to reduce grade inflation.
4. All 11 of our peer institutions (the group of large public universities that UT Austin uses for comparison purposes) use some form of plus/minus grading.
5. The new system will help with transfer student discrepancies.
6. The more grade options we have means that students are awarded grades appropriate to their performance in a course.

Will the Plus/Minus System be Grandfathered?

No. Come Fall of 2009, all students (current and incoming) will be under the new grading system.

Is the Grading System Mandatory?

Yes, in that starting fall 2009 there will only be one grading scale, one that includes plus-minus grade options.

Do Professors Have the Discretion to Use or Not Use It?

Starting Fall 2009, the University will have a single grading scale, one that ALLOWS for the assignment of plus/minus grades. However, the assignment of grades has always been, and remains, up to the discretion of the instructor.

Will Student's GPAs be Affected*?

No. Effects on GPA will likely even out, and the effect on top students is as likely to be positive. In any case, given that most of our peer institutions use plus/minus grading, this change would increase the equity of comparisons for students from different universities.

Will this Grade Change Policy Affect Seniors Graduating in December 2009?

Yes. It applies to all classes/students based on instructor discretion.

*Information taken from the Faculty Council motion on Plus/Minus Grading:

<http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2007-2008//legislation/implement_plus_minus.html>*