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# Guidelines 1/2015: Grading

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The purpose of this brief collection of guidelines is to make grading comparable across various courses and thus anchor our students' expectations.

**Pure substitution**. The most transparent benchmark for grading is pure substitution. Therefore, if separate course requirements (e.g., homework, midterm, final, attendance) are components graded as (a, b, c), the final grade is a + b + c. As a result, any component is graded *independently* of the other components.

**Pre-exam requirements**. When pre-exam requirements are absolutely essential to pass the course, a reasonable deviation from pure substitution is to condition points from the exam upon total points from pre-exam requirements.

We strongly recommend adopting the *runoff-form,* in which passing a threshold for pre-exam points multiplies points from the final exam by one, while failing a threshold for pre-exam points multiplies points from the final exam by zero. For example, suppose 50 points in total are awarded in all pre-exam requirements and the threshold is 24 points. A student with a pre-exam score $x < 24$ has a total score x and fails the entire course. A student with a pre-exam score $x \geq 24$ earns a total score x + y, where y is his or her score from the final exam.

In any case, if you want to incentivize the students in a particular way, think first about redistributing the points across different course requirements and also consider redesigning the requirements before you adopt non-substitutive grading.

**Tests**. Pure substitution should be followed as a general rule within a single written test. That is, each portion of the test should be graded independently, and the overall number of points should be a sum of the points from the individual parts.

**Transparent thresholds**. Thresholds for the grades should be known ex ante. A typical vector of thresholds for grades 3, 2, 1 is (60, 70, 80) points out of 100, but different thresholds such as (50, 65, 80) or (60, 75, 90) or close variations are also possible. Please do not adopt grading to a curve since it is not common in the EU; those students who want to demonstrate high relative performance can always use Merit Scholarships (awarded annually to the top 10% of students).

**ETCS thresholds.** For exchange students, we strongly recommend to convert 1-2-3-4 grades into A-B-C-D-E-F grades in the following way:

- A, B are for 1 (1+, 1-); C is for 2; D, E are for 3 (3+, 3-); and F is for 4.

**Credible testing**. If you suspect that the students may circumvent your testing procedures, please carefully check the credibility of your procedure. For instance, the students may easily share non-published problem sets from previous years. Or, students who use Aplia may easily download sample solutions from the Internet. The components where credibility is dubious (such as Aplia) may remain in place, but they should bear a very low weight in the overall grade.

**Experiments in grading**. Think twice before you adopt a novel grading procedure. Avoid surprises in grading (both positive and negative).

**No make-up for a finished overall grade**. Remember that if a student is given an overall grade 1-3, the student has no right for a make-up; see also Section 2.1 here (in CZ) or here (in EN).

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