Grading results for AY 2014-15

In order to promote fairness and transparency in assessment of students’ work and grading practices, the University grading policy charges each department with articulating and upholding its own well-defined and meaningful grading standards for work within its discipline. Last spring the Office of the Dean of the College hosted a series of discussions with departmental representatives to discuss grading practices generally, as well as approaches to developing departmental guidelines for grading and assessment. These cross-disciplinary conversations were enormously productive, and it was readily apparent that faculty are deeply invested in giving students clear and timely feedback on the quality of their work. These conversations served as a springboard for further discussions within the departments. By the conclusion of the spring term, twenty-eight departments had documented their grading standards and the remaining departments are expected to complete that work this fall.

The Committee has reviewed the departmental grading standards submitted, along with the grading data for AY 2014-15. Given that the standard for evaluating the grading record of a department or program is no longer the percentage of A grades awarded, we thought it more meaningful going forward to track the grade point average for undergraduate courses, which captures grades awarded across the entire grading scale. The grade point average for the University as a whole, in 100-400 level courses across all departments and programs, increased 0.055 points year over year – from 3.335 in AY 13-14 to 3.390 in AY 14-15. The chart shows the increase in grade point average by division and by programs (for programs that have their own subject codes).
More detailed grading data for all divisions, departments and programs will be made available shortly to all faculty on a secure server. Individual faculty members will continue to receive from the Registrar a report of their own grading data, and chairs will continue to receive summary reports for their departments; in both cases the data will now focus on tracking grade point average rather percentage of A grades. We recommend that departments review their grading results to ensure consistency with the standards they have articulated.

We hope that faculty in departments and programs will meet periodically to review and refine their grading and assessment practices, and that chairs and program directors will encourage ongoing discussion of these matters. The Council on Teaching and Learning is available to support the efforts of academic units to advance the pedagogy of assessing student work.

The Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing is chaired by the Dean of the College and consists of the following elected faculty members, representing all four divisions: Stephen Y. Chou, Electrical Engineering; Steven Chung, East Asian Studies; Michael S. Graziano, Psychology; Katja Guenther, History; Yair Mintzker, History; Eve C. Ostriker, Astrophysical Sciences; Clarence W. Rowley III, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering; Atsuko Ueda, East Asian Studies. Janet Rapelye, Dean of Admission; Polly Winfrey Griffin, Registrar; Rochelle Calhoun, Vice President for Campus Life; and Claire Fowler, Senior Associate Dean of the College, serve ex officio. The committee’s charge from the faculty is to administer academic regulations concerning the program of study and scholastic standing of undergraduate students. The grading policy approved by the faculty on October 6, 2014, calls for the Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing to report to the faculty each fall on the grading record of the previous year.