Grading Results for AY 2016-17

To promote fairness and transparency in the assessment of students’ work and grading practices, the University grading policy, approved by the faculty in October 2014, charges each department with articulating and upholding its own well-defined and meaningful grading standards for work within its discipline. This policy calls for the Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing to report to the faculty each fall on the grading record of the previous year.

The Committee has reviewed grading data for AY 2016-17 and notes the continued upward trend in grade point average for undergraduate courses. The University-wide GPA in 100-400 level courses across all departments and programs increased .013 points over the past year, from 3.422 in AY 15-16 to 3.435 in AY 16-17.

The grade point average for the University as a whole is now .045 points higher than it was in AY 2014-2015, the first year the revised grading policy was in effect, and .131 points higher than in AY 2004-2005, the first year following the previous change to the grading policy.

A notable consequence of the upward trend in GPA has been increased grade compression at the top of the grading scale. This makes it challenging to distinguish among our best students when awarding honors and prizes at both the University and department levels. The following graph shows the sharp increase in A grades and decline in B grades.
More detailed grading data for all divisions, departments, and programs will be made available shortly to all faculty through a secure server on the Office of the Dean of the College website. Individual faculty members will also receive a report on their own grading data from the Registrar. Chairs will receive department summary reports. We recommend that departments review their grading results to ensure they are consistent with articulated standards.

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 Office of the Dean of the College has informed new faculty of Princeton’s grading policies. We also remind all faculty about the pedagogical importance of including a clear statement of their grading policies and practices on their course syllabi and of providing students with meaningful and timely feedback. The Council on Teaching and Learning (the executive committee of the McGraw Center) 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 Jill Dolan, Dean of the College, and includes the following elected faculty members, representing all four divisions: Nozomi Ando, Chemistry; Sarah A. Chihaya, English; Jason W. Fleischer, Electrical Engineering; Aarti Gupta, Computer Science; Rena S. Lederman, Anthropology; Esteban A. Rossi-Hansberg, Woodrow Wilson School and Economics; Anna M. Shields, East Asian Studies. Janet Rapelye, Dean of Admission; Polly Winfrey Griffin, Registrar; W. 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.