Translating Numeric Scores into Letter Grades

Recommendations from the iSchool

Jeff Stanton, May 19, 2014

If you will use a numeric grading system (and most people do) with a translation to a letter grade at the end, make sure to include a table or description that shows the "cut points" for each letter grade. While SU does not have a mandated system, iSchool students could arguably benefit from having clear and consistent policies across all of their iSchool courses. The grading table below closely reflects the GPA policies and grade letter options of the university:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent** | **Letter Grade****Undergraduate** | **Letter Grade****Graduate** |
| 95+ | A | A |
| 90 – 94.999 | A- | A- |
| 87 – 89.999 | B+ | B+ |
| 83 – 86.999 | B | B |
| 80 – 82.999 | B- | B- |
| 77 – 79.999 | C+ | C+ |
| 73 – 76.999 | C | C |
| 65 – 72.999 | C- | C- |
| 60 – 64.999 | D | F |
| < 60 | F | F |

In addition to adopting a final grade conversion table like the one above, the syllabus for your course should describe the point value of each activity that you plan to grade. Describing the point value of every assignment helps your students to understand the relative importance of various learning activities. Whenever possible you should list each element of the course that will be graded, the point value or percentage associated with that element, and the due date where appropriate. Firm due dates and clear grading weights can really help students plan their semesters as they juggle multiple courses and other obligations.

Sometimes a course needs more flexibility and you may find it difficult to plan every assignment and its relative grading weight in advance. If this is the case in your course it is incumbent on you to communicate expectations to students regularly and well in advance of when a new or modified assignment will be due. If a course will have "pop quizzes" or other assignments where you need to use the element of surprise to promote learning, make sure that the syllabus lays out the ground rules for these and gives students the opportunity to prepare appropriately.

On a related note, if you plan to offer “extra credit” assignments or activities that students can use to make up for points lost on regular assignments, it is important that the syllabus set clear expectations on this. Students generally want to know what the maximum number of extra credit points they might earn is and the timing of when extra credit assignments will become available.