Computer Science guidelines on student assessment and grading

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University’s policies, in particular, Instructions to examiners and assessors and the Student Charter.

We use terms here like Examiner and Assessor that are officially defined by the University. A brief description of these terms is given at the bottom of this document.

1. Assessments are prepared by the course Examiner. They should fairly reflect the learning outcomes for the course.

2. Marking of assignments may be undertaken by the examiner, lecturers, tutors or independent ‘markers’ supervised by the lecturers.

3. Marking of tests and exams may be undertaken by the examiner, lecturers and tutors. Where tutors are marking tests and exams they are doing so under the supervision of the examiner or lecturers and procedures must be in place to ensure appropriate and consistent marking.

4. Results and proposed grades are prepared by the Examiners. The department Examinations Officer will make the incoming GPA information for a cohort available to Examiners during the semester. In preparation of grades it should be ensured that
   - The standard of the examination is appropriate for the subject and level.
   - The assessment is related to the principal learning outcomes of the course.
   - The distribution of grades is appropriate for the class and level, taking into account the relative size of the group and the range of abilities.
   - The relativity between a course and other courses at the same level is appropriate.
   - Borderline grades have been assigned appropriately.
     - Here inconsistencies within an individual student’s performance are considered, particularly for graduating students.

In normal circumstances this process should result in the outgoing GPA being no more than 1.0 points different than the incoming GPA (e.g. if the incoming GPA is 4.5 the outgoing should be between 3.5 and 5.5) and the grade distribution adhering to the table below. However there are exceptions to this a) CS101 and CS111 are generally higher because the incoming GPA is inaccurate b) there is more variability with graduate courses because of both missing incoming GPAs and the different nature of students and classes.
When the outgoing GPA or grade distributions are outside these norms the usual mechanism to correct them is to alter the grade boundaries. In no circumstances can the pass/fail mark be above 50%.

5. The proposed marks and grades are presented to the department’s Examinations Officer (currently David Welch).

6. The Examinations Officer checks that the proposed grades have been prepared according to item 4 above with particular emphasis given to checking that they are at the expected level for the class based on historical and current norms and the cohorts’ previous performance. These considerations are mostly based on incoming and outgoing GPAs.

7. The Examinations Officer may agree with the proposed grades or discuss anomalies with the Examiner.
   a. In the case of undergraduate courses the Examinations Officer is also the Assessor. Once agreement is reached between the parties the results are sent to the Examinations Office.
   b. Proposed grades for postgraduate courses are presented at the postgraduate examiners meeting which is attended by the Examiner for each course and the department’s External Assessor. This meeting takes into account the same points as above and scholarship eligibility. Once agreement is reached between the parties the results are sent to the Examinations Office.
   c. In the event that the Examiner and Assessor cannot agree the University’s procedures set out in Instructions to examiners and assessors apply.

Grade Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>University’s Standard Mark</th>
<th>% of class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typical Stage I</td>
<td>Typical Stage II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>≥90 5-10%</td>
<td>5-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥85 10-20%</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>≥80 20-30%</td>
<td>20-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>≥75 25-40%</td>
<td>25-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>≥70 35-50%</td>
<td>35-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>≥65 45-60%</td>
<td>45-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>≥60 50-65%</td>
<td>50-65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>≥55 55-70%</td>
<td>55-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>≥50 65-75%</td>
<td>65-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>≥45 5 marks below pass/fail</td>
<td>5 marks below pass/fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>≥40 10 marks below pass/fail</td>
<td>10 marks below pass/fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Officially defined roles

The University has a range of roles and responsibilities defined in the Instructions to examiners and assessors. Briefly these are:

**Academic Head:** overall responsibility, and deals with disagreements

**Course Director:** Overseeing design of assessment processes to ensure that assessments are relevant and aligned with learning outcomes; that the assessment complies with all aspects of policy; that the assessment criteria is transparent and available to all students at the start of semester

**Course Coordinator:** The person responsible for the administration and organisation of the course acting in conjunction with, and under the supervision of, the Course Director (one person can be both director and coordinator)

**Examiner - Taught Courses:** Responsible for setting and marking course assessment (can be same person as director and/or coordinator)

*In practical terms for most of our courses the director and coordinator is the same person who also lectures the course and acts as an examiner. Other lecturers of the course are examiners. PTEs and Senior Tutors cannot be directors – for these courses the HOD generally has this role.*

**Assessor:** Maintain appropriate and adequate academic standards for all aspects of the assessment process. In our department the Examinations Officer (currently David Welch) is the assessor for all undergrad courses and we have an external assessor for all postgrad courses.

Other roles

**Department Examinations Officer:** appointed by the department to act as Assessor for all undergraduate courses and also reviews all post graduate results before they are presented to the external Assessor

**Lecturer:** anyone who is lecturing a course.

**Tutor:** anyone who is tutoring a course.

Prepared by Beryl Plimmer and David Welch.