

## Linguistics Department Grading Policy

### Undergraduate and graduate courses

- Marks distribution schema should be in the syllabus for each course. Instructors also submit a copy of each Marking Schema to the department files at the start of each semester.
- Instructors should include the following sentence on the syllabus: “The Department of Linguistics follows the *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy*” and provide the link to this 10-pg. document:  
<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-1-2020>
- The practice of adjusting raw scores to reflect students’ overall performance in the course is specified in the Faculty of Arts and Science guidelines given in the *Academic Handbook* (see (§5.11, <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/teaching/academic-handbook#TermWork>):

A score is the raw number of points a student earns on an assessment; a mark is the result when that score has been calibrated to take into account the difficulty or ease of the testing instrument or the variation of marking standards among different TAs. Calibration is a perfectly acceptable – indeed, a responsible – practice, since it is totally unreasonable to expect an instructor to design test after test at precisely the same level of difficulty, and TAs vary in their experience and judgement. Calibration is the corrective process to ensure fairness in marking.

For more details, please consult these guidelines and see some concrete examples:  
<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/teaching/academic-handbook#AppendixB>

### Undergraduate courses

- At least one piece of term work worth at least 10% of the final grade must be returned to the student prior to the last date for withdrawal from the course without academic penalty.
- There are to be no tests worth >25% in the last two weeks of the term.
- No one essay, test, examination, etc. should have a value >80% of the course grade.
- The following are the Arts & Science distribution guidelines on marks in lower and upper-level undergraduate courses (§10.3 in <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/teaching/academic-handbook#FinalMarks>):
  - “For a larger first- or second-year course, the proportion of As in any given offering of the course might reasonably vary from 15% to 35%. Courses with marks consistently at the lower or upper end of this range should be reviewed to determine whether changes are needed to the course content, prerequisites, or assessment mechanisms. At the other end of the scale, the proportion of Fs in a first- or second-year course should generally not exceed 10%.”
  - “These guidelines can help instructors gauge the fairness and consistency of their proposed marks in a course. Instructors proposing a percentage of As outside the range of 15-35% in first- and second-year courses should review the marks to ensure that the assessments used in the course were fair and consistent with disciplinary practice. Similarly, instructors proposing a percentage of Fs greater than 10% should consider those grades carefully. An individual instructor should reflect on whether the assessments have been scaled appropriately. A unit head seeing a consistently higher percentage of Fs in a course over time might conclude that

the course has inappropriate prerequisites or requires some restructuring, or that additional student supports need to be put into place.

- “Since courses with fewer than 40 students, as well as courses in upper years, show much greater variation due to individual factors, detailed expectations of distributions of grades are less useful. However, we can state some general guidelines on third- and fourth-year courses. Specifically, we expect student marks in upper year courses to shift towards the higher end of the scale (with more As and many fewer failures) as students adjust to university-level work and as they pursue courses in their chosen areas of interest. Distributions with 30-40% As (or even more) would not be unusual in 300- and 400-level courses, while even 5-10% Fs at these levels would be worthy of attention.”
- Letter grades can be used for assigned work. These (cumulative) scores might not be directly identified with the final grade.
- For undergraduate courses, the refined letter grade scale is used:

Percent	Grade	GPA	Definition	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A	4.0		
80-84	A-	3.7		
77-79	B+	3.3	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.
73-76	B	3.0		
70-72	B-	2.7		
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63-66	C	2.0		
60-62	C-	1.7		
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal	Some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53-56	D	1.0		
50-52	D-	0.7		
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate	Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

- It is recommended practice not to assign final marks ending in ‘9’. The FAS guidelines in the Academic Handbook (§10.6 in <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/teaching/academic-handbook#FinalMarks>) states:
  - On our grading scale, there are a number of percentage marks where one more percent would shift the student up to the next range. Some of the more significant ones are 49%, 59%, 69%, 79% and 84%. ... You may want to give special attention to marks just below these thresholds; they are often contentious and you may expect to hear from a number of students who receive

such marks. [You may] decide intentionally whether to leave a mark just under one of these thresholds or to move it up or down.

### Graduate courses

- For graduate courses, we use the truncated refined letter grade scale:

Grade	Numerical Scale of Marks
A+	90 - 100%
A	85 - 89%
A-	80 - 84%
B+	77 - 79%
B	73 - 76%
B-	70 - 72%
FZ (fail)	0 - 69%

- Graduate students receive letter grades; a grade of C+ or lower is a failing grade for a graduate student.
- In graduate courses, department practice is to return some term work before the date for withdrawal.
- In mixed undergraduate/graduate courses, it is common (although not required) to replace a final exam with a term paper for graduate students.
- If participation forms part of the final grade it must not constitute more than 20%.

**Instructors are reminded to check the “Back to Teaching” handout (available on SharePoint and from the Associate Chair Undergraduate or Undergraduate Secretary) for additional information.**