

## **REPORT TO FACULTY BOARD ON THE NEW GRADING SCALE APPROVED BY SCAP**

**FROM: ACADEMIC STANDING AND POLICIES COMMITTEE**

**Professor Bitá Amani, Chair ASPC and Jane Emrich, Assistant Dean of Students**

**DATE: Update from September 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 Information Report to Faculty Board**

### **Background:**

The University has sought to rationalize university-wide policies for credit weights and grading scale to eliminate wide variations that have evolved over time. More consistency will allow the University to take advantage of administrative and functional efficiencies available from PeopleSoft (PS) to manage student services, finance, research, administration, human resources, and information technology services pursuant to the QUASR project: <http://www.queensu.ca/quasr/index.html>.

The timeline for implementation of the records and registration portion on the new student information system project will be in March 2011. See <http://www.queensu.ca/quasr/student/timeline.html>. Other modules in the PS system pertaining to admissions, financial aid for applicants, academic structure and campus community are being rolled out next week on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Grades will be collected and reported from the winter 2011 term using the new PeopleSoft system and the new transcript will be available effective from May 2011. PeopleSoft offers a blind grading functionality that will be used by the Faculty of Law. The summer 2011 term, in which the BISC programs are offered in a session in May and June will be graded and processed using the new system.

The Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP) recommended that Senate approve a consistent system of grading and course weights which align with prevalent practices in Canada, the U.S.A. and Europe. SCAP undertook thorough research of different grade models and selected a model that would not promote grade inflation, but would also ensure that academic achievement of Queen's students would be fairly and competitively presented for external review and progression, for pursuit of employment and/or academic careers. As part of its review, the grading systems of 11 Canadian universities (Alberta, British Columbia, Calgary, Dalhousie, Laval, McGill, McMaster, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and University of Western Ontario) and of 13 American universities (Berkeley, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Florida, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, Penn State, and Yale) were examined. The full SCAP report is available on request from Jane Emrich.

The course weighting system that the Faculty of Law has in place currently could be put in place without change in the new PS system as a subset of the scale approved by Senate in May 2009, then amended in April 2010. At the Faculty Board meeting of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, an information report was submitted which recommended adopting the current law scale as a subset of the Senate scale. However, a motion to approve this was withdrawn at the March 19<sup>th</sup> Faculty Board meeting, because the SCAP decided to receive submissions from the Faculties of Arts & Science, School

of Business, Faculty of Applied Science and Faculty of Law. The constituencies of these larger faculties and the School of Business wanted changes to be made to the grading scale which had been approved in May 2009.

#### **April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Changes to the Senate Approved Grading Scale.**

At the meeting of April 10<sup>th</sup>, Senate agreed to some changes, in particular to the addition of an A+ grade with a 4.3 GPA equivalent. Previously, the highest grade on the scale was A+ with a 4.0 GPA equivalent. Furthermore, the narrative descriptors corresponding to the grade scale were dropped from the Senate approved scale. Authority was delegated to the faculty level to approve narrative descriptors, subject to keeping SCAP informed of such approval. Faculties maintain authority to approve a subset of the full set of grades, but must keep SCAP informed of such a decision.

As of May, 2009, a notation of Honours would not be available in PS, but currently that is only used for Queen's Legal Aid Student Leadership. PN, (pass no honours available) is used to mark completion of certain degree requirements, such as the Law 299 Substantial Term Paper. There will be a new method to deal with such milestone notations in the PS Academic Advisement function. The additional failure grade of FR (Failure with Review) was added in April 2010, indicating that the failing grade is being reviewed and/or the student has the opportunity to write a supplemental exam to improve the grade.

#### **Issues:**

**1) Whether to adopt a subset of the grading scale approved by Senate in April 2010, consistent with the current Law grading scale, except for the addition of a grade of A+ with a GPA 4.3 equivalent.**

**2) Whether to adopt grade descriptors to correspond with the new scale. The current law scale has narrative descriptors, except a new one would be needed for A+, if adopted.**

It is possible to adopt a subset of the Senate approved grading scale, which would correspond to the current Faculty of Law alpha scale with GPA equivalents. The Faculty is accustomed to using alpha grades and alpha grades will be the official grades in the new system.

The GPA equivalents for the Law grading scale also correspond. **The exception is the addition of an A+ grade with a GPA 4.3 equivalent.**

The other issue is whether to keep our narrative descriptors, but add one for A+, if adopted. A town hall meeting with the L.S.S. and interested students is planned for **Wednesday October 13<sup>th</sup> in the evening from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. in Room 202.** On behalf of the ASPC, I am gathering opinion from the L.S.S. and faculty members concerning the issues. This commentary will be reported back to the ASPC. In light of the feedback received from faculty members and students, the ASPC will report back to Faculty Board and perhaps bring a motion to approve a new Faculty of Law scale.

**If the Law School community is unable to reach consensus on the grade scale to be adopted, by default, the Senate-approved scale will apply.**

**SCAP Approved Grading System April 2010**

**April 2010 SCAP Rationale for Changes to May 2009 scale:**

- represents the least change from the current system used by the largest Faculties and Schools at Queen’s
- A+ with 4.3 GPA equivalent makes it easier for academic units to make decisions about scholarships, fellowships and academic progression with greater differentiation at the top end of the scale.
- Gives a sense of fairness; if a student has done outstanding work, the GPA should reflect this achievement

| Letter Grade | Grade Points | Percentage | Narrative Descriptors are no longer prescribed by Senate (April 2010). To see the earlier descriptors that were approved in May 2009, see <a href="http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/May20_09/May20_09.pdf">http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/May20_09/May20_09.pdf</a> Appendix Ga p.69<br>Grade Descriptors may be established at the Faculty level. |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--|
| A+           | 4.3          | 90-100     |  |
| A            | 4.0          | 85-89.9    |  |
| A-           | 3.7          | 80-84.9    |  |
| B+           | 3.3          | 77-79.9    |  |
| B            | 3.0          | 73-76.9    |  |
| B-           | 2.7          | 70-72.9    | <i>Minimally acceptable passing grade in Graduate Studies</i>  |
| C+           | 2.3          | 67-69.9    |  |
| C            | 2.0          | 63-66.9    |  |
| C-           | 1.7          | 60-62.9    | <i>Minimally acceptable passing grade in Medicine</i>  |
| D+           | 1.3          | 57-59.9    |  |
| D            | 1.0          | 53-56.9    |  |

|    |     |         |                                |
|----|-----|---------|--------------------------------|
| D- | 0.7 | 50-52.9 |                                |
| F  | 0.0 | 0-49.9  | <i>Failure</i>                 |
| FR |     |         | <i>Failure with review</i>     |
| P  |     |         | <i>Pass; no grade assigned</i> |

### Non-Evaluative Grade Notations

#### CR - Credit

**IN (Incomplete):** to be assigned in all cases where the student would receive a failing grade if the outstanding work is not completed or the exam is not written. A fixed lapse rule will be applied across the University for the IN to convert to F, if the work is not completed. Lapse rule proposed – at the end of the next term.

**GD (Grade Deferred):** similar to IN, but has no lapse rule

**NG (Not Graded)** Courses that span multiple terms will be assigned a notation of NG until the course is completed; may be used for other courses in which no grade is assigned

**FR – Failure with Review** indicating that the failing grade is being reviewed and/or the student has the opportunity to write a supplemental examination to improve the grade.

**AUD** –remains audit

**TR** – transfer credit; no grade assigned

**DR** – course dropped

**FR**-failure with review

**Current Faculty of Law Grading Scale with GPA Equivalents and Narrative Descriptors approved for DHL Calculations**

See [http://www.queensu.ca/calendars/law/Grading\\_System.html](http://www.queensu.ca/calendars/law/Grading_System.html).

| Letter Grade | Grade Points | Percentage | Descriptor                        |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| A            | 4.0          | NA         | <i>Exceptional</i>                |
| A-           | 3.67         | NA         | <i>Excellent</i>                  |
| B+           | 3.33         | NA         | <i>Very good</i>                  |
| B            | 3.00         | NA         | <i>Good</i>                       |
| B-           | 2.67         | NA         | <i>Satisfactory</i>               |
| C+           | 2.33         | NA         | <i>Fair</i>                       |
| C            | 2.00         | NA         | <i>Adequate</i>                   |
| D            | 1.00         | NA         | <i>Marginal</i>                   |
| F            | 0.00         | NA         | <i>Failure</i>                    |
| P            |              |            | <i>Pass</i>                       |
| H            |              |            | <i>Honours</i>                    |
| PN           |              |            | <i>Pass, no honours available</i> |

**Non-Evaluative Transcript Notations**

**(Honours/ Pass/ Fail)** used only for **Law 591 and 592 Queen's Legal Aid Student Leadership**. Earlier in this decade, Law 350 Appellate Advocacy-Moots was also graded on this basis, when it was approved as a degree requirement in second year. That was changed by motion of Faculty Board on February 2nd, 2007 to eliminate Appellate Advocacy-Moots as a degree requirement and to establish a more flexible Advocacy degree requirement that can be satisfied by a number of courses that are designated in each academic year.

**(PN/ F)** used for **Queen's Law Journal courses (Law 584-589)**. Over the last two academic years, **one section of Law 360/361 (Trial Advocacy)** was

also graded on this basis. Recommendation would be to switch to pass/fail.

**PN** is also the entry used to **denote completion of Law 295 Advocacy Requirement and Law 299 Substantial Term Paper**. These notations function to denote satisfaction of the substantial term paper requirement (Law 299) or the Advocacy Requirement through instructor certification ( Law 295). A new system will be used in Peoplesoft for showing satisfaction of such milestones in the Academic Advising function.

**IP** –used to designate course-work not completed, for which an extension has been granted by ASPC

**ED** – used to designate exam deferred granted by ASPC on the basis of documented medical or compassionate grounds.

**DR**- Course dropped

**Proposed Subset of Senate Approved Scale, with A+ = 4.3 GPA and with proposed Narrative Descriptor for A+**

| Letter Grade | Grade Points | Percentage | Descriptor            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------|
| A+           | 4.3          | NA         | <i>Distinguished?</i> |
| A            | 4.0          | NA         | <i>Exceptional</i>    |
| A-           | 3.7          | NA         | <i>Excellent</i>      |
| B+           | 3.3          | NA         | <i>Very good</i>      |
| B            | 3.0          | NA         | <i>Good</i>           |
| B-           | 2.7          | NA         | <i>Satisfactory</i>   |
| C+           | 2.3          | NA         | <i>Fair</i>           |
| C            | 2.0          | NA         | <i>Adequate</i>       |
| D            | 1.0          | NA         | <i>Marginal *</i>     |
| F            | 0.0          | NA         | <i>Failure</i>        |
| P            |              |            | <i>Pass</i>           |

\*lowest passing grade for a course in law (exception is for a failed course, for which supplemental exam privileges are granted by ASPC – minimum grade is C).

**Non-Evaluative Grade Notations (same as adopted by Senate, April 2010)**

**CR** - credit

**IN (Incomplete):** to be assigned in all cases where the student would receive a failing grade if the outstanding work is not completed or the exam is not written. A fixed lapse rule will be applied across the University for the IN to convert to F, if the work is not completed. Lapse rule proposed – at the end of the next term.

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