



## Grading System

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### Abstract:

*Grading in the realm of education is the process of applying standardized measurements of varying levels of comprehension within a subject area.*

*Adoption of grading system in India, the grading system was introduced in 2008-09 from class I-VIII, reducing the exam stress. Extending the concept to class IX and X has further reduced the pressure, giving students an opportunity to explore other avenues. Following the US model, the implementation of the grading system is to bring in more practical education than the current theoretical method. This model prescribes a varied range of opportunities, providing children of all levels a platform to showcase their talent and pursue their interests traditionally; class XI students were given subjects as per marks scored in Class X. This system often disappointed students if they scored low. Moreover, if a student didn't get the required percentage due to poor scoring in one subject, then the entire percentage gets affected. The grading system will give students relief. It will provide ample opportunities to students to excel in their choice field.*

*The Indian education system has taken a step forward towards reviving the education system with the introduction of grading system in session 2009-10. It will help in reducing the pressure on students during exams. In the last five years the meaning of education has changed for students from imbibing knowledge to merely scoring marks, resulting in myriad forms of education policies.*

*The purpose of this paper is to show the clear concept of grading and justify the gradation system. One way to capture the complexity of possible ways in which grades are produced is to consider the set of implicit choices that lie behind an instructor's use of a specific testing and/or grading procedure. Included here are such questions as: What evaluation procedure should I use? Term papers, classroom discussions or in-class tests? If I choose tests, what kind(s)? Essay, true/false, fill in the blank, matching or multiple-choice? If I choose multiple-choice, what grading model should I use? Normal curve, percent-correct, improvement over preceding tests? If I choose percent-correct, how many tests should I give? Final only, two in-class tests and a final, one midterm and one final? How should I weight each test if I choose the midterm-final pattern? Midterm equals final, midterm is equivalent to twice the final exam grade, and final equals twice the midterm grade? What grade report system should I use? A, B, C, D, F; or A+, A, A-, B+ ... F? An examination of this collection of possible choices suggests that instructors have a large number of options as to how to go about testing and grading their students.*

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**Keywords:** *Grading system, Education system, Indian education system, Education policies*

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### 1. Introduction

Grading and reporting are relatively recent phenomena in education. In fact, prior to 1850, grading and reporting were virtually unknown in schools in the United States. Throughout much of the nineteenth century most schools grouped students of all ages and backgrounds together with one teacher in one-

room schoolhouses, and few students went beyond elementary studies. The teacher reported students' learning progress orally to parents, usually during visits to students' homes.

As the number of students increased in the late 1800s, schools began to group students in grade levels according to their age, and new ideas about curriculum and teaching methods were tried. One of these new ideas was the use of formal progress evaluations of students' work, in which teachers wrote down the skills each student had mastered and those on which additional work was needed. This was done primarily for the students' benefit, since they were not permitted to move on to the next level until they demonstrated their mastery of the current one. It was also the earliest example of a narrative report card.

With the passage of compulsory attendance laws at the elementary level during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of students entering high schools increased rapidly. Between 1870 and 1910 the number of public high schools in the United States increased from 500 to 10,000. As a result, subject area instruction in high schools became increasingly specific and student populations became more diverse. While elementary teachers continued to use written descriptions and narrative reports to document student learning, high school teachers began using percentages and other similar markings to certify students' accomplishments in different subject areas. This was the beginning of the grading and reporting systems that exist today.

The shift to percentage grading was gradual and few American educators questioned it. The practice seemed a natural by-product of the increased demands on high school teachers, who now faced classrooms with growing numbers of students. But in 1912 a study by two Wisconsin researchers seriously challenged the reliability of percentage grades as accurate indicators of students' achievement.

These demonstrations of wide variation in grading practices led to a gradual move away from percentage scores to scales that had fewer and larger categories. One was a three-point scale that employed the categories of Excellent, Average and Poor. Another was the familiar five-point scale of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor and Failing (A, B, C, D and F). This reduction in the number of score categories served to reduce the variation in grades, but it did not solve the problem of teacher subjectivity.

Grading on the curve was considered appropriate at that time because it was well known that the distribution of students' intelligence test scores approximated a normal probability curve. Since innate intelligence and school achievement were thought to be directly related, such a procedure seemed both fair and equitable. Grading on the curve also relieved teachers of the difficult task of having to identify specific learning criteria. Fortunately, most educators of the early twenty-first century have a better understanding of the flawed premises behind this practice and of its many negative consequences.

In the years that followed, the debate over grading and reporting intensified. A number of schools abolished formal grades altogether, believing they were a distraction in teaching and learning. Some schools returned to using only verbal descriptions and narrative reports of student achievement. Others advocated pass/fail systems that distinguished only between acceptable and failing work. Still others advocated a mastery approach, in which the only important factor was whether or not the student had mastered the content or skill being taught. Once mastered, that student would move on to other areas of study.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, lack of consensus about what works best has led to wide variation in teachers' grading and reporting practices, especially among those at the elementary level. Many elementary teachers continue to use traditional letter grades and record a single grade on the reporting form for each subject area studied. Others use numbers or descriptive categories as proxies for letter grades. They might, for example, record a 1, 2, 3 or 4 or they might describe students' achievement as Beginning, Developing, Proficient or Distinguished. Some elementary schools have developed standards-based reporting forms that record students' learning progress on specific skills or

learning goals. Most of these forms also include sections for teachers to evaluate students' work habits or behaviors and many provide space for narrative comments.

## 2. How Grades are produced

Grading systems represent just one aspect of an interconnecting network of educational processes and any attempt to describe grading systems without considering other aspects of this network must necessarily be incomplete. Perhaps the most important of these processes concerns the procedures used to produce grades in the first place, namely, the classroom test. Here, of course, are purely formal differences; for example, between multiple choice and essay tests, or between in-class and take-home tests or papers. Also to be included are the quality of test items themselves not only in terms of content but also in terms of the clarity of the question and, in the case of multiple-choice tests, of the distracters.

Any consideration of the ways in which testing and grading relate to one another must also deal with the ways in which one or both of these activities relate to learning and teaching. The relationship between learning and testing is a fairly direct one, especially if tests are used not only to evaluate student achievement but also to reinforce or promote learning itself. Thus, it is easy to develop a classroom question or exercise that requires the student to read some material before being able to answer the question or complete the exercise. Teaching, on the other hand, would seem to be somewhat further removed from issues of testing and grading, although the specific testing and grading plan used by the instructor does inform the student as to what constitutes relevant knowledge as well as what attitude he or she holds toward precise evaluation and academic competition.

Students are not immune to testing and grade procedures and educational researchers have made the distinction between students who are grade oriented and those who are learning oriented. Although this distinction is surely too one-dimensional, it does suggest that for some students the classroom is a place where they experience and enjoy learning for its own sake. For other students, however, the classroom is experienced as a crucible in which they are tested and in which the attainment of a good grade becomes more important than the learning itself. When students are asked how they became grade oriented, they usually point to the actions of their teachers in emphasizing grades as a significant indicator of future success; alternatively, they describe instructors who are excited by promoting new learning in their classrooms. When college instructors are asked about the reasons for their emphasis on grades, they report that student behaviors—such as arguing over the scoring of a single question—make it necessary for them to maintain strict and well-defined grading standards in their classrooms. The ironic point is that both the student and the instructor see the "other" as emphasizing grades over learning, and neither sees this as a desirable state of affairs. What seems missing in this context is a clear recognition by both the instructor and the student that grades are best construed as a type of communication. When grades are thought about in this way, they can be used to improve learning. As it now stands, however, the communicative purpose of grading is ordinarily submerged in their more ordinary use as a means of rating and sorting students for social and institutional purposes not directly tied to learning. Only when grades are integrated into a coherent teaching and learning strategy do they serve the purpose of providing useful and meaningful feedback not only to the larger culture but to the individual student as well.

## 3. Variations in the Grading System

Like all prototypes, the A–F system admits many variations. These often take the form of pluses and minuses, thereby producing a scale having the possibility of fifteen distinct units: A+, A, A–, B+, B ... F–. In actual practice, the grade of A+ is scarcely ever used and the same is true for D+ and D– and F+ and F–, thereby yielding a scale of between eight to ten units. Generally speaking, the greater the number of units in the grading system the more precisely does it hope to quantify student performance. What is interesting in this regard are fluctuations in the actual number of units used in different historical eras? Without going too deeply into the relevant historical facts, it is clear that certain historical periods, such as the 1960s, reduced the grading system to two or so units—Pass, No Credit—whereas other periods, such as the 1980s, expanded it to ten, eleven or twelve units.

Variations in the breadth of the grading system would seem to have significant educational implications. At a minimum, these differences may be taken to imply that scales having a large number of units indicate a relative comfort in making precise distinctions, whereas those having fewer units suggest a relative discomfort in making such distinctions. In the case of more differentiated systems, distinctions and rankings are significant and individual achievement is emphasized; in the case of less differentiated systems, distinctions and rankings are de-emphasized and inter student competition is minimized. To some degree, it is possible to view fluctuations in American grading systems as reflecting a more general ambivalence the society has in regard to competition and cooperation, between individual recognition and social equity. Educational institutions sometimes emphasize strict evaluation, competition and individual achievement, whereas at other times they emphasize less precise evaluation, cooperation, and sympathetic understanding for students of all achievement levels.

Another property of grading systems is that individual class grades often are combined to produce an overall metric called the grade point average or GPA. Unlike its constituent values, which usually are carried to only one (or no numerically significant places), the GPA presents a metric of 400 units yielding the possibility that a GPA of 3.00 will locate the student in the category of "good" whereas a value of 2.99 will exclude him or her from this category. In the same way, honors, admission to graduate school, preliminary selection for interviews by a desirable company, and so forth, may be defined by a single point difference on the GPA scale.

The GPA is also a relatively poor basis on which to predict future performance, which perhaps explains why such attempts are never very impressive. In fact, a number of meta-analyses of this relationship, conducted every ten years or so since 1965, reveals that the median correlation between GPA and future performance is 0.18; a value that is neither very useful nor impressive. The strongest relationship between GPA and future achievement is usually found between undergraduate GPA and first-year performance in graduate or professional school.

Despite such difficulties in understanding the exact meanings of grades and the GPA, they remain important social metrics and sometimes yield heated discussions over issues such as grade inflation. Although grade inflation has many different meanings, it usually is defined by an increase in the absolute number of As and Bs over some period of years. The tacit assumption here seems to be that any continuing increase in the overall percentage of "good grades" or in the overall GPA implies a corresponding decline in academic standards. Although historically there have been periods in which the number of good grades decreased, significant social concerns usually only accompany the grade inflation pattern. This one-sided emphasis suggests that grade inflation is as much a sociopolitical issue as an educational one and depends upon the dubious equating of grades with money. What really seems of concern here is a value issue, not a cogent analogy that reveals anything significant about grades or money.

#### **4. Grading in Education**

Grades can be assigned in letters (for example, A, B, C, D, or F), as a range (for example 4.0–1.0), as a number out of a possible total (for example out of 20 or 100), as descriptors (excellent, great, satisfactory, needs improvement), in percentages, or, as is common in some post-secondary institutions in some countries, as a Grade Point Average (GPA). GPA is calculated by taking the number of grade points a student earned in a given period of time divided by the total number of credits taken. The GPA can be used by potential employers or further post-secondary institutions to assess and compare applicants. A Cumulative Grade Point Average is a calculation of the average of all of a student's grades for all semesters and courses completed up to a given academic term.

Over the course of an academic career the average student will be exposed to a variety of grading systems and procedures. Although some of these systems may be qualitative in nature, such as an annual or semiannual written narrative, the vast majority is quantitative and depends upon numerical or



alphanumerical metrics. Perhaps the most familiar of these involves the letters "A" through "F," where "A" is usually given a value of 4.0 and is characterized in words as outstanding or excellent and "F" is given a value of 0.0 and is described as unsatisfactory or failing. The grades of A through F are usually derived from some more differentiated quantitative value such as test score, in which the specific nature of the relationship between grade and test score may take a variety of different forms. Regardless of the specific translation of test performance into letter grade, the point to keep in mind is that the A–F scale defines the most frequent grading system used in higher education over the past half century or more.

### 5. School Grading Systems

Few issues have created more controversy among educators than those associated with grading and reporting student learning. Despite the many debates and multitudes of studies, however, prescriptions for best practice remain elusive. Although teachers generally try to develop grading policies that are honest and fair, strong evidence shows that their practices vary widely, even among those who teach at the same grade level within the same school.

In essence, grading is an exercise in professional judgment on the part of teachers. It involves the collection and evaluation of evidence on students' achievement or performance over a specified period of time, such as nine weeks, an academic semester or entire school year. Through this process, various types of descriptive information and measures of students' performance are converted into grades or marks that summarize students' accomplishments. They might be letter grades such as A, B, C, D and F or numerals such as 4, 3, 2, and 1. Reporting is the process by which these judgments are communicated to parents, students or others.

### 6. Grading System in Indian Schools

Until high school, an averaged percentage is provided. A percentage over 80 is considered excellent; between 60-80 is considered to be 'first division'; between 40-60 is considered to be 'second division', though these terminologies and classifications depend on the 'board of education'.

Universities here follow Percentage System and 10-point GPA System. The Percentage System works as: Maximum Marks:100, Minimum Marks: 0, Minimum Marks Required for Passing: 35. 100-80% Considered Excellent, 65-79% Considered Very Good, 55–64% considered good, 45–55% considered fair, 41–44% considered Pass, 0-40% considered fail. The 10-point GPA is categorized as follows: 10-9.1 (O (out of standing) or A+)- Best, 9-8.1(A)-Excellent, 8-7.1(B+)-exceptionally good, 7-6.1(B)-very good, 6-5.1(C+)- good, 5-4.1(C)- average, 4-3.1(D+)-fair,3.1-2(D)- Pass,2-0(E+-E)-fail. A GPA of over 7 is generally considered to be an indication of a strong grasp of all subjects.

Percentage	Eq	U	Classification
90 to 100	4.5	O	Out standing
80 to 89	4.0	A+	Distinction
60 to 79	3.5	A	First Class
50 to 59	3.0	B+	Second Class
40 to 49	2.5	B	Pass Class
< 39	2.0	C	Fail

As per reports, every day more than 17 students aged between 15-25 years commit suicide in India due to non-performance in the examination or an entrance test. Watching young children of the country succumbing to the undue pressure of scoring high marks is horrifying. One of the points to note here is the thinking of the society, which puts lot of pressure on students to 'to perform'.

This pressure from schools, parents, peer groups and society take away the youthfulness of a child. Further, a health report also supports that this often causes health hazard such as fatigue, body aches, eye

weakness, stress and in more severe cases, depression. Looking at today's education scenario, the Central Board of Senior Education has introduced educational counselors and child psychologists in schools to boost the confidence of young students and mentally prepare them for the board examination. This method has helped in reducing the stress and making them comfortable with the examination.

Understanding the board exam system in India and its relation with students is of great importance in present times. While coping with the expectations of school, parents and society and keeping pace with their talent, students face a lot of hardships. Thus, the implementation of a grading system and abolition of board exams is really a boon for students.

Its implementation will help an average student to cope with the stress though leaving a lot of toppers to question it. Students will be evaluated on a 9-point grading system, which will diminish the difference between a student scoring 99% and one scoring 91%. Both students will get the A+ grade. To make the grading system a success, parents and teachers need to acknowledge children's special assets and encourage them pursue their interest.

The grading system by HRD minister – Kapil Sibal has brought in a new wave of transformation in the Indian education system. He put India up on the ladder of the global education system. The HRD minister commenting on the system said that it would provide a standardization of excellence at the school level.

### **7. Advantages of Grading System**

One of the upsides of the CCE system is that it aims to help reduce stress in students because they work alongside the students individually and guide them depending on their specific strengths and ability. In addition, they refrain from using negative language if a student can't complete a project or understand something. They also pride themselves on encouraging students to excel in areas that they are stronger in.

The CCE system also focuses on holistic education which aims to develop various aspects of a student's personality which ultimately helps them identify what they are better at and stronger at in terms of academics.

There is no pressure for students to become highly academic because they aim to encourage individuals to choose subjects based on their interests while retaining the importance of academia. They aim to make the students feel more relaxed, so they improve their academic ability without feeling under pressure. It will minimize misclassification of students based on marks. It will eliminate unhealthy competition among high achievers.

It will reduce societal pressure and will provide the learner with more flexibility. It will lead to a focus on a better learning environment Operational. It will facilitate joyful and stress-free learning.

### **8. Disadvantages of Grading System**

A downside of the CCE system is the grading system. This is because the bracket is very wide, for example students that score between 90 and 100 will get an A\* grade. You may see this as a positive scheme because it gives the chance for more students to receive a higher grade, however, a student that scores 8 more points than someone else but doesn't receive a better grade may seem unfair.

Despite the system aiming to lessen stress, the grading system may in fact cause more stress for the students. For example, a student may feel more pressure to get a higher grade because the grade margin is substantially larger than you would expect.

## 9. Conclusion

The issues of grading and reporting on student learning continue to challenge educators. However, more is known at the beginning of the twenty-first century than ever before about the complexities involved and how certain practices can influence teaching and learning. To develop grading and reporting practices that provide quality information about student learning requires clear thinking, careful planning, excellent communication skills, and an overriding concern for the well-being of students. Combining these skills with current knowledge on effective practice will surely result in more efficient and more effective grading and reporting practices.

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