



GRADING SCALE

The University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University have both identified what a given grade means.

Definition	Letter Grade	Percentage	Point Value
Exceptional	A+	90-100	10
Excellent	A	85-89	9
	A-	80-84	8
Very Good	B+	75-79	7
	B	70-74	6
Good	C+	66-69	5
	C	60-65	4
Passable	D+	55-59	3
	D	50-54	2
Redeemable Failure	E	40-49	1
Failure	F	0-39	0

Below, I have provided my interpretation of what the definition and letter grade mean (e.g., in the case of a C+ or a C, what does "good" mean?). I have done so in order (1) to explain what the grade that you will receive on a given assignment or exam means and (2) to allow you to aim at the grade you wish to receive.

With regard to the former (1), when you receive a grade in this course, you will understand better why you have received it. With regard to the latter (2), you will have a better means of taking responsibility for the grade you want to receive on an assignment or exam. (For example, not all students want to do the work necessary for an A or a B. Some are very happy with a C and want simply to know what they need to do to get a C.) University students are, after all, adults and should be able to decide how much work they wish to do and for what reason, but they should also know how much work they need to do for a particular grade. In the end, however, for better or worse, it is ultimately up to the professor to judge whether the student has succeeded.

C-level:

C ("good"): I start with the assumption that a student should be able simply to summarise the material discussed in class and the required reading and "give it back" to the professor. This ability is essential for all future learning. A student who reflects this ability is working at the C level (with nuances of ability suggesting either C or C+). Students either work at, above, or below the C level.

ABOVE C-level:

B ("very good"): The ability merely to summarize (C-level work) is essential for all future learning, but does not reflect any extra work on the part of the student. Extra work that reflects a desire to do more than summarize might be: a refined summarization of material (reflecting a greater investment of time in the summarization), or a refined statement of the material, or further reflection on the material discussed (which requires not only time but also considerable thought). A student who is working at the B level evidences this level of work (with nuances suggesting either B or B+).

A or A- ("excellent"): Extra time and reflection, when combined with extra reading and discussion, and the further time and reflection required to integrate that extra reading and discussion with the required class discussion and reading, suggest a student's willingness and desire to work at the A or A- level; a successful integration (not just mere extra material) allows a student to achieve A or A- on her/his work. Some students are able to do this naturally because of prior training in a related field; others will take it upon themselves to advance their learning during the present course. It is not up to me to decide why someone's work is excellent, only that it is.

A+ ("exceptional"): As the descriptor implies, A+ work is rare and especially noteworthy. A+ work is work that is out-of-the-ordinary and is reflective of an unusual output, not just of time, not just of reflection, not just of extra reading, and not just of integration of it all into one. There is a quality of A+ work that leaves one in awe! It is work that the professor would be proud to have carried out her/himself!

BELOW C-level:

If you are working below C-level, you are going to have trouble.

D ("passable"): Work that suggests that a student has not succeeded in summarizing the required work from class and/or readings but that suggests that a student might have a vague idea of what is at stake is "passable" work, but it is not work that I want to encourage. Regular D work bodes ill for the student (with D+ only hinting at a bit more ability than D). I strongly suggest that you need to talk with your professor about your work if you receive 3 Ds in a row.

E ("redeemable failure"): Work that clearly misses the point but that might merit re-doing (e.g., an exam was not completed or truncated for reasons that are not explained, a paper that is late without a justifiable excuse but that appears to be of at least passable quality, a work that is not bad but that builds on a completely erroneous idea or premise) is work at the E level.

F ("failure"): Work that appears to evidence a complete ignorance of the material imparted in class, in discussion, or in readings, or that evidences base carelessness, or that evidences a perversely cavalier attitude to the learning process in the class, will receive an F.