

## Grading Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to act as a touchstone for faculty as they grade student work, to encourage consistency across courses and faculty, and to help students understand what grades mean and what their expectations should be.

Because graduate students have successfully completed undergraduate work (and GRE's, etc.), it is expected that they will produce work that reflects a higher range of ability than undergraduates. That said, it is also true that graduate level work will continue to push students to excel and will be demanding.

Grades are intended to be an honest commentary on performance. It is helpful to remember that they are not a commentary on the student as a person.

In graduate school grading, the full range of grades is available for use, A to F.

The grade levels offer the following commentaries:

A = Mastery of the material plus work that is “in addition” to the basic requirements being fulfilled. Work at an A grade level will embody content and demonstrate grasp that goes beyond the basic (and expected) mastery of the material. The work may demonstrate application of the material in a unique way or offer higher-level insights, for example.

B = Basic and adequate mastery of the material.

C = Has not achieved or demonstrated an appropriate or satisfactory level of mastery of the material.

D = Substantially substandard across a wide range of the material.

Pluses and minuses reflect a range of performance within the letter grades. A+ is rare and spectacular. A- reflects full mastery plus a hint of going beyond.

To remain in good standing in the Graduate School, students must maintain a minimum B average. (Good standing will continue if a student receives a C grade in a course as long as the overall average remains at B or better.)

D+ means that the course will not count as being completed. For credit, the course would need to be repeated. (With a C-, the course does count.)

To receive a P in a P/NP course, the P must signify a minimum B-.

## Writing Standards

Writing quality is part of the grading issue. One of the Masters program's pedagogical goals is to promote good academic writing and good writing period. The program encourages students to aim high and to get help when they need it. All faculty members are engaged in maintaining high program writing standards.

Students should not expect professors to be their grammar teachers. Students can expect professors to mark grammatical errors in writing assignments. It is the student's responsibility to understand or to learn about the mistakes that are noted and to make improvements accordingly. Again, noting problem grammar is not a comment on the student as a person.

The Masters program understands a reasonable graduate-level writing standard to mean clearly articulated ideas arranged coherently with no more than a couple of (or perhaps a few) grammatical errors in a paper. If a paper is poorly written with many grammatical mistakes, students can expect to be required to re-write it. When a student is not meeting graduate-level writing standards, the program is committed to working with the student to improve writing competency. The program director is always available to help and there are additional resources available on campus. All of us are well served in our writing by an editor.

English is a second language for some of our students. In those instances, expectations and requirements are adjusted but the goal of encouraging best writing practices remains the same.

Among many other sources, you can find some writing style tips at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing\\_style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing_style).