



**FACULTY SENATE AGENDA // NOVEMBER 5, 2019
2:30 PM – 4:30 PM // OLSCAMP 101**

**CALL TO ORDER
ROLL CALL**

CHAIR REMARKS // Jenn Stucker, 2019 – 20 Faculty Senate Chair

COMMUNICATIONS

- Dr. Rodney Rogers, President
- Dr. Joe Whitehead, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Robin Herschkowitz, GSS President
- Marcus Goolsby, USG President

OLD BUSINESS

1 // +/- GRADING POLICY (vote)

NEW BUSINESS

1 // SPRING SENATE ELECTIONS

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES

- Committee on Academic Affairs (CAA)
- Committee on Professional Affairs (CPA)
- Adjunct Faculty Committee (AFC)
- Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (FAAC)
- Committee on Committees (Com/Com)
- Committee on Amendments + Bylaws (A+B)

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

AD-HOC COMMITTEES, WORK GROUPS

- Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)
- Classroom Enrollment Capacity

BGSU FACULTY ASSOCIATION

ISSUES AND CONCERNS / SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

*Faculty Senate Holiday Reception at University House
Monday, December 9, 2019 // 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Attire is Business Casual*

ADJOURNMENT

NOTE: Senate meetings are open to the public. Supplemental materials supporting proposed action item(s) may be sent to Senators only. Senators arriving after roll call are asked to report to the secretary at the end of the meeting. Please use a microphone and state your name when addressing the body. Senators are expected to stay through adjournment.

NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 3, 2019 // 2:30pm – 4:30pm // Olscamp 101

Proposed Plus/Minus Grading Policy Frequently Asked Questions provided by Faculty Senate // October 8, 2019

The questions which follow have been compiled from the comments, questions, and requests for information made by discussion groups at the October 1st Faculty Senate meeting. The answers below are based on the inquiries and investigations of the Faculty Senate Officers in the week following that meeting. While every effort has been made to attribute the source of information on which these answers are based, this document should not be viewed as containing authoritative or final answers.

If any Faculty Senator or member of the University Community is aware of an error made in this document or has more information to offer, please contact one of the Faculty Senate Officers (jstuck@bgsu.edu, mlavery@bgsu.edu, and/or robyngm@bgsu.edu) or the Faculty Senate Office Secretary (419-372-2751; knewman@bgsu.edu) with the relevant information, as well as a reference to its source.

1. What are the implications of this policy for financial aid, or for progress in a program?

This question represents one of the most common concerns expressed in relation to the proposed plus/minus grading policy; and the most accurate answer to this question is, "It depends." Most financial aid requirements, program requirements, or academic standing guidelines address GPA and not individual course grades (see for example, [Policy 3341-3-55](#)). Thus, the proposed policy is unlikely to have a uniformly beneficial or detrimental effect on any one group of students. Individual students may experience either benefits or challenges from this policy however, depending on their patterns of academic performance.

Let us consider an example in which a student must maintain a 2.0 GPA to continue receiving a particular type of financial aid. If one student maintains a GPA near 2.0 and consistently performs in the lower end of the whole-letter grade range in multiple classes, then the plus/minus grading system will make it more likely that this student receives minus grades (earning 0.3 fewer quality points than before). Such a student may find that, under the new policy, they are at greater risk of losing financial aid. Conversely, if another student maintains a GPA near 2.0, but consistently performs in the upper end of the whole-letter grade range in multiple classes, then proposed system will make it more likely that this student receives plus grades (earning 0.3 more quality points than before). Such a student may find that the proposed system allows them to maintain a higher GPA, making their financial aid more secure.

The only situations in which the proposed system would make it consistently more difficult for all students to meet existing standards are those in which the standard includes a minimum grade that must be earned in a specific course. For example, consider a program in which students must earn "a C or better" in a specific introductory course before moving on to a required advanced course. In this case, adoption of the proposed plus/minus grading policy would suggest that students who perform in the lower end of the current C letter grade range (and who may continue the program under current policy) would be in danger of receiving a C-, which would not allow them to continue in their program. Faculty Senators and members of the University Community are encouraged to investigate their own program requirements, as well as the requirements of any relevant scholarships, to determine the potential impact for their students.

2. Will there be a particular grading scale required of all faculty?

Under the current proposed policy language, no. Neither the proposed undergraduate plus/minus grading policy nor the proposed graduate plus/minus grading policy specifies a grading scale that instructors must use to determine assigned letter grades. Note that the current undergraduate grading policy ([Policy 3341-3-46](#)) and the current graduate grading policy ([Policy 3341-3-9](#)) also do not specify a grading scale. Instructors are currently free to assign whole-letter grades based on whatever criteria they feel are most appropriate for their courses, programs, and students.

For example, Instructor 1 may use a traditional 10-point scale in which students who have earned $\geq 90\%$ of the points available in the course earn an A. Instructor 2 may choose to make an A more difficult to earn by setting that cut-score at 94%, while Instructor 3 may choose to make an A more attainable by setting the cut-score at 85%. Finally, Instructor 4 might choose to use holistic grading in which individual assignments are awarded a whole-letter grades according to specific rubrics for each assignment, and the final course grade will be jointly determined by the student and the instructor during a one-on-one meeting held at the end of the semester.

Provided that the instructors in question provide their specific grading scales and criteria in the course syllabus ([CBA Article 9, para. 2.7](#)) and these instructors are prepared to defend their grading policies in the case of an academic appeal (see [Policy 3341-3-3](#) for graduate students and the final section of [Policy 3341-3-46](#) for undergraduates), then all four instructors currently have the academic freedom to assign grades in the manner that they feel is most appropriate. There is currently no language in the proposed plus/minus grading policy that would abridge these freedoms.

3. It may be confusing and/or frustrating for students enrolled in different sections of the same course if those instructors use different grading scales or different grading systems. Can the plus/minus scale be made mandatory?

As with current grading policies, there is nothing in the proposed plus/minus grading policies that would prevent the faculty in a particular school, department, or program from agreeing to use a specific common grading system or grading scale. In fact, such discussions are likely to benefit students with consistency of instructional quality and rigor. Groups of faculty who share common interests or purposes and agree to adhere to common guidelines and practices are making appropriate use of academic freedom as it is defined in the [Academic Charter](#), the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), and the AAUP's [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#). It may be inappropriate (and possibly contrary to the documents cited in the previous sentence) to establish a one-size-fits-all grading scale and/or requirement to use plus/minus grades across all sections of all classes at the institution via university policy. Faculty Senators are encouraged to seek input from their respective constituencies on this issue to inform their vote.

4. Can we choose to use only plus grades and not minus grades?

Consistent with the answers to questions 2 and 3 above, you may choose to use the proposed system in any way that you deem appropriate for your courses, programs, and students.

5. Are university systems and technology ready to implement plus/minus grading?

University systems are already designed to support the current whole-letter grade options, and methods already exist for instructors to assign course grades, for those course grades to be

converted to quality points, and for term GPAs and cumulative GPAs to be calculated on their basis. The proposed plus/minus grading policy would allow instructors to select from twelve options when assigning final grades, rather than the previous five options. Changing from whole-letter grades to plus/minus grades will require the data tables from which the current final grade options are drawn to be updated to include the plus and minus options. The University Registrar and Chief Financial Officer have both confirmed that, although it might be inaccurate to call such a change trivial, we can handle the necessary changes internally without acquiring additional software, data systems, or resources.

6. Based on historical data at BGSU, how many students would have had a higher GPA under the proposed policy, and how many students would have had a lower GPA?

Unfortunately, this is not a question that can be answered with existing data systems. Although an individual instructor may use the Canvas gradebook to calculate final grades, the MyBGSU Faculty Center does not draw final grades from Canvas. In addition, some instructors may choose to use paper records with which to calculate students' final grades. Since University systems are currently unable to differentiate between high whole-letter grades and low whole-letter grades, only the instructor has access to all of the information on which a final course grade is based. Interested faculty are encouraged to look back at their own records to determine how many students would have been affected if they had implemented plus/minus grades in previous semesters.

7. The "ATN" grade which is required for students who stop coming to class doesn't appear in the new policy. Will we still be able to assign this grade?

The "ATN" grade is governed by different policies and regulations and will still be available for instructor use as required by those guidelines. The "ATN" grade does not appear in the current undergraduate grading policy ([Policy 3341-3-46](#)) or the current graduate grading policy ([Policy 3341-3-9](#)), so changing those policies will not affect it.

8. Will the plus/minus grading policy lead to more grade complaints from students?

It has not been empirically established whether plus/minus grading policies lead to increased grade complaints. However, if your experience suggests that students are more likely to complain or to haggle over points when their current grade is close to one of the breakpoints on your grading scale, then it seems reasonable to assume that having additional breakpoints in the grading scale would increase the frequency of such complaints. Faculty are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences to determine the likelihood of increased grade complaints.

9. Is the faculty Senate vote scheduled for November 5th procedural or advisory? If the policy does not pass the Senate, could it be put into effect anyway?

The questions related to the role of the Senate vote and its authority to shape university policy on this and similar academic matters is somewhat complex, nuanced, and requires a bit lengthier response than the questions already addressed in this document. As such, these questions have been saved for the end of this FAQ.

The Faculty Senate vote on the proposed plus/minus grading policy is advisory. Note that having an advisory role does not mean that our vote is irrelevant or unimportant in this matter (as discussed in

the latter half of this response). According to paragraph (C)(1)(a) of the university's [Policy on Policy Development \(Policy 3341-1-5\)](#):

Only the university President or the Board of Trustees of the university shall have the authority to issue an official university Policy. The university President shall determine whether a particular policy action will be brought to the Board of Trustees for Board approval.

Paragraph (D)(1)(b) of the same policy also reads:

Any university office or unit, including the Faculty Senate, may identify the need for adopting, amending, or rescinding a university Policy. Units seeking to adopt, amend or rescind a university Policy must communicate that request to the unit's Responsible Officer who will determine whether to support and sponsor the request.

These two paragraphs of the Policy on Policy Development above are best understood in light of the way in which Ohio state law governs its public universities. The Bylaws of the Board of Trustees ([Policy 3341-1-1](#)) opens with the following words:

The Board of Trustees shall conduct all university affairs in accordance with its responsibilities and powers under the Constitution and Laws of the State of Ohio.

Although a full examination of the aforementioned Constitution and Laws of the State of Ohio are beyond the scope of this FAQ, the first sentence of the Board's bylaws above suggests that all authority for all university matters rests with the Board, and that any authority held by other members of the University Community has been delegated by the Board (usually through the President) and is executed with the Board's consent and oversight. This interpretation is confirmed by the final (and rather lengthy) sentence of the preamble which reads:

Detailed rules and regulations for the organization, administration and operation of the university may be promulgated, amended, and repealed by the Board of Trustees on its own initiative or upon the recommendation of the university Administration, the Faculty, or the Faculty Senate, or any member of the university community or university constituency group who has the best interests of the university in mind, but in all cases the Board of Trustees does retain the final authority and responsibility.

The final clause of this sentence places the authority for establishing, modifying, or abolishing policy soundly in the hands of the Board, and identifies the role of all other constituents as purely advisory in nature.

Though the powers of the Board, including those that the Board has delegated to the President are quite broad, it is important to note that these powers are executed through two primary mechanisms; university policies, and shared governance. The university policies which appear on the [BGSU Policy Register](#) (including the [Academic Charter](#)) are sections of [Chapter 3341 of the Ohio Revised Code](#) (hence why all university policies begin with "3341"). Since university policies are part of Ohio State Law, and since BGSU's shared governance is defined through university policy, then shared governance has legitimate legal authority.

The [Academic Charter](#), the principal document through which shared governance is defined, states in section (A)(1)(d) that "The primary responsibility for the development and maintenance of the University's academic programs belongs to the faculty." This responsibility is further defined in (A)(4)(c)(i), which reads:

It is essential to the character and mission of a mature university that the faculty have the primary authority and responsibility to develop, sustain, and enhance the intellectual quality and reputation of the institution and maintain its academic integrity. The stature of a

university is directly related to the quality of its faculty. The ability of a university to attract, develop, and retain a high-quality faculty is dependent upon its economic policies, as well as its academic policies.

In accordance with these principles, the Senate, as a representative body of the faculty and subject to the faculty's right to review, advise, and consent as set forth in (4)(c)(iv), (14)(b)(v), and (14)(b)(vi), is obligated through its policy and standards framing authority and by other means to promote to the fullest extent possible (a) a climate of academic freedom for all faculty; (b) equity and excellence with regard to all academic policies and standards; (c) an optimal academic environment throughout the University; (d) the definition and establishment of standards and procedures of accountability concerning professional faculty ethics and responsibilities;

The next section, (A)(4)(c)(ii), also states that:

The Senate has the discretion to offer recommendations and advice on issues germane to the academic function of the institution and to the welfare of its students.

The language of the Academic Charter acknowledges the centrality of the faculty role in the academic functions of the university and places great emphasis on its responsibility for the academic environment. Although the Board has the power to ignore Faculty Senate votes on academic matters, doing so would violate the principles of shared governance which the Board has put into place.

10. Can the Senate amend or modify the proposed policy, or must we vote on it in its current form?

Under Robert's Rules of Order, which governs Faculty Senate meetings, a vote on the proposed plus/minus grading policy is not one of the six kinds of motions that cannot be amended. Thus, a Motion to Amend can be considered by the body.

3341-3-9 **Grading Policies- Graduate.**

Applicability	All University Units – Graduate Students
Responsible Unit	Office of the Provost
Policy Administrator	Graduate College

(A) Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy describes grading policies and incomplete policy.

(B) Policy

(1) Unit of Credit

The unit of credit is the semester hour which is ordinarily earned by one hour of recitation or lecture a week per semester.

Depending upon the amount of outside preparation required two or three hours of laboratory work carry the same credit as one hour of recitation or lecture.

(2) Grading System

(a) Prior to Fall 2020, the following grade options may be used by faculty in reporting and recording a graduate student's proficiency in courses:

- A 4.00 points
- B 3.00 points
- C 2.00 points
- D 1.00 points
- F 0.00 points
- WF withdraw failing 0.00 points

(b) Starting Fall 2020, the following grade options may be used by faculty in reporting and recording a graduate student's proficiency in courses:

- A 4.00 points
- A- 3.70 points
- B+ 3.30 points
- B 3.00 points
- B- 2.70 points
- C+ 2.30 points
- C 2.00 points
- C- 1.70 points

D+	1.30 points
D	1.00 points
D-	0.70 points
F	0.00 points
WF	withdraw failing 0.00 points

- (c) Some courses are graded on an S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis and are so indicated in the individual course descriptions. A grade of S is equivalent to a letter grade of B or higher (with the exception of 6910, 6990, or 7990, see below). If a graduate course has been approved for S/U grading, a graduate student is not eligible to receive a letter grade in that course.
- (d) A course taken for graduate credit in which the grade of D, F, or U is received (D+, D, D-, F, or U starting Fall 2020) may not be used to meet minimum credit hour requirements for a graduate degree. Students should consult their academic program for any other requirements.
- (e) Prior to Spring 2018, grades for courses numbered 6910, 6990, and 7990 are reported as IP (in progress) until the completed final capstone experience or experiences (e.g., research paper, portfolio, or academic equivalent), thesis, or dissertation is approved when the final grade of S (satisfactory) is substituted.
- (f) Starting Spring 2018, grades for courses numbered 6910, 6990, and 7990 are graded on an S/U basis only. A grade of S in one of these courses denotes satisfactory progress that semester, and a grade of U in one of these courses denotes unsatisfactory progress that semester, based on criteria determined at the program level. The evaluation of the final experience, thesis, or dissertation is an independent judgment of the final status of the experience, thesis, or dissertation, and is independent from S or U grades earned.
- (g) Master's students are not permitted to use any 6990 thesis credits toward their Plan II requirements, regardless of the grade received.

(3) Grading Options – Graduate Courses

Students and instructors do not have an option concerning the grading system for a graduate course. Each graduate course is approved for either letter or S/U grading. Unlike undergraduate grading, it is the university's decision, not the student's option that determines the grading system to be used in graduate-level courses.

(4) Grading Options – Undergraduate Courses

Graduate students who take undergraduate courses are graded according to the undergraduate grading system. Such students receive a letter grade unless they

register to be graded on an S/U basis. Regardless of the grading option, undergraduate courses taken by graduate students are not calculated in the graduate GPA.

(5) Incomplete Policy

- (a) An INC (incomplete) may be given only when, for some justifiable reason, a student fails to fulfill a specified requirement in a course.
- (b) An INC may be removed and a grade substituted if the student completes course requirements to the satisfaction of the instructor prior to the deadline established by the Graduate College. However, an individual instructor may come to an agreement with his or her student for an earlier deadline for removal of an incomplete grade. The Graduate College deadlines for removal of incomplete grades for the respective academic semesters are:
 - (i) Fall semester: June first
 - (ii) Spring semester: September first
 - (iii) Summer semester: January first
- (c) For an extension, the student must petition their academic dean or designate for such consideration in writing prior to the expiration of the deadline stated above. The instructor's support is required for approval of the request. See <http://www.bgsu.edu/graduate/documents-and-forms.html> for "Incomplete Extension Request."
- (d) For courses taken S/U, any mark of INC not removed by these deadlines will change to U. For courses taken for a letter grade, any mark of INC not removed by these deadlines will change to F.
- (e) A student cannot graduate with a grade of INC in a graduate level course.