



NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTION 1025.07C

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY (NDU) POLICY ON GRADES AND GRADING


Originating Component: Academic Affairs

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Incorporates and Cancels: NDU Instruction 1025.07 Policy on Grades and Grading dated 2 August 2021 and NDU I 1025.07B dated 30 June 2022

Approved by:


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Purpose: Establishes the NDU policy on grades and grading to be implemented university-wide beginning with Academic Year 2022-23. Version C does not alter the grade range information in Version B. It adds University standards for the Grading Timeliness, Late Work, Grade Appeals, and Assessment Remediation.

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY.

This instruction sets forth policies and procedures for student grades, grading scales, and grading, effective for all colleges and course offerings as of the beginning of Academic Year 2022-23 (1 July 2022). NDU and its components will not change grade policy in the middle of an active course or program. Courses and programs that began before the issuance of this instruction, but extend into AY2022-23 are exempt from these policies and procedures until the completion of that course or program, after which the next iteration of that course or program will comply with the policies and procedures outlined below. This policy applies to all assessments in all core courses and electives.

1.2. BACKGROUND.

Prior to August 2021, NDU operated under a grade policy with an 8-point range for the grade of A (93-100).¹ Deans of Faculty believed that such a wide point range was not discreet enough to differentiate excellent or outstanding students from others. The Deans of Faculty also believed that such a wide range may contribute indirectly to grade inflation by the faculty. In August 2021, NDU issued NDUI 1025.07 Policy on Grades and Grading, which was designed to address grade inflation University-wide by limiting the A grade range to 3 points, 93-95, and a grade scale prescribed between 0 - 95 points with no A+ grades, nor any grades above 95 points. While this grade scale had been in use at one NDU college for several years without issue, its adoption University-wide was less successful.

Along with college selection of distinguished graduates, the new grading policy comports with the *JCS Vision and Guidance for PME and Talent Management* to identify “our best and brightest” and “make individual officers accountable for academic performance and record that performance in their permanent records.”² This revised policy re-establishes a more standard 0 – 100-point scale, while reducing the range for a grade of A. It also recognizes that structural changes alone are insufficient to reduce grade inflation absent vigorous enforcement and a cultural shift by individual faculty, course directors, and Deans of Faculty.

¹ NDU AA 5,10 NDU Policy on Grades (18 July 2013) and NDU Grade Policy Correlation to Percentage Scales dtd 11 September 2014.

² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War: The Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision and Guidance for Professional Military Education & Talent Management*, 5-6.

SECTION 2: POLICY

2.1. GRADING.

a. *Grades.* The table below shows letter grades, qualitative descriptors, quality points, and percent ranges to be used for grading. While brief, the qualitative grade descriptors nonetheless capture the range of graded outcomes, with the grade of B+ generally associated with the expected student performance. Quality points are used to calculate a student's Grade Point Average (GPA), whereas percent ranges are used for final course grades, individual assignments, and other course activities. Course letter grades and overall GPA are displayed on the student's transcript.

Letter Grade	Qualitative Descriptor	Quality Points	Percent Range	Percent Range for Rounding ³
A	Excellent (or Top tier) Performance ¹	4.00	96-100	95.50-100.00
A-	Better than Expected Performance	3.70	90-95	89.50-95.49
B+	Expected Level of Performance	3.30	86-89	85.50-89.49
B	Acceptable Performance	3.00	83-85	82.50-85.49
B-	Marginal Performance	2.70	80-82	79.50-82.49
C	Unacceptable Performance ²	2.00	70-79	69.50-79.49
F (For courses with letter grades)	Failure	0.00	0-69	0.00-69.49
P (For Pass-Fail designated courses)	Pass	0.00	N/A	N/A
F (For Pass-Fail designated courses)	Fail	0.00	N/A	N/A

1. Differentiation of top-tier performance as described by CJCSI 1800.01F.
2. Below 80 is considered unacceptable graduate performance and is likely not to receive credit when transferred to other graduate institutions.
3. Used in technical implementation within learning management systems. See Configuration Guidelines for Creating Courses in the University Student Management System (USMS), Blackboard and Tk20.

Table A: NDU Letter Grade, Descriptors, Quality Points, Point Range, & Rounding

b. *Other Course Grades.* The table below defines other course grades for special circumstances.

Grade	Quality Points	Description
I	0.00	Incomplete: The I grade for a course will be assigned only upon approval of the course instructor and the student's Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs. Incomplete indicates that one or more course requirements has not been completed for reasons that, in the judgment of the course instructor, were unavoidable. A student must initiate the request for an Incomplete grade with the instructor.

		The student and the instructor will specify in writing the requirements to be completed and the deadline for completion, which may not exceed one calendar year. (College policies may vary; students should refer to their College's student handbook for details.) Upon completion of the outstanding requirements, the student must request that the instructor submit a change of grade to the Registrar's office. Any Incomplete grade not resolved by the documented deadline will convert to an F grade automatically. While the grade is recorded as an Incomplete, the student will not earn credits for the course and the grade will not affect the student's GPA.
W	0.00	<p>Withdrawal: A course or program withdrawal request first must be approved by the College's Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs. The request may also require the approval of the student's sponsoring/parent organization. Finally, the request must be approved by the Provost and then submitted to the Registrar's Office for assignment of the W grade in the system of record. The W grade does not affect the student's GPA and the student will not earn credit for that course.</p> <p>For Distance Learning Students, Deans of Faculty may approve withdrawals.</p> <p><i>See also:</i> NDU Instruction 1000.02 Student Disenrollment Policy.</p>
TR	0.00	Transfer Credit: The TR grade for a course will be assigned by the Registrar's Office in accordance with the NDU Transfer Credit Policy. The acceptance of transfer credits is at the discretion of the University and the maximum number of transfer credits allowed is six (based on semester hours). If approved, the Registrar's Office will properly notate the transfer credit in the student's degree audit and on the transcript. A grade of TR does not affect the student's GPA, but the student will be assigned earned credits for the transferred course.
AU		Students will follow college and university procedures to audit a course. If approved, the Registrar's Office will assign a grade of AU for that course, to be recorded on the student's transcript. The AU grade does not affect a student's GPA or earned credits, but serves to reflect attendance in the course.

Table B: Grades for Special Circumstances

2.2. GRADING PHILOSOPHY.

NDU grading procedures serve to provide feedback to students and document performance. Assignment and final course grades provide students with a numerical value of performance against assessment criteria. All graded events at NDU (core courses and electives) shall be evaluated with a rubric that ties to course and program outcomes. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, through the DoD Instruction 1322.35, Volume 1 (26 Apr 2022), requires military education programs to maintain competitive grading standards that "provide meaningful differentiation of student performance" and identify those students who demonstrate exceptional mastery of program and course outcomes.³ Due to the competitive nature for entrance into NDU programs resulting in high-quality students, the average NDU student will generally earn course grades in the B+ to A-range. Only students who demonstrate truly exceptional outcome achievement will be awarded an "A."

From an educational perspective, the most important feedback students receive is written and/or oral, which provides strengths and opportunities for improvement. Feedback should be specific and substantive so it can

³ DoDI 1322.35, Volume 1, *Military Education: Program Management and Administration*, April 26, 2022, Section 4.4.d Student Assessments.

https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132235_vol1.PDF?ver=1mKICMbRcNsQUXaPf5YUfw%3D%3D

be used to help students improve their performance from one assignment to the next. All faculty should aim to provide detailed and exacting feedback to all students on all assignments in a timely manner. Reference individual College policies and the NDU Regulation 5.75, NDU Electives Program on the timeliness of grades.

Component Deans of Faculty and Academic Programs will implement the provisions of this grading policy for all courses under their purview. Implementation could include actions that:

1. Ensure faculty understand the assessment and grading requirements as set forth in this policy, to include faculty awareness of the importance of grade differentiation.
2. Train course directors and/or faculty on the development of rubrics that clearly delineate performance benchmarks relative to the established standard and between the grade ranges listed above.
3. Train faculty on the use of those rubrics to assess student performance and the importance of common interpretation of the rubric language (interrater reliability). Hold faculty accountable to provide substantive feedback on each graded event.
4. Establish grade distribution reporting at the aggregate course and/or program level.
5. Communicate expectations about NDU's grading standards to NDU students early and often.

2.3. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.

To graduate with a NDU Master of Science or Master of Arts degree, a student must:

1. Have an overall program GPA of at least 3.0 across all core and elective courses (GPA = Total quality points/Total credits).
2. Pass all core and elective courses with the grade of B- or higher.
3. Satisfy all designated course work requirements as listed in the respective degree program plan for each college, including but not limited to the thesis, capstone, and oral exams, as applicable.

2.4. GRADING DEADLINES. (14 calendar days)

To enhance student success and facilitate learning, faculty must provide students with timely and detailed feedback on all academic assessments using the appropriate assessment rubric. NDU recognizes that not all academic assignments are equal. Some are short and take less time for the student to complete and the faculty to grade. Others, such as an ISRP or thesis, take months of preparation and often require multiple interactions between students and faculty. The differences in length and complexity of assessments notwithstanding, NDU students still need timely and detailed feedback to improve their performance on the next assessment.

Therefore, the NDU standard for returning timely and detailed feedback to students is no more than 14 calendar days after the assessment, regardless of length or complexity of the assessment.

College Deans of Faculty may reduce or extend this deadline on a case-by-case basis to facilitate feedback on shorter assessments before students undertake the next course assessment or take discreet holidays or the December holiday break into consideration. In all cases, however, the overriding objective is that students receive feedback on one assessment in a course prior to undertaking another assessment. Deans of Faculty, course directors, and individual faculty should plan accordingly.

2.5 LATE WORK

Just as NDU expects its faculty to return student assessments in a timely manner, NDU expects its students to turn their work in on time. While compelling situations may interfere occasionally with a student meeting this expectation, timeliness and completeness are the professional norm and standard at NDU. When a compelling situation occurs, the student should contact their faculty member, preferably in advance, and request a short-term delay. Faculty members should use their professional judgement in awarding these delays and follow individual college guidance regarding the allowable length of the delay. Faculty members and students will complete a written agreement (email is sufficient) to document the new due date and the reason for the extension. Faculty members should inform their course directors and the student's Primary Faculty Advisor (PFA) of any extensions.

Various reasons for a delay may include computer or network problems, power outages, personal or family member illness, or personal emergency. If a student is having difficulty uploading an assessment into the Learning Management System, they should contact their faculty member and email them the assessment, while working to resolve any technical issues with the LMS upload. LMS issues are not a sufficient reason for a delay.

Any late work, defined in this policy as an unauthorized delay in meeting assessment deadlines, will result in a grade penalty. This policy applies to all assessments in all courses, core and elective. There are no timeouts for weekends or holidays. If an assessment is not turned in on time, defined as after the syllabus due date and time or as further agreed to by the faculty and acknowledged by the student, the deliverable is late, and the clock starts.

The following time periods and grade penalties apply to all work deemed "late" as described above:

0-48 hours late: the assessment will receive no grade higher than a B (between 83-85 points).

More than 48 hours late: the assessment will receive an F (69 points or less, depending on the instructor's grading of the assessment) and the student will be referred to the college Dean of Faculty for unsatisfactory performance.

In either case, for unexcused late turn in of work the instructor will annotate the student's record in the Learning Management System, and notify the course director and the student's Primary Faculty Advisor (PFA) at a minimum.

This policy applies to all assessments, core course and elective.

2.6 GRADE APPEALS (7 & 7)

Students may appeal their grade on any assessment for which they feel the instructor has abused their discretion or issued an arbitrary or capricious grade. In every case, the burden of proof rests with the student to demonstrate a cause for a change in grade. The student has seven (7) work-days after receiving the grade and assessment feedback from the instructor to file a written appeal via memorandum with the Course Director

In the event that the Course Director is also the student's instructor, the student should deliver the Appeal memo to the college Associate Dean of Faculty. For a student taking an elective taught by a faculty member from a different college, the process is the same except the student would file their appeal with instructor's college Associate Dean. Similarly, for a student taking an NDU elective (one offered by non-college faculty), the student will file their appeal with the Deputy Provost.

Prior to initiating a grade appeal, the student should meet with their instructor to discuss their performance on the assessment. As a professional courtesy, the student should inform the instructor if they intend to file an appeal.

Upon receipt of the Appeal memo, the Course Director (or Associate Dean or Deputy Provost) will have 7 work-days to conduct an assessment and issue a ruling to the student. In all cases, the same timelines apply; 7 work-days to file an Appeal, and 7 work-days for final adjudication.

2.7 REMEDIATION.

Colleges will follow their own internal remediation policies except as noted below:

- a. Any assessment, regardless of point or percentage value in a course, where a student earns a C (Unsatisfactory Performance) or lower will be remediated.
- b. Under normal circumstances, the remediation will occur under the same conditions as the original assessment. For example, if the assessment is an in-class essay, the student will take another in-class essay; if it is an oral comprehensive exam, the student will take another oral comprehensive exam. Deans of Faculty are authorized to modify the conditions for the remedial assessment on a case-by-case basis.
- c. To facilitate the most effective learning environment and not overwhelm the student with additional assessments, the reassessment will occur in a timely manner, usually no later than 7 calendar days after the remedial instruction is complete.
- d. Upon successful remediation, the student will receive a grade no higher than a B- (80%) and the instructor will annotate the remediation process in the student's record.

SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. PROVOST/VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS.

- a. Publish and maintain the NDU Policy on Grades and Grading, ensuring it reflects the intent of the OPMEP Manual (CJCSM 1810.01).
- b. Review and adjudicate requests for course and program withdrawal.
- c. Ensure that all deans and faculty, including instructional faculty not assigned to a college, are informed of the policy, and implement it effectively.
- d. Communicate expectations about NDU's grading standards to NDU students early and often.

3.2. DEANS OF FACULTY AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.

- a. Advise the Provost on recommended changes to the NDU Policy on Grades and Grading, and provide evidence to support such recommendations (e.g., course grade distributions, program GPA distributions).
- b. Review and adjudicate requests for Incomplete grades and Withdrawals from courses and programs.
- c. Ensure that college faculty effectively implement the NDU Policy on Grades and Grading.
- d. Communicate expectations about NDU's grading standards to NDU students early and often.

3.3. UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR.

- a. Assign Withdrawal course grade and withdraw students from programs upon approval by the Provost.
- b. Evaluate and assign transfer credits (TR) in accordance with the NDU Transfer Credit Policy.
- c. Ensure the timely and accurate transfer of grades from Learning Management System to the Student Information System.

3.4. FACULTY.

- a. All faculty are responsible for grading in accordance with this policy effective academic year 2022-23.

REFERENCES

NDU Instruction 1025.07 NDU Policy on Grades and Grading, August 2021

NDU Instruction 1025.07 Guidance Implementation Guidance for NDU Policy on Grades and Grading, 27 September 2021

NDU-AA Instruction 5.10, NDU Policy on Grades

AA Policy Memorandum dated 11 September 2014, NDU Grade Policy Correlation to Percentage Scales

Configuration Guidelines for Creating Courses in the University Student Management System (USMS), Blackboard and Tk20 (appended to NDU Instruction 1025.07 Guidance Implementation Guidance for NDU Policy on Grades and Grading, 27 September 2021)

NDU Instruction 1000.02 Student Disenrollment Policy 18 July 2016

Transfer Credit Policy, 20 Jan 2012

DoDI 1322.35, *Volume 1, Military Education: Program Management and Administration*, April 26, 2022

Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War: The Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision and Guidance for Professional Military Education & Talent Management*, 1 May 2020

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