Academic Quality Framework

Grade Point Average Position

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OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

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Grade Point Average (GPA) Approach

1 Fundamental Aspects to the GPA Approach

The fundamental aspects of the GPA approach are:

1. The Granulated GPA Model outlined in Section 6 is the approved model for TU Dublin to be adopted for incoming students from September 2025.

2. The Student Record Management System will allow a Multi-stage GPA to be applied, but in the short term, the calculation of the Award Classification will be based on the final year of the programme only[1]. This will accord the University the necessary time to fully consider the implications of implementing a multi-year GPA across all programmes in the future, in the context of:

    a. The relatively high number of advanced entry students in TU Dublin.

    b. Use of add-on programmes in TU Dublin.

3. The Student Record Management System will be configured to allow input of both numeric/percentage and alpha grades in the first instance. This will also allow time for the University to consider and decide on whether assessment marking will be based on:

    a. Percentage Grades

    b. Alpha Grades (e.g., A, B, C…)

    c. Both Percentage and Alpha Grades

2 What is Grade Point Average (GPA)?

Grade Point Average (GPA), one of the most common standardised measures of student academic performance, is a numerical representation (typically reported on a 0.0 – 4.0 scale), calculated by dividing the total grade points earned by the total number of credits attempted. Each letter-grade in the assessment matrix for modules is assigned a numerical value normally on a scale of 0 to 4. Apart from measuring the final student attainment, it may also be used to monitor consistency of student performance; as criteria for academic excellence; for the consideration of differences in performance

[1] Except in the cases where Award Classification on existing programmes is currently calculated based on the final and penultimate years

across and between programmes. Also, some scholarship schemes rely on GPA when considering qualifying applicants.

3 Why is GPA the preferred grading system for TU Dublin?

A GPA grading system can benefit both students and the university by enabling consistency, clarity, and transparency within the assessment processes. Specifically, the GPA system:

a) is widely recognised and accepted by institutions worldwide, potentially enhancing student mobility, credit transfer pathways and further education or career opportunities, locally and abroad.

b) provides a consistent and standardised way to assess academic achievement (performance) across programmes, schools, and disciplines.

c) enables a clear and comparable (objective) measure of academic achievement (performance), making it easier to track student progress and academic standing, both for individual students and at an institutional level. Underperforming and at-risk students can be timeously identified for early corrective measures and interventions.

d) and its associated grade descriptions allow students to take greater responsibility for their learning (i.e., holds students accountable for their work), which can lead to improved performance and better learning outcomes.

4 Requirements for GPA Implementation

a) A clearly defined grading policy communicated to students, to include weighting of assessment, the grading scale, and how the final grade and award classification are calculated and determined.

b) Accurate grade calculation with standardised grading scale, to ensure consistency in the grading process, e.g., commonly used four-point scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0). Granulation of whole letter grading with +/- grading allows for better differentiation between student performance.

c) Compatible Student Records Management System, capable of accounting for grades and ECTS credits.

d) Transparency to students, i.e., easily accessible grades and GPA records.

e) Structured review process to ensure effectiveness and relevance in the context of a passing GPA Score which is sufficient for student progression or award.

5 Underpinning Principles

Several GPA models were evaluated for alignment to the following principles:

a) *Requirement for a Reliable and Accurate Representation of Academic Performance/Outcomes*: The GPA model should accurately reflect a student's academic performance. It should be able to provide an objective measure of a student's academic ability based on their assessment grades. The model should be able to distinguish between high-performing students and those on the margins of acceptable performance and produce consistent, dependable results.

b) *Validity of Evidence of Student Achievement (Expressing Student Proficiency and Potential)*: The GPA model should be a valid reflection of proficiency in meeting the associated learning outcomes, programme outcomes and satisfactory achievement of graduate attributes. Therefore, it should also be able to act as a predictor of a student's performance in follow-on education programmes if desired, and in their chosen career path.

c) *Requirement to Maintain Fairness in Grade Calculations*: The GPA model should be fair to all students and should not favour or disadvantage one student cohort over another.

d) *Requirement for Transparency*: The model should be transparent in how a student's GPA is calculated. It should be easy for both students and staff to understand how grades are calculated and subsequently aggregated to the GPA, and the relevant factors considered.

e) *Requirement for Consistency Across Programmes*: The model should enable a student’s GPA to be calculated consistently over time and across different disciplines within the university, i.e., the same standards and criteria shall be applied to all students regardless of their programme of study.

f) *Requirement for Flexibility*: The GPA model should allow the accommodation of choice within a programme, enabling the use of either marks or grades as appropriate for their module and discipline, while facilitating different weightings of different programme components and any unique features of assessment in individual academic programmes. It should be able to account for changes in academic requirements (e.g., module thresholds) and grading policies (e.g., semester weighting for the final GPA) and for granting of exemptions on a case-by-case basis.

g) *Usability Requirements*: The GPA model should be easy to use and interpret in meritocracy contexts for both students and staff and be inter-operable within the student information systems and assessment processes of the university.

h) *Granularity*: The GPA model should bear clear and reliable granularity, capable of distinguishing proficiency and student mastery in the designated learning outcomes

associated with each assessment stage and consequently the award standard of the associated academic programme.

i) *Reliable Interface with Programme Assessment Strategies:* Capability of a GPA Model to accurately define academic competencies attained (including disparity between individual student performances) are only as good as the validity and integrity of in-programme assessment strategies. Therefore, the GPA module should be supported by, among others: clearly defined assessment criteria; true alignment of assessments with learning outcomes; applications of multiple assessment strategies: use of rubrics and marking schemes; standardisation of grading etc. There should be provision for continuous improvement of assessment processes through regular evaluation of the effectiveness of assessment strategies and grading practices.

j) *Facilitate the provision of feedback to students on their performance:* A good GPA Model will enable students to respond to feedback received on early-stage assessments and to enhance their performance in later stage assessments. This will be facilitated by the development of discipline-specific rubrics for each grade standard.

k) *Mobility:* The GPA Model should be compatible with other GPA Models, easily understood by external parties, to facilitate international student mobility both in exchange/joint programmes and mobility in careers after graduation.

6 Granulated 4.0 GPA Scale

Following evaluation of different GPA, the Granulated 4.0 GPA Scale, shown in Table 1, was chosen for its closer alignment with the underpinning principles to this proposal and the lesser impact on the historic TU Dublin award classification data. Appendix A provides an illustrative scheme of the Granulated Grade Descriptions when applied and Appendix B shows an example GPA and award classification calculationF.

Table 1 – Granulated 4.0 GPA Model

Grade	% Band	GPA value
A1	80-100	4.0
A2	75-79	3.8
A3	70-74	3.6
B1	65-69	3.2
B2	60-64	3.0
B3	55-59	2.8
C1	50-54	2.6
C2	45-49	2.4
C3	40-44	2
D1	35-40	1.6
F	0-35	0

Classification: Honours Bachelors Degree; Higher Diploma; Taught Masters	**GPA value**
First Class Honours	3.60
Second Class Honours Upper	3.00
Second Class Honours Lower	2.60
Pass	2.00

Classification: Higher Certificate; Bachelors Degree; Postgraduate Diploma; Postgraduate Certificate	**GPA value**
Distinction	3.60
Merit Grade 1	3.00
Merit Grade 2	2.60
Pass	2.00

Appendix A: Illustrative Scheme of Granulated Grade Descriptions

Grade	Award level	GPA	Description
A1	First	4.00	Outstanding performance. In-depth knowledge and understanding of principles and concepts related to the topic. Integrates information within a wider context. Excellent analysis and interpretation. Evidence of a significant amount of outside reading. A logically structured and clear approach. Answer is original and reflective.
A2	First	3.80	Excellent performance. A comprehensive knowledge and understanding of principles and concepts. Excellent analysis and interpretation. Evidence of a significant amount of outside reading. Answer may have neglected to deal with one or two minor aspects of the issues involved. A logically structured and clear approach.
A3	First	3.60	Really good performance. A comprehensive knowledge and understanding of principles and concepts. Really good analysis and interpretation. Evidence of outside reading. Answers may have some minor gaps. A logically structured and clear approach.
B1	2.1	3.20	Very good performance. A substantial but not totally comprehensive knowledge and understanding of principles and concepts. Shows a very good competence in the subject without being outstanding. Very good analysis and interpretation. Some gaps in knowledge. Student can argue the key issues in an intellectually organised manner. A logically structured and clear approach.

B2	2.1	3.00	Good performance. A competent and organised approach to the subject matter. A reasonable knowledge and understanding of principles and concepts. Very good analysis and interpretation. Student is very familiar with the material covered in lecture notes but may show limited evidence of wider reading. Answers may be organised rather than inspired.
B3	2.2	2.80	Competent performance. Shows evidence of having put significant work into studying the subject. A reasonable level of knowledge. Good analysis and interpretation. Some gaps/oversights in either knowledge, or in the approach taken. Limited evidence of wider reading. Reasonable analytical and interpretative skills. The work is still of sufficient standard to merit an honours award.
C1	2.2	2.60	Satisfactory performance. Shows a familiarity with the subject material covered in the question. The approach taken to answering the question is rather limited. Focuses on material covered in lecture notes. Little or no evidence of wider reading. A basic knowledge of key principles and concepts only. Limited analytical and interpretative skills.
C2	Pass	2.40	▪ Acceptable performance. ▪ Conversant with the subject area. ▪ A good average answer, which does not stray beyond the basics. ▪ Some significant gaps in knowledge. Limited analytical and interpretative skills.

C3	Pass	2.00	▪ Minimally acceptable performance. ▪ A basic pass. Shows a basic knowledge of key principles and concepts. ▪ Significant gaps in knowledge or understanding. ▪ May have omitted to answer part of the question. ▪ Answer is basic and factual with some errors. ▪ The standard of work is sufficient to obtain a passing grade. ▪ Limited analytical and interpretative skills.
D1	Compensating Fail	1.60	▪ Weak performance, compensating fail. ▪ A poor answer, unsatisfactory in some significant ways. ▪ Student is unable to correctly recall important material related to the question at hand. ▪ Little evidence of analytical and interpretative skills. ▪ Answer is disorganised and lacks intellectual depth.
F	Fail	0.00	▪ An outright failure no compensation allowed. ▪ The work is completely unsatisfactory and shows very little evidence of effort. ▪ Little or no evidence of knowledge of key principles and concepts. ▪ No evidence of analytical or interpretative skills.

Appendix B: Example GPA Calculations

Student	Percentage Grade	ECT Credits	Granulated GPA	Granulated GPV*ECTS Calculation
1	71	5	3.6	18
1	46	5	2.4	12
1	51	5	2.6	13
1	70	5	3.6	18
1	48	5	2.4	12
1	64	5	3.0	15
1	70	5	3.6	18
1	66	5	3.2	16
1	41	5	2.0	10
1	73	15	3.6	54
	62.17	60		186
Calculated GPA				3.10
	Second Class Honours -Upper			Second Class Honours -Upper