PS 44 Grade Assignment

GENERAL POLICY
Grading policies, as aspects of the total educational policy of the University, are determined by the faculty subject to the authority of the Board of Supervisors. The grading system is described in detail in the current issue of the General Catalog, for both undergraduate and graduate students. The responsibility of an instructor as the head of the college or university class is to provide an environment conducive to students’ learning and success in the course, and to conduct a fair evaluation of students’ performance in his/her course. This policy reaffirms the role of an instructor to assign grade in his/her course while also providing options for the very few special cases in which alternative measures must be taken to ensure that students receive the fair evaluation to which they are entitled.

BASIS OF GRADES
Assignment of grades should result from the application of academic standards and the objective measurements of students’ course and classroom performance. In no case should the assignment of grades be influenced by extraneous situations, whether institutional goals, retention and graduation objectives or any other measure unrelated to the subject of and assessment within a course.

While it is appropriate (and indeed inevitable) that the instructor should exercise subjective judgment in determining grades, particularly in "borderline" cases, the judgment should be based solely on academic considerations. Grades must not be utilized as coercive or punitive measures reflective of a student’s behavior, attitude, personal philosophy, or other personal characteristics except as those qualities relate directly to the student's level of mastery of the course material.

Grading must be based on work that is assigned and evaluated equitably and fairly, with no special consideration given to individual students unless justified by disability (see PS-26) or excused absence (see PS-22). Individual students should not, for example, be allowed to take on "extra credit" projects, spend extra hours in laboratories, or present themselves for re-examination or special examination unless the same options are available to the entire class on the same terms.

ASSIGNMENT OF GRADES
It is the right and responsibility of the instructor in a course to determine and assign the final letter grade for each student in the course beyond the final date for withdrawing with a W. Individual instructors are expected to assign all grades equitably and consistently in accordance with the standards established by faculties of the various colleges, schools or departments. There is no "University curve" or other table of numerical equivalents of letter grades to which a faculty member must adhere.
If, in a course including the one having multiple sections, there is a need for consistency in grading standards and practices, then the faculty of the relevant unit may, by vote, establish such standards and practices, which will then be promulgated in writing to all faculty members in the unit before the beginning of the semester. An instructor will retain his or her pedagogical freedom within a classroom within these broad established standards. In the absence of such published standards, complete authority for grading abides with the instructor of the course.

At the beginning of each semester, faculty members must promulgate (through paper copies, web site postings or other means) written course syllabi in all courses, both graduate and undergraduate, which must clearly state the relative weight of the component factors of the final grade. Additionally, in 4000-level courses in which instruction of undergraduates for undergraduate credit and graduate students for graduate credit is combined, syllabi should clearly set forth any different expectations of performance by students in the two groups (beyond the expectation of a 2.0 minimum gpa for undergraduates and a 3.0 minimum gpa for graduate students).

At any point in a semester, the instructor should be able to explain, on request, a student's standing in the course, grades assigned to that point, the basis for the grades, and the weight of these grades in the final grade. Following completion of the course, the student is to be provided, on request, a review of his/her examination, an explanation of the final grade, and the method by which it was determined; this review is to include an accounting for all other unreturned work. Faculty members are expected to keep all unreturned student work and grade books for at least six months following termination of a course. If faculty leave the University, permanently or temporarily during this period, their final examinations, all unreturned work, and grade books are to be deposited with the department chair to be kept for at least six months following termination of a course.

In extraordinary circumstances such as medical leave, departure from the university and other unforeseen reasons during the semester, that make it impossible for an instructor to fulfill the teaching responsibility, the administrative officer having immediate jurisdiction (usually the department chair) will determine if a substitute instructor is needed for the remainder of the semester and whether the original instructor is willing or able to assign grades for the course. In the event the original instructor is unable to assign grades for the course, the administrative officer will assign a new instructor of record for the remainder of the course duration. The grades from that day onwards will be assigned by the new instructor of record for the course. The final grades must equitably consider the student performance on record prior to the new instructor’s assigned date to teach the course. In no circumstance, will the new instructor change the grades on record (other than computation or oversight errors) on any item such as assignments or tests, which were neither graded nor administered by the new instructor. As far as practical, the new instructor shall retain the basis for grades and their relative weights as distributed in the course syllabus at the beginning of the semester in determining the final grades. Any deviation for the basis of grades from the original syllabus must be clearly stated, promulgated and explained at the time of the change to the students and to the line officer by the new instructor of record. In the rare event when it is not possible to assign a new instructor of record, the line officer, after consultation with a committee of tenured professors in the department that offers the course, shall assign the grade of P (Pass) to undergraduates for work of at least C quality and to graduate students for work of B quality or
better and a grade of F (Fail) for work not meeting these standards. The makeup of the committee of tenured professors is described below.

The above procedure for grade assignment shall also be followed in case of a rare situation in which an instructor is suspended from his or her teaching duties during a semester by administrative intervention. The reason for administrative intervention may arise due to serious causes resulting in suspension of academic duties under other university policies or due to non-performance or serious under-performance of teaching duties.

Under-performance of teaching duties include a situation where an instructor proves to be hopelessly ineffective in teaching the subject matter to the students to a degree that his or her removal is the only option left for the benefit of the students’ learning of the course material. The line officer (usually the chair of the department) must address any concern with the instructor first and must always respect his or her academic and pedagogical freedom in the class room. If the perceived problem persists, the line officer shall consult with a committee comprising of at least six tenured professors of rank equal to or higher than the instructor under consideration from the department to counsel the instructor. Unit rules shall specify a process for establishing this committee. The instructor can select one tenured professor to the committee, if he or she so desires. In the event, there are fewer than six tenured professors in the department of rank equal to or higher than the instructor under consideration, qualified individuals can be added from outside the department. If the committee of tenured professors agrees that the situation cannot be resolved and warrants further action, the line officer will contact the dean of the college or school. The dean will meet with the instructor and the chair. If they are unable to resolve the situation, the dean will approach the Provost. The dean shall present the reasons for such intervention in writing to the provost and the instructor concerned. The provost will make the decision on whether administrative intervention is appropriate or not after consulting with the instructor concerned.

CHANGING GRADES
Once submitted to the Office of the University Registrar, a grade may not be changed except as follows:
1. Completion of an I grade
2. Correction of an error in computation
3. Through the academic appeal procedure (see Grade Appeals - LSU General Catalog)

If the academic appeal mechanism is followed, appropriate correspondence must accompany the change-of-grade form.