## Plus/Minus Grading System FAQ

### Adoption of Plus/Minus Grade Symbols at Foothill and De Anza Colleges: Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the new policy on the use of plus and minus grade symbols? The Foothill and De Anza Academic Senates asked the Board of Trustees to approve adoption of plus/minus grade symbols, and the Board approved the adoption of the new grading scale beginning with the Fall 2006 term. The adopted policy states:**

* *Starting with the fall term of the 2006-07 academic year, the grade scale will include plus and minus symbols. Grade points will be calculated as described in the Grade Scale table.*

***Grade Scale:  
A+ 4.0   
A   4.0   
A-  3.7   
B+ 3.3   
B   3.0   
B-  2.7   
C+ 2.3   
C   2.0   
D+ 1.3   
D   1.0   
D-  0.7   
F   0.0***

**Why are we doing this?** A short answer is *because the faculty determined by vote that this change was desirable.* A longer answer recognizes factors that were discussed more thoroughly prior to adoption: consistency with the system used at UC and CSU campuses, the fact that +/- symbols will reduce the size of certain grade inequities that result with a system using only base letter grades, the belief held by many faculty members that they *can*distinguish between, say, B and B+ work, and the recognition that student effort to improve a grade that falls short of that required for a full letter grade change can result in a change under the +/i system.

**Am I required to assign plus/minus grades in my courses?**Individual faculty members assign grades that they believe best reflect the performance of their students. It is the position of the Academic Senates at both Foothill and De Anza Colleges that a plus/minus grading system allows an instructor to make finer and possibly more accurate distinctions in evaluating students’ performance and have argued this case successfully before the Board of Trustees. Senate language regarding this issue described a situation in which all faculty “acknowledge” the “+” and “-“ symbols. The Senates encourage faculty to use a plus/minus grading system in their courses. However, individual faculty members have the right and responsibility to assign grades that they believe best reflect the performance of their students.

**Can I assign a C- course grade?**No. California Education Code does not allow the reporting of a C- grade.

**Can I assign an A+ course grade?** Yes. However, the California Education Code defines a grading scale with NO grade greater than a 4.0 in the determination of a student’s GPA. If you assign an A+ grade, the A+ will appear on the student’s transcript, although the A+ will earn 4.0 grade points. (This is consistent with current practice at public four-year institutions in California.)

**Should I tell my students about the adoption of plus/minus in my green sheets/course syllabi?** Your syllabi/green sheets should describe the grading policies you use in your courses. Any changes in your policy necessitated by the adoption of the plus/minus symbols should be reflected in these documents as of the beginning of the fall 2006 term.

**I have more questions about the adoption of the +/- system. Who can a talk to about this and where can I get information about how to start doing this?**A good place to start is by contacting your Academic Senate officers directly or through your division Senate representatives.

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