

THE KERALA STATE HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

GRADING SIMPLIFIED

The following is a simplified version of the guidelines for grading in undergraduate courses formulated by the Kerala State Higher Education Council in question-answer format.

I. What is wrong with marking?

1. Evaluation involves assessment of quality which is largely subjective and therefore imprecise. In marking, a precision scale is used for assessment. The use of a fine scale for a raw assessment could lead to distortions in evaluation.
2. Different scales are used for evaluating different types of answers in the same test, necessitating constant shifts in mental scales and thus complicating the evaluation process
3. Marks are awarded taking into account the quality and range of an answer, which makes evaluation a complex process.

II. What is grading? What are its variants?

Grades, like marks, are tools used for assessment. While marks are precision scales, grades are broad scales. Grading is therefore a coarse assessment on a coarse scale. Grading can be used (1) as supplementary to marks to minimize distortions in assessment (2) as an assessment tool in place of marks. In direct grading, grades are used in place of marks. In indirect grading, grades are used to supplement marks to minimize distortions in assessment. Indirect grading is absolute when marks given on a 101 point scale are converted into 5/7/9/11 point scale. It is relative when marks are converted into grades on the basis of the relative performance of students in the same class/ college/university.

III. What are the limitations of absolute / relative grading?

In absolute grading, marks awarded are classified into different grades, with a view to minimizing errors arising from subjective assessment. The boundaries of different ranges of performance are rigid in this classification. This could lead to distortions in assessment in respect of those who score close to the margins. In relative grading, the performance of each student is compared with that of his peers and graded to ensure normal distribution in performance assessment. The number of students falling into each category is fixed on the basis of normal distribution. Such an arrangement may be some times unjust as the statistical principle of normal distribution may not be duplicated in all real life situations .Awarding grades on the basis of a pre-fixed pattern may not represent the actual academic and intellectual ability of students.

IV. What are the advantages of direct grading?

Direct grading simplifies the process of assessment and presents a more objective alternative to marking, as explained below.

1. It makes a raw assessment on a raw scale.
2. Uses a uniform scale for the assessment of quality
3. Separates assessment of quality and range

V. What is the process of direct grading?

In direct grading, marks are done away with. Each answer is graded for its quality. Weightage is then given, based on the range of the question, as given in the question paper. Grades and weightages are assigned numerical values. This would help combine grades and arrive at mean grades. The weighted grade points of answers are arrived at by multiplying grade points by weightage. The sum of weighted grade points is then divided by the sum of the weightage to arrive at the Grade Point Average (GPA) for the paper. The same procedure is adopted for external and internal evaluation. The grades of different papers could be combined and the mean taken to arrive at the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of an entire programme.

VI. What is the place of normal distribution in internal evaluation?

The statistical principle of normal distribution assumes that the performance of individuals within a large group follow a definite pattern which can be represented in terms of a normal curve. Thus if a sample of 100 candidates is taken, assuming a normal distribution, grading could be done as shown below:

Grading under normal distribution

Classification	Grade	Percentage of population
Outstanding	1	7
Very Good	2	24
Good	3	38
Fair	4	24
Poor	5	7

Though normal distribution need not be strictly implemented by regulation, the principle of normal distribution may be recognized as a guideline for assessment, especially in internal assessment. This, along with the inclusion of the name of the institution and the class average in the score sheet would go a long way to ensure greater differentiation in the scores awarded in the internal evaluation and make it more reliable than at present.

VII. How does a teacher calculate the overall grade of an answer paper?

The following illustration could be instructive

Suppose the weightage for different types of questions and the grades awarded are as follows:

Type of Questions	Question No	Grades awarded	Grade Points	Weightage	Weighted Grade Points
Objective (in bunches of four)	1-4	B	3	1	3
	5-8	A	4	1	4
	9-12	A	4	1	4
	13-16	C	2	1	2
	17-20	D	1	1	1
Short Answer	21	C	2	1	2
	22	B	3	1	3
	23	A	4	1	4
	24	D	1	1	1
	25	A	4	1	4
	26	B	3	1	3
Short Essay	27	B	3	2	6
	28	F	0	2	0
	29	B	3	2	6
	30	A	4	2	8
Long Essay	31	B	3	4	12
	32	D	1	4	4
Total				27	67

Combined grade point average of the paper = Total weighted grade points ÷ sum of the weightage = $67/27 = 2.48 = \text{Grade C}$

VIII. What is the advantage of 5 point scale for initial valuation and 7 point scale for final certification?

The assessment of the Council is that a 5 point scale is the most suitable uniform scale for the evaluation of answers to questions as varied as a bunch of four objective type questions, short answers, short essays and long essays. For final certification a seven points or even larger scale can be used as no assessment is involved at that stage. Use of a larger scale could facilitate finer distinctions at this stage, without affecting the overall quality of assessment. The following table would show that the five point scale has only been expanded into 7 point scale by making finer distinctions within the broad scales of A, B & C, by distinguishing between A & A+, B & B+, C & C+

Five Point Scale for Evaluation

Grade	Grade range
A	3.5 to 4
B	2.5 to 3.49
C	1.5 to 2.49
D	.5 to 1.49
F	Less than .5

Seven Point Scale for Certification

Grade	Grade range
A⁺	3.8 to 4
A	3.5 to 3.79
B⁺	3 to 3.49
B	2.5 to 2.99
C⁺	2 to 2.49
C	1.5 to 1.99
D	.5 to 1.49

IX How is question setting under the grading system different from question setting under the marking system?

Under marking system, maximum marks are allotted to answers by the question setter on the basis of the range of the question. Accordingly, the marks allotted for an essay type question would be many times that of an objective type question. Under grading, instead of allotting marks, the range is expressed in terms of weightage. As per the guidelines of the Council, a bunch of four questions would carry a weightage of 1, a short answer 1, (assuming that a bunch of four objective type questions is the equivalent in range of one short answer question) a short essay 2 and a long essay 4. Problems, derivations etc. could also be given appropriate weightage. The decision on the type of questions to be set and the weightage given to each would have to be taken by the respective Boards of Studies. Instead of indicating maximum marks against each question, the question paper should carry information about the weightage for each question.

Member Secretary