

NOVEMBER 23

RE: MA15900 Semester Grade calculations, Failing? Maybe not, etc.

Although we still have a couple of days to go, I first want to wish you all a pleasant Thanksgiving break.

****RAISING YOUR GRADE:**

Just to be clear, when I say there is yet hope to improve your overall grade it is not just some rosy platitude, although you certainly need to earn that improvement by finishing strong on quizzes & HW and ultimately by doing well on the Final Exam. Some of you still do not understand the curve we will use for calculating final semester grades and think you are failing the class when the vast majority of you are not failing. Hopefully the individualized grade estimate I sent you helped you to see about where you currently are grade-wise(Read all of that email carefully).

*SEE further below for more information on the Semester Grades process.

****How much can I raise your grade by? How much do you need to score on the Final Exam?**

The short, reasonable answer is typically up(or down) a full letter grade is quite possible, perhaps slightly more in extraordinary circumstances. I cannot tell you exactly what score you need on the Final Exam, but with the remaining quizzes, the remaining HWs, and a 200 point Final Exam, quite a bit can change. For example, if you currently have a C-, to raise your grade to a B- would likely take a high B grade on the Final Exam, and the maximum possible letter grade for such students would likely be a B if they scored a middle A on the Final Exam. If you currently have a solid regular C, then a solid middle B grade on the Final Exam is quite likely to earn you a B- or maybe even a B.

****BOTTOM LINE:** Try to finish as strong as you are able on the remaining Quizzes, HWs, and Final Exam.

******FINAL Exam MA15900**

******Monday, December 13**

****** 8:00 AM (2 hour exam), in the early morning**

******Location: To be announced**

YOU CAN GET YOUR ENTIRE FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE THROUGH MYPURDUE

In about a week or so I will be sending you more specific information regarding the MA15900 Final Exam. If you just cannot wait and want to start reviewing, then use the MA15900 Assignment Sheet and the associated odd-numbered problems from Chapters 1, 2, 3... from the textbook.

Best,

Owen K. Davis

RE: MA15900 Semester Grade calculations

The semester grade calculation process we use is indeed hard for students to grasp. I assure you it is extremely fair and works very well.

For those of you who want more detail on this process than exists in the MA15900 Ground Rules (which are available on the MA 15900 webpage www.math.purdue.edu/MA15900), this email answers a few common student questions and gives more details how semester letter grades will be calculated in perhaps a bit more understandable way than the necessarily shorter ground rules explanation.

COMPUTATION OF FINAL GRADES

****All the homeworks combined are worth as much as 3/4 of a midterm exam at the end of the semester (HW grade = HW% * 75 points). For online HW (CengageNOW), (90%,80%,60%,45%) would be reasonable but approximate (A,B,C,D) cutoffs if you look up your overall iLrn percentage.**

NOTE: You can see your current HW percentage for all assignments(includes completed assignments, started assignments, and assignments past due in the system). Simply click on the "Courses" tab in CengageNOW. Click on the "Grades" tab for the individual assignment scores.

**All the quizzes combined are worth as much as 5/4 of a midterm exam at the end of the semester (Quiz grade = Quiz% * 125 points).

OVERALL GRADES

Quizzes are worth 125 points, the online Homework is worth 75 points, each of the three evening Exams is worth 100 points, and the Final Exam is worth 200 points. This is a total of 700 points for the semester. At the end of the semester, each student's grade is determined using his/her total points out of 700 points.

The course grades are calculated as follows: Letter grade cut-offs are determined for the four common exams combined (500 points possible). These cutoffs have always been reasonably curved and have always been more generous (lower) than 90-80-70-60 (lower than 450, 400, 350, and 300 points respectively for A, B, C, and D grades). Then, your recitation instructor determines the number of each letter grade his/her students earned as a group based on the total of their four exam scores, out of 500 points. This will determine specifically how many A's, B's, C's, D's, and F's a specific recitation instructor will be allowed to give. Note that this does not determine which individual students will actually get the A's, B's, etc. for the semester grade. For instance, a student could have high B's on the exams, but due to getting an A on the homeworks and quizzes, conceivably end up with an A for the semester. Conversely, a student could have A's on the exams, but due to poor or very poor quiz and homework performance could end up with a B or even potentially a C for the semester.

Next, your recitation instructor lists all of his students' total semester points (out of the 700 total points available), in numerical order, highest to lowest. If ten of his students receive an A according to the four exam cut-offs, the first 10 students on this list of total semester points will automatically receive an A as their final grade in the course, and so on down the list for the other grades. Further, students 1 to 15 points below a grade cut-off (based on the 700 total points available) will automatically be raised to the closest higher minus grade(For example, earned C grade by total points raised to B-). Other students who are 16 to 30 points below a grade cutoff are considered borderline cases. If the grade obtained on the final exam, the four-exam composite total, or the quizzes is at least as good as the higher one in the borderline, the course grade will be raised to the closest higher minus grade(For example, earned C grade raised to B-), otherwise these students will receive the closest plus grade(For example, earned C grade raised to C+). NOTE: There is no F+ grade, so D/F borderline grades will either be raised to a D- or remain an F. Even further, B, C, & D students who are 31 to 45 points below a grade cut-off will receive the closest plus grade(For example, earned C grade raised to C+).

***3 common student questions...

> Is the score on the math website for the exam grades going to be curved? Or are they already curved? The scores are what they are. No recalculation of the exam scores is done. It is a different type of curve than many of you are used to. Instead of recalculating your the grade based on the curve, we simply lower the percentage standard for what constitutes an A, B, C, etc. Your Exam grades will always be your actual rounded percentage scores. So 8 out 17 correct answers is a 47% and was the lowest C score on Exam 3 and your score would remain 47 points out of 100.

***Here is another student question I received...

"I got a 65 on my exam. What would my letter grade be if I got a 65 out of 100? Why is my grade not a D?"

Because we lower the scale for what constitutes a D. We set the scale where we think it should go and then assign letter grades. A score of 65 on Exam 3 is a middle C, a 71 would be a high C. Do not over-think it. The exams are relatively tough and so we are more generous than 90-80-70-60. Instead for our Exam 3 it was 88-76-47-35. It is what is what is.

***A third student question on the grading scale...

I am still a little bit confused by the grading scale. I am wondering, do I have to be in the higher percentage of the class in order to get an A, or can I just get a certain number of points to get an A?

Hmm...because the exams are harder some semesters than others and an individual TUTH instructor may grade the quizzes harder or easier than most, there is no set number of points I can tell you to attain for an A out of the semester total of 700 possible points. I can tell you the standard for an A will always be more generous(less than), 90% of the semester's 700 possible points, as for example on the relatively tough Exam 2 where 82% was the lowest A score(Note: While 88% was the lowest A score on an easier Exam 3). Also, there is no set percentage of the number of students I will give A's, B's, etc. to at the end of the semester. That will vary from semester to semester depending on students performance.

****The bottom line is that you are in control of your own grade destiny. If you achieve the lowest A on all the Exams by the grade estimates/cutoffs I publish after each exam, a 90% on the HW, and score an average of 18 points on the quizzes, then you will easily end up with a solid A for the semester letter grade. The same sort of generosity holds true for the other letter grades also. The standard number of points required to attain a semester grade of B will always be more generous than 80% of the 700 possible semester points and for a C much more generous than 70%(for example 47% on Exam 3 was a low C).

I hope this helps you understand how your final semester letter grade will be calculated after the final exam is complete.

Best,
Owen K. Davis