

Grading Methodology for MA 161

Exam 1	100	pts
+ Exam 2	100	pts
+ Exam 3	100	pts
+ Final Exam	<u>200</u>	pts
= Common Exam Total	500	pts
Common Exam Total	500	pts
+ Homework	100	pts
+ Quizzes	100	pts
= Overall Score	700	pts

The TAs will be allocated letter grades as determined by their students' **Common Exam Totals**. TAs will award these course letter grades to their students based on each student's **Overall Score**.

How are TAs allocated grades?'

Cutoffs will be applied uniformly across all sections to the **Common Exam Totals**. The Common Exam Total grades will be allocated *at least as generously* as the following cutoffs (out of 500 points): 450 A-, 400 B-, 325 C-, 250 D. Each TA will be allocated a certain number of each kind of letter grade (A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, F) to award to their students.

How do TAs award the grades they've been allocated?'

The TAs will award their allocated letter grades within each section by each student's **Overall Score** out of 700 points. By ranking students within each section by **Overall Score**, the course-wide cutoffs for **Common Exam Total** are translated into section-specific cutoffs for **Overall Score**. In this way, the number of allocated grades from a common scale will determine cutoffs on the students' **Overall Scores** within each section, and grades will be assigned accordingly.

EXAMPLE: Suppose the Common Exam Total cutoffs this semester are 465 for A, 450 for A-, 430 for B+, etc. Suppose that one particular recitation section has five students each with a **Common Exam Total** of 465 or more, ten students between 450 and 465, twenty-five students between 430 and 450, etc. The TA is allocated five A's, ten A-'s, twenty-five B+'s, etc. To assign course grades, students in that section are ranked based on **Overall Score**; the instructor then counts from the top and draws a cutoff line after the fifth student (the A line), another cutoff line after fifteenth student (the A- line), another cutoff line after the fortieth student (the B+ line), etc.

Remarks

- The use of the common exam total in assigning final grades is designed to provide uniformity across different sections under the supervisions of different recitation instructors.
- The \pm within category are determined (approximately) by the top 30% getting +, the bottom 30% getting -, and the middle no change. Students within a few points of an Overall Score cutoff line may be bumped up.
- Although advisory letter grades might be announced for each midterm, the **Common Exam Total** is a sum of **raw** numerical scores unadjusted in any way. The advisory cutoffs are designed to help students anticipate where they stand before the **Common Exam Total** cutoffs are assigned.
- Homework and quizzes constitute an extremely important part of the course. A poor score on either one of these categories can jeopardize students' effort towards a good grade, especially in borderline cases. On the other hand, homework and quizzes only contribute 200 points to the **Overall Score** while the exams contribute 500 points. Obviously a poor performance on the exams most likely will not be compensated by good scores on homework and quizzes.