
FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE ON PLUS/MINUS GRADING

Prepared by the Student Government Association Executive Branch



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Plus-minus Grading Scale Con Arguments

I. Negative impact on recruitment and retention:

A. Not used elsewhere in KY

- i. EKU grads less competitive with other KY grads when entering work force, graduate school, law school, etc.

B. Disadvantage to top students

- i. Honors Program: 94% disapproval and belief that system will hurt their GPAs.
- ii. No reward for exceptional performance; lack of A+
- iii. President Elect of KY Association for Gifted Education, Pat Noble- "The plus/minus system is a nebulous reflection of the students' achievements and does not reflect the true accomplishments made by bright individuals."
- iv. Rick Matthew's Model (negative impact above 3.4; greatest at 3.8).
- v. 70% all EKU students receive some form of financial aid, 80% including KEES recipients; all GPA dependent.

II. Illusion of accuracy if no clearly specified learning criteria:

- A. Arbitrary expectations: Faculty not using pluses or minuses, assigning them for attendance, 80%-95%= B; 92%-97% = A-, etc.
- B. Does not address faculty accountability for classroom performance and quality of teaching.

III. Will not "fix" grade inflation

- A. Assumption that grade inflation is bad
 - i. Students whose grades increased dramatically from 1983-1996 scored 10-16 on ACT.
 - ii. Open admissions policy since removed - must score 18 on ACT.
 - iii. Grade inflation shows increase of better and more focused students.
- B. Problems with grade inflation report:
 - i. Holds individual students accountable for low faculty expectations and classmates' poor performance.
 - ii. Study did not include a diverse sampling of students.
 - iii. No evidence of outside research.

IV. Fairness

- A. If grade inflation exists, blames students for faculty's increased assignment of high grades.
- B. Students already established GPA under one grading scale.
- C. Breach of contract for 1997-1999 University Catalogue students.

V. Lack of Faculty Support

- A. 1998 survey: 42% wanted **option** to use plus/minus
- B. 3 votes by Senate before new scale established
- C. New structure of Senate: reduced administration

FACULTY SURVEY (N = 86)

Mean

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1.78 | 1. Overall, I support the plus/minus grading scale. |
| 1.98 | 2. Plus/Minus will benefit my students. |
| 2.18 | 3. Plus/Minus will solve grade inflation. |
| 3.38 | 4. Plus/Minus is confusing to my students. |
| 2.6 | 5. Plus/Minus is simple to administer in my classes. |

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

STUDENT SURVEY (N = 145)

Mean

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1.68 | 1. Overall, I like the plus/minus grading scale. |
| 3.48 | 2. I would choose a University with a 5-point scale over one with a 12-Point scale. |
| 3.28 | 3. Plus/Minus will affect my financial aid. |
| 3.14 | 4. I find Plus/Minus confusing. |
| 2.03 | 5. My professors support Plus/Minus. |

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

FACULTY COMMENTS

SGA PLUS/MINUS SURVEY

- This should be decided by faculty not students.
- If continuing with system it is only fair to award A+ or A then B+/- through D. current system dilutes value of A.
- I think they should use the system at University of Wisconsin: A – AB – B – BC – C – etc.
- Evaluation of our student's transcripts by outside agencies, like graduate or professional schools, will be problematic.
- It is a hideous, stupid system. It needs to be scrapped.
- This is a new process and acceptance by students may increase after they become accustomed to it.
- The system will lower the average student's GPA.
- See 1-3 above!
- Change is always hard, but overall I think it is good, once you get used to it.
- Plus/minus is more discrete and I feel better about the grades I assign.
- I could support the assignment or percentage grades but the addition of a +/- is just adding to the breaking points and will create a higher level of student/teacher tension.
- Generally, my students have not liked this system
- Students say it actually penalizes them.
- Yuk.
- I don't like the policy that forces all instructors to give plus/minus grades. That is an instructor's choice at most universities.
- Useless complication, it sucks.
- Why voice your opinion now, after it has been implemented-why not speak up earlier?
- While simple, it takes up much time and seems to have little value.
- I was adamantly opposed to this issue and voted no when I was on Faculty Senate. I see this in direct opposition to student retention and a waste of financial resources.
- Plus/Minus hurts most of my students GPA and does not affect grade inflation since my grading methods do not allow grade inflation.
- I see no advantage to a +/- system. How it could stop grade inflation is beyond me. Faculty who "pad" grades to increase popularity will still continue to do so. We've added a lot of confusion for nothing.

Student Comments

SGA PLUS/MINUS SURVEY

- It's going to make my cumulative GPA go way down. So that's sad.
- I dislike it completely. It will affect my GPA drastically and I feel it's unfair.
- I think an A is an A regardless to the grading scale. According to the +/-, if you worked hard for an A, then you deserve the points for an A towards your GPA.
- I don't like this system, because when I started this college it wasn't that way.
- I work very hard to make decent grades (3.3 or so) and now I will have to work twice as hard to receive the same grades.
- It causes trouble for students.
- It hurts students more than it helps us.
- It should have been grand fathered in.
- I believe it is unfair to those students who needs a good GPA who are competing against other universities with a 5 point scale, like graduate school, medical school.
- Plus-minus rewards those who make Bs and below by providing a plus, yet they do not reward those that make As with an A+. In fact they penalize them by taking some of the 4 points that they worked so hard to achieve/attain! It is inconsistent and unfair.
- I have attended other universities and they have the average 5 point scale which works much better for the students and their future.
- If going to be implement plus/minus, then it should only begin with incoming freshman.
- The plus/minus system has not proven to be beneficial to any student at ECU or other universities who have been on the same system.
- If the university wants to implement +/-, it should be on incoming freshman and not those who had a 5 point scale in their undergrad catalog.
- We hate the +/- scale!
- I don't like the change, I believe it affects my GPA.
- Being a paralegal student with hopes of going to law school, this could be very damaging for my future.
- It could affect my financial aid.
- It's not fair.
- I strongly dislike the 12 point grading scale.
- Some of the professors use it, but not all.
- May we go back to the old grading scale?
- If the plus/minus scores will affect my GPA and Financial Aid, I want it to be the easiest way to get financial assistance.
- I am thinking of transferring to another school that doesn't have a +/- system.
- As a 4.0 student for last two terms, I now find myself worrying about my A- instead of learning. How does this affect President's List, Dean's List, and Scholarships?
- Do not like this system at all.
- Do not like this grading scale.