

Unanimously approved by the Academic Affairs Committee on November 12, 2014.

Guidelines to Enhance Course Rigor

Each course is expected to include assessed coursework that is challenging, rigorous, and aligned with the learning outcomes in its syllabus. It is important to identify courses that lack rigor promptly so that the issue may be addressed. Signs of laxness may include a consistent pattern of grade inflation across all the courses an instructor teaches.

Because course rigor is evaluated with respect to the nature of the course and its discipline, department chairs should review the grade distributions for the courses taught by faculty in their respective department and consider an appropriate plan of action to address potential issues in conversation with the individual instructor. This intervention should usually suffice to address issues related to course rigor.

Examples of guiding principles that each department chair may consider include the following:

1. At the undergraduate level, an instructor should not assign an A– and above for more than 60% of the total final course grades assigned across all courses taught in the calendar year.
2. At the graduate level, an instructor should not assign an A– and above for more than 80% of the total final course grades assigned across all courses taught in the calendar year.
3. At the undergraduate and graduate level, an instructor should not assign an A+ for more than 10% of the total final course grades assigned across all courses taught in the calendar year.

The application of this guideline is limited in scope:

1. At the undergraduate level, this guideline applies only to instructors who cumulatively teach at least 20 students in regular undergraduate courses, and likewise at the graduate level, during the calendar year.
2. This guideline applies to an instructor cumulatively, across all courses taught in a given calendar year at the undergraduate level, and likewise at the graduate level. It does not apply to individual courses.
3. This guideline applies only to regular courses. It does not, for example, apply to arranged courses, such as capstones, independent studies, practicums, internships, theses, projects, or research rotations.