

## Final Letter Grade Determination

The purpose of this document is to describe how final letter grades for the course are assigned based on the 500 available points.

There is a common *myth* that getting 90% of the available points in any course entitles a student to an A, 80% entitles the student to a B, etc. We refer to this as a *myth* because it is false! In Math 135 (as in many of the large calculus courses at Rutgers), there is absolutely no connection between getting a certain percentage of the points and getting a certain letter grade. Instead, the Math Department requires that grades be assigned based on a particular system, which is described below.

After the final exam is graded, the Math Department determines what score on the final exam is an A, what score is a B+, what score is a B, all the way down through all of the grades. This determination is based both on how well students have mastered the required material and on the difficulty of the exam. Each instructor is then directed to count how many students in each of their large-lecture sections received final exam grades of A, B+, B, etc. These numbers determine the total numbers of A's, B+'s, B's, etc., that the instructor gives in that large-lecture section. A student's letter grade on the final exam is not necessarily their letter grade in the course.

In order to assign grades to particular students, each instructor sorts all of the students in each large-lecture section, from highest to lowest, based on the students' point totals for the entire course, that is, their score out of the 500 possible points. The instructor then starts at the top of the list, counts off the number of each grade allocated to the class, and assigns the grades in descending order. For example, suppose that 10 students get A's on the final exam, and 5 students get B+'s. Then the students with the 10 highest overall point totals for the course will get A's, and the student with the next 5 highest point totals will get B+'s. The instructor proceeds down the list, assigning the total number of allocated B's, C+'s, C's, D's, and F's, until each student has a grade. Thus a student's course grade is sometimes not the same as their final exam grade.

The reason why this system is fair is that everyone enrolled in Math 135 across the university takes an equivalent version of the same final exam, so counting how many of each grade was earned on the final exam by a particular section is an accurate way of measuring how well that section mastered the required material. This way, a grade of A in Math 135 corresponds to the same level of mastery, independent of the professor, recitation instructor, and difficulty level of the midterm exams and quizzes.

Please note that this method of assigning grades means a student's rank in the class is essentially a *meaningless* statistic. A student ranked, say 33 out of 75, is no more or less entitled to an A than a student ranked 1 out of 75 or 56 out of 75. The number of A's for the class is determined by the class's performance on the final exam. Thus, being at a certain rank or higher does not guarantee a particular letter grade. Letter grades are determined by the method described above and only by that method.