memo

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| To: | Graduate Policy Committee |
| From: | Jeffrey Kahn, Chair Curriculum Committee |
| Date: | September 12, 2018 (revised) |
| Re: | College of Law Grades |
|  | The College of Law is seeking approval from the Graduate Policy Committee to switch to a new grading scale. Currently, in a departure from the practices of most (if not all) of the rest of the University, the College of Law uses a numeric grading scale from 60 to 100. The College of Law is requesting to switch to a letter grading system with quality points that match the University’s ordinary grading scale. This change will put the College of Law in line with the rest of Florida State University.  The College of Law Curriculum Committee commenced work on this proposal in the summer of 2016, in consultation with the Administration. During the fall 2017 and early spring 2018, the Curriculum Committee held a number of formal and informal conversations with faculty members, students, staff, and administrators regarding these potential changes. The Curriculum Committee drafted and circulated in formal proposal in the late spring 2018 semester. During this time, the College of Law sought comments and assistance from the University Registrar. On April 3, 2018, Kim Barber and Aimee Leturmy of the University’s Registrar Office met with the College of Law Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean of Academic Programs, the COL Registrar, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, and the Director of the COL Technology Office. At that meeting, a basic strategic plan was developed for carrying out the proposed shift in grading scale from a numeric to a letter grading system. The College of Law Administration has continued to coordinate with Kim Barber and her colleagues regarding this proposal. In mid-April, the Curriculum Committee approved the proposed change to the grading scheme and submitted it to the College of Law faculty for their approval. The faculty met on April 24, 2018 to consider the Curriculum Committee’s proposal. The faculty discussed the various pros and cons of making the change, and voted unanimously to approve (see below regarding a compromise discussed and approved at the faculty meeting).  The attached revised by-laws illustrate the proposed changes. They also lay out the transition plan that the school will adopt to address concerns about lack of notice and retroactive grading changes to our upper-level students. Briefly, all current upper-division students will continue to receive numeric grades, and their transcripts will continue to report numeric grades from 60 to 100. The class entering in the Fall 2018 semester will be the first class that will have transcripts with grades using letter grades. The students in that class were informed before enrolling at the College of Law that the College planned to make the grading change, beginning with the grades issued at the end of the Fall 2018 semester.[[1]](#footnote-1)  As noted this change will put the College of Law in line with the rest of the university. In fact, originally the faculty preferred to use an assignment of quality points based on thirds of points rather than quarters, which is more typical at American law schools (for example, a B+ would be a 3.33 rather than a 3.25). At the faculty meeting, the faculty decided that despite that preference, it was better to match the university standard. However, one difference should be noted. Because of the needs of law-school grading and hiring in the legal profession, the faculty felt it was very important to keep an A+ grade (which converts to a 4.25. on the grading scale) to reserve a mark of distinction for its highest-performing students. We hope that the Graduate Policy Committee will allow us to continue to use the A+ grade that we have used in the past. Although it is rare to award that grade, it is viewed by the faculty as a critical part of the grading array. |

**Proposed Revision to College of Law By-Laws**

Section 4 Grading System

4.1 Grading System

The College of Law assigns the following letter grades. Each grade corresponds to a number of points:

Grade Points

A+ 4.25

A 4.00

A– 3.75

B+ 3.25

B 3.00

B– 2.75

C+ 2.25

C 2.00

C– 1.75

D+ 1.25

D 1.00

D– 0.75

F 0.00

The College of Law may also report the following codes on students’ official transcripts:

Code Meaning

S Satisfactory work

U Unsatisfactory work

I Incomplete

IE Incomplete expired

AF Administrative failure

AD Administrative disenrollment (no credit)

WD Withdrawn from course by permission of the College of Law

W Withdrawn from the College of Law or the University

4.1.1. The grade of A+ may be awarded only to students who are currently enrolled in one of the College of Law’s academic programs (the J.D., LL.M., J.M., and Certificate programs). An FSU student who is not currently enrolled in a College of Law academic program and who takes a College of Law class will be graded in accordance with the grading scale set forth in 4.1, *except that* an A+ may not be awarded to such a student.

4.1.2 Transition Rules

JD Students:

*2018-2019*:

All first-year students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1.

All second-year and third-year students will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale until they graduate, in order to minimize disruptions.

*2019-2020*:

All first-year and second-year students will be will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1.

All third-year students will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale.

*2020-2021*:

All JD students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1. Note: although we expect that all JD students who began before the 2018-19 academic year, would have graduated, any who have not, will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scheme until they graduate.

LL.M. Students:

*2018-2019*:

All LL.M. students will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale, in order to minimize disruptions.

*2019-2020*:

All entering LL.M. students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1.

All continuing LL.M. students will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale until they graduate.

*2020-2021*:

All LL.M. students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1. Note: although we expect that all LL.M. students who began before the 2019-20 academic year, would have graduated, any who have not, will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale until they graduate.

J.M. Students:

*2018-2019*:

All entering J.M. students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1.

All continuing J.M. students will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale until they graduate.

*2019-2020*:

All entering J.M. students, and those who began in 2018-19, will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1.

All J.M. students who began before the 2018-19 academic year will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scale until they graduate.

*2020-2021*:

All J.M. students will be awarded letter grades on their transcripts according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1. Note: although we expect that all J.M. students who began before the 2018-19 academic year, would have graduated, any who have not, will be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts under the current numeric scheme until they graduate.

4.1.3 Rules for JD, LL.M, and J.M. Students Readmitted to the College of Law

Beginning in 2020-2021, any JD, LL.M. and J.M student who was previously academically dismissed or otherwise dropped out of the College of Law and successfully seeks readmission will be awarded letter grades on their transcript according to the letter grading system described in Section 4.1. Any previous numeric grades that the student has on their transcript will be converted into letter grades using the following table:

A+ 98-100

A 93-97

A– 90-92

B+ 86-89

B 80-85

B– 77-79

C+ 74-76

C 69-73

C– 65-68

D 62-64

F 60-61

Note: section 4.1.2 applies only to JD, LL.M., and J.M. students who were academically dismissed or otherwise dropped out of the College of Law. Any other JD, LL.M. and J.M. student who began their studies under the numeric scale and continue their studies without such interruptions will continue to be awarded numeric grades on their transcripts until they graduate.

1. Note: law school classes, particularly those in the first-year, only have one exam, held at the end of the semester, which made it easier to begin the transition during the fall 2018 semester. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)