

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Office of the Chancellor

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ON THE PLUS AND MINUS GRADING SYSTEM

1. Why should we change to a plus and minus grading system?

- The plus and minus grading system reflects student achievement more accurately and provides precise feedback to students so they might learn how to improve their performances.
- The plus and minus grading system promotes fairness and honesty in the assessment of student performance by reducing the size of the differences between neighboring grades. For example, a student who has done work that deserves somewhat less than a B could be given a B- rather than a C under the new grading system.
- A plus and minus grading system that has been in use at UH Hilo is working well and has added flexibility to student assessment.
- The plus and minus grading system would encourage students to achieve more by creating a more competitive environment.
- The new Banner student information system will allow for plus and minus grades to be assigned to students.
- At least 80% of the 100 top universities in the country use plus and minus grades.

2. Will this system lower students' GPAs?

There is no substantial evidence that a change to a plus and minus grading system would tend to lower or raise GPAs.

3. Are faculty able to differentiate between slight variations in the quality of students' work?

If faculty do not wish to use the more precise plus and minus grading system, they may continue to assign only whole letter grades. If they believe they are capable of making more subtle distinctions in student performance, under the plus and minus system, they can give the most accurate feedback on student performance.

4. Shouldn't the A+ be awarded a higher score than 4.0?

An A+ would appear on the transcript to show that a student received the highest rating. However, because a 4.0 is the highest numerical score in GPAs, an A+ will be assigned a 4.0 score.

5. Would the new grading system change the academic standards for graduation (e.g., minimum GPA of 2.0), scholarships, and other grade policies?

The implementation of the new grading system would not result in changes in the academic standards for graduation, scholarships, and other current grade policies.

An academic advisor should be consulted for more information on the plus and minus grading system.