

# An Open Forum on a Proposed Revision of the PolyU's Grading System & Institutional Subject Grading Descriptors

## **Dr. M. S. Wong & Dr. Shirley Ngai**

Co-Chair of the Working Group on Subject Quality  
Assurance (WGSQA)

## **Prof. Michael Prosser**

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Honorary/Adjunct Professor  
The University of Sydney, The University of Tasmania

**Date** : 21 Nov (Wed)  
22 Nov (Thu) - Rerun

**Time** : 12:45 – 2:15 pm

**Venue** : Rm TU411

This open forum is co-organized by the Working Group on Subject Quality Assurance and the Educational Development Centre

# Findings from 2<sup>nd</sup> QAC Audit Panel Report in 2017

Enhancement Action and Relevant Background Information	Issue Owners	Proposed Action Plan for Submission to QAC Secretariat (As per the QAC Audit Manual, please indicate what actions will be taken, by whom and when)
<p><b>5 Strengthen the differentiation in the levels of performance under the CRA system</b></p> <p>a The University's approach to CRA requires assessment based on criteria and academic standards derived from the SILOs, as set out in the subject description form. There are clear and comprehensive guidelines for implementation of CRA which provide information on identifying SILOs; selecting assessment methods aligned with ILOs; setting assessment criteria; communicating criteria to students and assessors; assessing and grading; and feeding back to students.</p> <p>The <b>text on grading</b> differentiates between levels of student performance in assessment using adjectives such as 'fully meets', 'largely meets', or 'marginally meets'. <b>The Audit Panel considers that levels of performance could be differentiated more precisely and meaningfully and encourages the University to do so.</b> (Para 4.7, Page 17 - 18)</p>	<p>AVP(LT), Chair persons of WGSQA</p>	<p>The grading scale referred to by the Panel (<i>in the Handbook on Academic Regulations and Procedures, Section B1, 7.1</i>) is necessarily generic in nature as it is intended as a common reference for all subjects.</p> <p>The actual rubrics used at the subject level are typically much more elaborated in terms of level descriptions. To further consolidate the use of rubrics at the subject level, the University has introduced a new policy that requires rubrics to <u>be specified and explicitly shared with students for all major assessment components. In addition, samples of rubrics will be reviewed by external academic advisors on a regular basis.</u></p> <p><b><u>An Working Group on Subject Quality Assurance (WGSQA) has been set up to review the grading system, assessment policy and practice at PolyU with a view to further enhance our ability to set and maintain academic standards.</u></b></p>

# Original Institutional Subject Level Grade Descriptor

(performance standards not clearly defined)

Assessment grades shall be awarded on a criterion-referenced basis. A student's overall performance in a subject shall be graded as follows:

Subject grade	Short description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A+	Exceptionally Outstanding	The student's work is exceptionally outstanding. It exceeds the intended subject learning outcomes in all regards.
A	Outstanding	The student's work is outstanding. It exceeds the intended subject learning outcomes in nearly all regards.
B+	Very Good	The student's work is very good. It exceeds the intended subject learning outcomes in most regards.
B	Good	The student's work is good. It exceeds the intended subject learning outcomes in some regards.
C+	Wholly Satisfactory	The student's work is wholly satisfactory. It fully meets the intended subject learning outcomes.
C	Satisfactory	The student's work is satisfactory. It largely meets the intended subject learning outcomes.
D+	Barely Satisfactory	The student's work is barely satisfactory. It marginally meets the intended subject learning outcomes.
D	Barely Adequate	The student's work is barely adequate. It meets the intended subject learning outcomes only in some regards.
F	Inadequate	The student's work is inadequate. It fails to meet many of the intended subject learning outcomes.

Source: *Handbook on Academic Regulations and Procedures*, Section B, 7.1.

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# WGSQA Member Composition

Ex-officio Member: Prof. Chetwyn Chan, AVP(LT)

Chairpersons: Dr M.S. Wong (BME, FENG)  
Dr Shirley Ngai (RS, FHSS)

Members:

1. Dr Chi-Wah Leung (AP, FAST)
2. Dr Tracy Mok (ITC, FAST)
3. Dr Alice Shiu (AF, FB)
4. Dr Ricky Chan (MM, FB)
5. Dr Ming-Yin Jonathan Chan (BSE, FCE)
6. Dr Wallace Lai (LSGI, FCE)
7. Dr Bin Xiao (COMP, FENG)
8. Dr Wo Wong (ME, FENG)
9. Dr Lang Chen (CC, FH)
10. Dr Alan Urmston (ELC, FH)
11. Dr Janet Leung (APSS, FHSS)
12. Dr Zenobia Chan (SN, FHSS)
13. Mr Fred Han (SD)
14. Mr Man-To Yiu (SD)
15. Dr Chloe Lau (SHTM)
16. Dr Mimi Li (SHTM)
17. Dr Pakey Chik (EDC)
18. Mr Kenneth Tam (EDC)
19. Dr Barbara Tam (EDC)

## Terms of Reference - WGSQA

1. Review the effectiveness of current subject QA policies & procedures to assure that:
  - subject intended learning outcomes are appropriate for the level of study & comparable to similar subjects offered by other institutions;
  - subject grades are true representations of students' academic achievements;
2. Recommend policies and/or measures for ensuring that practices that are essential for setting appropriate outcomes & ensuring grading integrity are consistently implemented across departments;
3. Recommend policies and/or measures for facilitating the development of rubrics & their appropriate use in setting and grading assessments and providing feedback to students.

## Bio of External Consultant

### Dr. Michael Prosser, PhD

- Honorary Professor, University of Sydney
- Honorary Professor, University of Hong Kong
- Adjunct Professor, University of Tasmania
- 18 years experience as director of academic development units:
  - Foundation Director for Institute of Teaching and Learning, University of Sydney
  - Foundation Director for Academic Development Unit, La Trobe University
  - Foundation Director for Research and Evaluation, Higher Education Academy (UK)
- Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL), HKU (2007-2011)
  - development and implementation of institutional policies for an OBA to T&L and associated standard based assessment;
  - worked on aspects of standards based assessments, QA processes and led the consultations with the Faculties on the results of the institutions QA processes (2011-2014);
  - development of HKU's submission of QA process to the QAC (2015).
- Chief Investigator on 9 Australian Research Council research grants (26 years of ARC funding) and 2 HK General Research Fund grants (6 years HK UGC funding)



# Outcome Based Education (OBE) in PolyU

Year	Major Events
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum Revision exercise was initiated; all UGC-funded FT Ug programmes were revised to <b><u>articulate learning outcomes and enhance alignment of teaching/learning and assessment with the outcomes</u></b></li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><u>Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRA)</u></b> was officially adopted in all programmes from 2005/06 onwards to align assessment policy with the philosophy of OBE</li> <li>A student's overall performance in a subject should be graded according to the <b><u>Subject Grading Descriptors</u></b></li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All departments developed <b><u>Programme Learning Outcome Assessment Plans (P-LOAP)</u></b> for undergraduate programmes</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First set of graduate attributes was articulated into <b><u>Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO)</u></b> and was disseminated with relevant policies and guidelines to guide programme development (<i>Competent Professionals; Critical Thinkers; Effective Communicators; Innovative Problem Solver; Lifelong Learner &amp; Ethical Leaders</i>)</li> </ul>



# Outcome Based Education (OBE) in PolyU

Year	Major Events
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An <b><u>Institutional Learning Outcome Assessment Plan</u></b> 2012-15 was developed and further reviewed triennially</li> </ul>
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All departments implemented the <b><u>Graduating Student Survey</u></b> for undergraduate programmes</li> </ul>
2016 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy on use of <b><u>Marking Rubrics</u></b> was introduced</li> <li>Definition of A, B, C, D &amp; F               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous assessment (2017-18)</li> <li>• Final exam (2018-19)</li> <li>• Subjects with basic mathematics or science concepts (2019-20)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In QAC report, UGC proposed for revision of <b><u>Institutional Subject Grade Descriptors</u></b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WGSQA was established for development of <b><u>new Institutional Subject Grade Descriptors</u></b>, facilitating programme level grade descriptors to align with the new institutional subject grade descriptors &amp; aligning subject level grade descriptors to programme level grade descriptors</li> </ul>

# Why Have Institutional Level Grade Descriptors:

## Role of Institutional Level Grade Descriptors

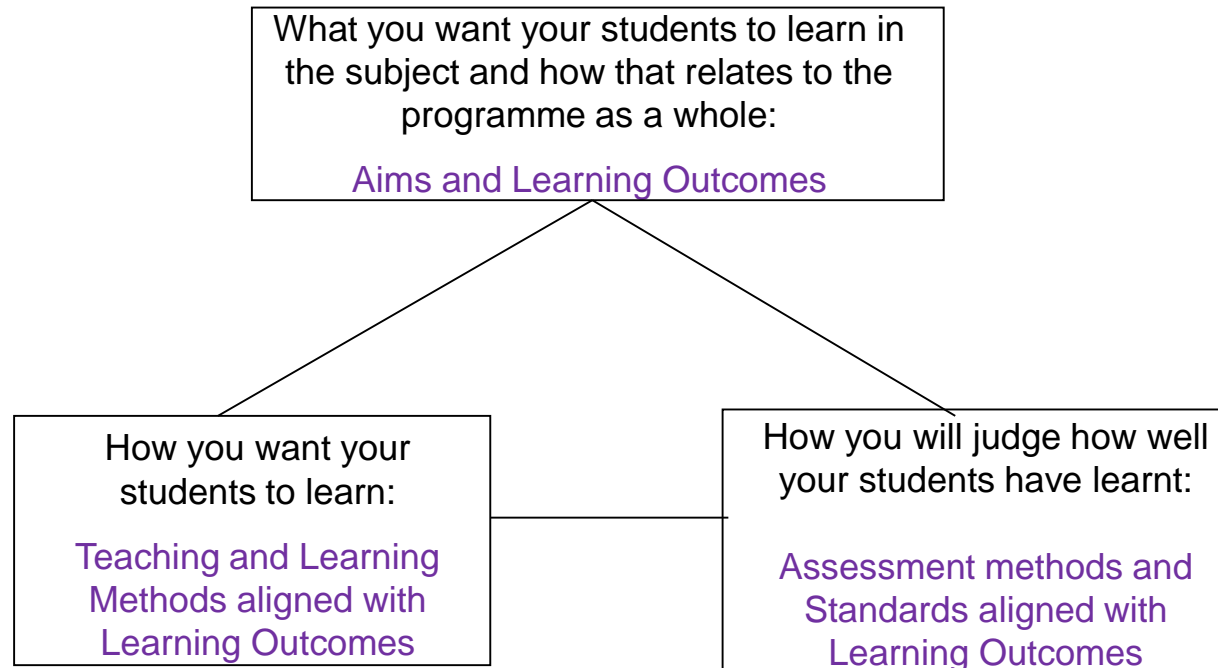
### Context

- Governments, employers and others critical / sceptical of learning outcomes
- They wish to ensure and assure that students achieve more generic learning outcomes – critical thinker, effective communicator, innovative problem solving, etc

### Outcomes based approach to teaching and learning

- Clearly stated institutional, program and subject level learning outcomes – aligned
- Alignment of teaching and learning methods with learning outcomes (to incorporate generic attributes)
- Assessment of what and how well learning outcomes achieved – not ranking of students in terms of achievement of learning outcomes

# Model of Outcome Based Approach to Student Learning



## Assessment

- Assessment based upon the quality of the achievement of learning outcomes
- Marking rubrics with clearly defined performance standards used to assess the quality of achievement of learning outcomes
- **Problem is: variation in standards across institution, programs and subjects with individually developed marking rubrics**

## Moderation

- Moderation of assessment based upon quality of achievement of learning outcomes – not norm-referenced adjustments of grade distributions.

## How and why assure consistency of standards?

- An example, average height of population.

External standard to which to align marking rubrics – **Grade Descriptor** – to try to ensure consistency of standards

Moderation of grading aims to ensure consistency of standards across:

- assessment items,
- subjects and
- programs

by comparing and aligning marking rubrics with external standard – **institutional level grade descriptor** (standard ruler)

## PolyU Policy on use of Marking Rubrics

“Rubrics must be specified for all ‘major’ assessment items at the subject level, made available to students before the assessment, and used for grading the assessment. Departments have the flexibility to determine what is ‘major’. As a rule of thumb:

- For subjects without examinations, rubrics should be required for single assessment items with a weighting of 30% or above of the subject’s overall assessment.
- For subjects with examinations, rubrics should be required for single assessment items with a weighting of 20% or above of the subject’s overall assessment.”

## PolyU Policy on use of Marking Rubrics

“To ensure that the rubrics reflect a suitable level of academic standards, samples of the rubrics should be periodically reviewed by:

- Departmental Academic Advisors,
- ~~External Examiners and/or~~
- Overseas Academic Advisors,

as part of the review process during Departmental Review and other periodic visits by these individuals where appropriate.

This being a measure of external benchmarking is not a substitute for internal moderation of assessment processes and results by relevant departmental committees/panels/boards.”

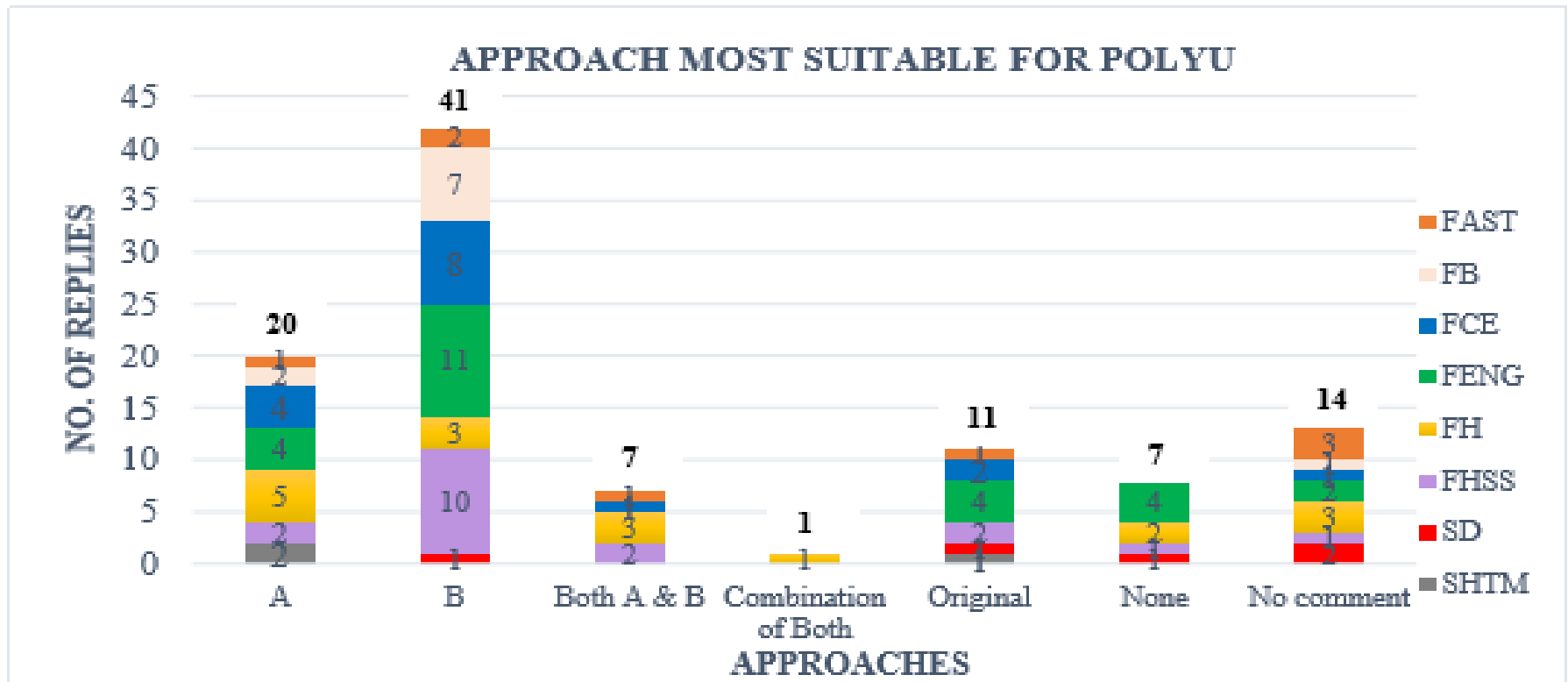
## Action Timeline

Month/Year	Actions
Aug 2017	<p><b><u>UGC QAC's comment</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Audit Panel considers that levels of performance, as indicated in the grading descriptors, could be differentiated more precisely and meaningfully.</li> </ul>
Sep – Dec 2017	<p><b><u>Benchmark Study (8 HK and 10 leading overseas universities)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most universities only have 4 to 6 grade descriptors, namely A, B, C, D, E and/or F.</li> <li>• Streamlining the grading system in PolyU by offering only 5 descriptors, allowing the level of performance to be differentiated in a more meaningfully generic manner.</li> <li>• Rubrics would assist in giving much more elaborated and useful grade descriptors at the subject level.</li> <li>• (+) and (-) modifiers should be adopted for Grade A-C.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Preliminary Survey (to WGSQA members)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 sets of descriptors with different approaches were presented (using materials from other universities in most cases)</li> <li>• 2 of the most preferable sets of descriptors were shortlisted for wider consultation</li> </ul>



## Action Timeline

Month/Year	Actions
Jan – Mar 2018	<p><b>Wider Consultation</b> (to all DLTC Chairs and Programme Leaders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 of the most preferable sets of descriptors (Set A &amp; B) were shortlisted for wider consultation</li> <li>• Most respondents prefer Set B</li> </ul>



## Action Timeline

Month/Year	Actions
Apr – June 2018	<p><b><u>Departmental Consultation &amp; WGSQA Meeting</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted departments/schools and WGSQA members on the draft Institutional Grading Descriptors</li> <li>• Reviewed and refined Set B descriptors to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consistency of wordings and punctuations</li> <li>➤ Commonalities of assessment criteria across disciplines</li> <li>➤ Inclusion of criteria on subject learning outcomes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
July – Nov 2018	<p><b><u>Benchmark Study</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further benchmark study on the existing grading system (grade points) with other universities</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Open Forum</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports transparency</li> <li>• Allows academic staff to exchange opinions</li> <li>• Supports better transition for academic staff in future if approved</li> </ul>
Dec 2018 – Jan 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final review on the proposed revisions based on the feedbacks from the open forum</li> <li>• Submission to LTC, Academic Planning and Regulations Committee and Senate for approval</li> </ul>

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Source: *Handbook on Academic Regulations and Procedures*, Section B, 7.1.

# **Institutional Level: University of Queensland** **Final Grade Descriptor**

7. High Distinction: As for 6, with consistent evidence of substantial originality and insight in identifying, generating and communicating competing arguments, perspectives or problem solving approaches; critically evaluates problems, their solutions and implications.
5. Credit: substantial understanding of fundamental concepts of the field of study and ability to apply these concepts in a variety of contexts; develops or adapts convincing arguments and provides coherent justification; communicates information and ideas clearly and fluently in terms of the conventions of the discipline.
4. Pass: adequate understanding and application of the fundamental concepts of the field of study; develops routine arguments or decisions and provides acceptable justification; communicates information and ideas adequately in terms of the conventions of the discipline.
2. Fail: clear deficiencies in understanding and applying fundamental concepts; communicates information or ideas in ways that are frequently incomplete or confusing and give little attention to the conventions of the discipline.

# Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Grades

In determining a student's grade, consideration is given for elegance of presentation, creativity, imagination, and originality where these may appropriately be called for.

Grades at MIT are not awarded according to a predetermined distribution of letter grades; that is, subjects are not graded "on a curve".

The grade for each student should be determined independent of the performance of other students in the class, and should be related to the student's mastery of the material based on the following grade descriptions.

<http://catalog.mit.edu/mit/procedures/academic-performance-grades/#gradestext>

# Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Grades

- 
- A Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.
- 
- B Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.
- 
- C Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.
- 
- D Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

## Faculty Level Grade Descriptors – local institution

A	original thought, strong analytical and critical abilities as well as a thorough grasp of the topic from background reading and analysis; should demonstrate excellent organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
B	critical and analytical thinking but not necessarily original in their thinking; show adequate grasp of the topic from background reading and analysis; should demonstrate strong organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
C	reasonable grasp of their subject but most of their information is derivative, with rather little evidence of critical thinking; should demonstrate fair organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
D	being able to assemble the bare minimum of information, poorly digested and not very well organized in presentation. There is no evidence of critical thinking.
F	poor knowledge and understanding of the subject, a lack of coherence and organization, and answers are largely irrelevant. Work fails to reach degree level

# Draft Revised Institutional Subject Level Grade Descriptor

(performance standards more clearly defined)

Assessment grades shall be awarded on a criterion-referenced basis. A student's overall performance in a subject shall be graded as follows:

Subject grade	Short description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent	Demonstrates <u>excellent achievement</u> of intended subject learning outcomes by being able to skillfully use concepts and solve complex problems. Shows evidence of innovative and critical thinking in unfamiliar situations, and is able to express the synthesis or application of ideas in a logical and comprehensive manner.
B	Good	Demonstrates <u>good achievement</u> of intended subject learning outcomes by being able to use appropriate concepts, and solve problems. Shows the ability to analyze issues critically and make well-grounded judgements in familiar or standard situations, and is able to express the synthesis or application of ideas in a logical and comprehensive manner.
C	Satisfactory	Demonstrates <u>satisfactory achievement</u> of intended subject learning outcomes by being able to solve relatively simple problems. Shows some capacity for analysis and making judgements in a variety of familiar and standard situations, and is able to express the synthesis or application of ideas in a manner that is generally logical but fragmented.
D	Pass	Demonstrates <u>marginal achievement</u> of intended subject learning outcomes by being able to solve relatively simple problems. Can make basic comparisons, connections and judgments and express the ideas learnt in the subject, though there are frequent breakdowns in logic and clarity.
F	Failure	Demonstrates <u>inadequate achievement</u> of intended learning outcomes through a lack of knowledge and/or understanding of the subject matter. Evidence of analysis is often irrelevant or incomplete.



# Draft Revised Institutional Subject Level Grade Descriptor

(performance standards more clearly defined)

## Notes

Note 1: Marking rubrics aligned with these grade descriptors need not include all aspects of the grade descriptor

Note 2: Marking rubrics aligned with these grade descriptors may include other aspects aligned with particular subject matter or field of study requirements but are not included in the grade descriptor

Marking rubrics aligned with these Grade Descriptors may take one of three suggested forms:

1. Holistic marking rubrics
2. Analytic marking rubrics
3. Item structure marking rubric

The holistic and analytic rubrics may be appropriate to assessment items asking for open ended responses such as essays, research reports, oral presentations, capstone reports, etc. – qualitative responses

The item structure rubric may be appropriate to assessment items composed of parts of increasing complexity such as more quantitative items, with each part aligned with the marking rubric descriptor - quantitative responses

# Grading System Comparison with Local Institutions

Grade	PolyU (Current)		HKU		HKUST		CityU		CUHK		HKBU		LU		EdUHK		
A+	Exceptionally Outstanding	4.50	Excellent	4.30	Excellent Performance	4.30	Excellent	4.30	Excellent	4.00	Excellent	4.00	Excellent	4.00	Distinction	4.33	
A	Outstanding	4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00	4.00
A-				3.70		3.70		3.70		3.70		3.70		3.70		3.67	3.67
B+	Very Good	3.50	Good	3.30	Good Performance	3.30	Good	3.30	Good	3.30	Good	3.33	Good	3.33	Good	3.33	
B	Good	3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00	3.00
B-				2.70		2.70		2.70		2.70		2.67		2.67		2.67	
C+	Wholly Satisfactory	2.50	Satisfactory	2.30	Satisfactory Performance	2.30	Adequate	2.30	Fair	2.30	Satisfactory	2.33	Fair	2.33	Satisfactory	2.33	
C	Satisfactory	2.00		2.00		2.00		2.00		2.00		2.00		2.00		2.00	
C-				1.70		1.70		1.70		1.67		1.67		1.67			
D+	Barely Satisfactory	1.50	Pass	1.30	Marginal Pass	1.00	Marginal	1.00	Pass	1.30	Marginal Pass	1.00	Pass	1.33		1.00	
D	Barely Adequate	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00			
E										Conditional Pass	0.00						
F	Inadequate	0.00	Fail	0.00	Fail	0.00	Failure	0.00	Failure	0.00	Failure	0.00	Failure	0.00	Fail	0.00	

## Classification of Awards

First	3.70-4.00	3.60 – 4.30	3.50 - 4.30	3.50 or above	3.50 or above	3.40-4.00	3.50 or above	3.40 or above
Upper Second	3.20-3.69	3.00 – 3.59	2.85 - 3.49	3.00 - 3.49	3.10-3.49	3.00-3.39	3.00 - 3.49	3.00 - 3.39
Lower Second	2.30-3.19	2.40 – 2.99	2.15 - 2.84	2.50 - 2.99	2.50-3.09	2.50-2.99	2.50 - 2.99	2.50- 2.99
Third	2.00-2.29	1.70 – 2.39	1.50 - 2.14	2.00 - 2.49	1.50-2.49	2.20-2.49	2.00 - 2.49	2.20 - 2.49
Pass	N/A	1.00 – 1.69	N/A	1.70 - 1.99	N/A	2.00-2.19	1.67 - 1.99	2.00 - 2.19

## Observations

- i. PolyU is the **only** university which **does not adopt (-) modifier to grades A, B and C.**
- ii. PolyU is the **only** university **which adopts a 4.50 grading scale with A+ as the highest grade.**
- iii. All universities adopt the same grade point for grade A, B, C, D and F, which is 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0.
- iv. **Most universities adopt a 0.3-point difference between modifier grades and its' major grade.** E.g., The grade points of B+, B, and B- would be 3.30, 3.00 and 2.70.

# Grading System Comparison with Overseas Institutions

Grade	Stanford		MIT		Harvard		Chicago		NUS		Tsinghua		Seoul National Uni						
A+	Excellent	4.30					4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	Excellent	4.00		4.30					
A		4.00	Exceptionally Good	5.00	Excellent*	4.00						4.00	4.00		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	
A-		3.70				3.67													3.70
B+	Good	3.30					3.30	3.00	4.00	3.50	Good	3.30		3.30					
B		3.00	Good	4.00	Good*	3.00						3.00	3.00		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
B-		2.70				2.67													2.70
C+	Satisfactory	2.30					2.33	2.00	2.50	2.00	Fair	2.30		2.30					
C		2.00	Adequate	3.00	Adequate and Satisfactory*	2.00						N/A	2.00		N/A	2.00	2.00	2.00	N/A
C-		1.70				1.67													
D+	Minimal Pass	1.30					1.33	1.00	1.50	1.00	Poor	1.30		1.30					
D		1.00	Minimally Acceptable	2.00	Unsatisfactory but indicates some minimal command of course materials*	1.00						1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
D-		0.70				0.67													N/A
E							N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A						
F	Not Pass	0.00	Failed	0.00	Unworthy of course credit*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Failure	0.00			0.00					

## Observations

- i. Most universities:
  - Adopt modifiers (+ and -) for grades A to C, except for Harvard and NUS.
  - adopt a 0.3-point difference between modifier grades and its' major grade.
  - Set GPA of 2.00 (average grade of C / C-) as the requirement for graduation.
- ii. University of Chicago, Tsinghua and NUS have a same grade point allocated for grade A and A+.

### **Two** major types of grading systems:

1. Grade Point Averages (GPA)
  - US & Asia
2. Weighted Average Mark (WAM)
  - UK & Australia

# A PolyU's grading system in bigger alignment with that of other universities will look like the following:

Grade	PolyU (Current)		PolyU (Suggestions)	
	Short Description	Grade Point	Short Description	Grade Point
A+	Exceptionally Outstanding	4.50	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>4.30</b>
A	Outstanding	4.00		<b>4.00</b>
A-				<b>3.70</b>
B+	Very Good	3.50	<b>Good</b>	<b>3.30</b>
B	Good	3.00		<b>3.00</b>
B-				<b>2.70</b>
C+	Wholly Satisfactory	2.50	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>2.30</b>
C	Satisfactory	2.00*		<b>2.00*</b>
C-				<b>1.70</b>
D+	Barely Satisfactory	1.50	-	-
D	Barely Adequate	1.00	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1.00</b>
F	Inadequate	0.00	<b>Failure</b>	<b>0.00</b>

\*The existing academic regulations require students to attain a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or above in order to graduate. Also, a continuous attainment of GPA lower than 2.00 might be regarded as a ground of deregistration from a programme.

### Notes from benchmarking:

- ✓ PolyU is the only university which does not adopt (-) modifier to grades A, B and C, as compared to local and overseas universities.
- ✓ PolyU is the only university which adopts a 4.50 grading scale with A+ as the highest grade.
- ✓ Most universities adopt a 0.3-point difference between modifier grades and its' major grade. E.g., The grade point of B+, B, and B- would be 3.30, 3.00 and 2.70.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q1** Why do we need to revise the current subject grading descriptors?

**A1** The recent visit by the Quality Assurance Council recommended that the University should revise its Grade Descriptor, ensuring that there are clear and identifiable differences between grades.

**Q2** It is difficult to differentiate the difference between grade A+, A and A-. Can we have text descriptions for the modifiers (+) and (-) in order to provide better guidance to colleagues and enhance consistency in grading?

**A2** Given the variation in subject matter, disciplines and professions across the University, it is difficult to be too definitive in the descriptors of grading modifiers. It is recommended that these finer distinctions can be left to the discretion of the assessors.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- Q3** The descriptors may be more challenging to be applied for courses which focus more on skills and competencies.
- A3** All subjects have mapped their subject learning outcomes to the institutional subject learning outcomes, indicating that their subject learning outcomes include critical thinking, innovative problem solving and the application in practice of knowledge and skills. The descriptors should then be applied to all subjects.
- Q4** A subject grade of D represents only a grade point of 1.0, which is very far from the accepted benchmark to survive, i.e. an average of 2.0. Should we keep the grade D+?
- A4** Grade D represents a “Pass”. Further defining a high level (D+) or low level (D-) pass might not be meaningful.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q5** Student with a GPA below 2.0 in PolyU is counted as failed, and it is not recommended for graduation. Students should achieve GPA at least 2.0 for graduation and in some occasions to retain in the programme.

However, the grade of C- with a grade point of 1.7 is described as Satisfactory which is definitely misleading.

**A5** The benchmarking study with local and overseas universities indicates that most universities expect more than satisfactory/pass grade before graduation.

A student's overall performance in a subject shall be graded according to the Institutional Subject Grading Descriptors and System. The graduation requirements shall be governed by the regulations on "University Graduation Requirements" and "Award Classification".

The benchmarking study indicated that other universities do not allow their students to graduate even if with satisfactory/pass grade for all subjects.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q6** How do we implement this new system?

**A6** This recommendations to the grading descriptors and suggestions to the grading system, upon considering feedbacks from consultations, will be submitted to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), Academic Planning and Regulations Committee (APRC) and Senate for approval.

Detailed implementation plan and policies will be drafted by the approving authorities if the recommendations are accepted.



## **Your opinion matters!**

### **Please share your thoughts with us via:**

- i. Participants' Feedback Questionnaire
- ii. By email to:
  - [m.s.wong@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:m.s.wong@polyu.edu.hk) (Dr. M S Wong / BME) /
  - [shirley.ngai@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:shirley.ngai@polyu.edu.hk) (Dr. Shirley Ngai / RS)

**Thank you.**