I, Cam, I Saw, I Conquered

The faculty committee on academic performance will decide January 9 whether the cum shall be dropped from the term report. This proposal is the result of action taken by the student committee on educational policy, a subcommittee of the Institute Committee. S.C.E.P.'s proposal was to eliminate the cum from the term report. The need for so many significant figures in the column is also questioned.

Even if the changes now under consideration go into effect it is probable that they will only amount to a partial solution to the problem of evaluating the student's performance, while maintaining a proper emphasis on knowledge and not on grades. As the marking system presently stands, good quiz grades are undeniably underclassmen's primary goal, and it is inevitable that some will sacrifice true learning for a good mark. The Associated Tutors is an example of this type of attitude. The student is given a quick stuffing of material thought to be on the quiz and given a lesson in quizmanship. Unfortunately this type of note learning is not permanent by any means.

There is need for a marking system that will provide the necessary quantitative rank for selective service purposes and provide some competition and incentive, but not the three digit precision all-scratch-cams.

A system which would pass these requirements is an A, C, F marking system, a top grade, a passing grade, and a failing grade. With this system it would be possible to maintain a proper balance of student evaluation and cum-emphasis. Failing quizes, the resident body could be divided into three groups: those who made the top quartile, those who made the bottom quartile, and those who made the middle quartile, or top quartile, top-middle quarter, and bottom half, or even four quarters.

It is to be hoped that the faculty will do more than talk over superficial changes in the marking system and will consider just why it is that we have the cum at all. Why, for instance, doesn't the institute operate like Oxford, whose only grade is a pass or a fail on a final examination? The purpose of our marking system is doubtful: it is: provide incentive to learn and to act as some index of the student's progress. At Oxford, the incentive to learn is assumed. It is a question whether this is good. (Cohen MIT publications occasionally brunt the contrary.) Among many of us a "shame face knowledge" has been supplied by an awareness to the fact that exams must be passed in order to get a good job and to stay out of the army. Perhaps demphasizing the cum only serves to make us forget this fact. On the other hand, it may not, because even if the cum and term rating are not visible on the term report, every MIT man has a slide rule and knows how to use it.

The faculty has evidently recognized that a coldly calculated three-significant-figure cum often has the effect of mis-directing the student in his choice of goals. But perhaps the answer to this is not merely to stamp the blow, as it was, but to seek new and less arbitrary yardsticks for measuring the student's worth.

letters

To the Editor of The Tech:

Your December 20 article entitled "Cohen at Oddil with Article on Housemasters" exhibits a lack of literary judgment and is illustrative of why The Tech has a poor reputation. Campus Easton has been editorializing on the headlines of a news story. Such is the character of our marking system. As a consequence, The Tech occasionally provides an all-too-wide-spread source of misinformation.

As for the statement that "Cohen did not indicate how he had obtained Dean Rule's views," the Chairman of The Tech was advised, at the time of receipt of my letter, that I had talked to the Dean before refuting statements made in your paper. Incidentally, the Decus is quite accessible and his views may be obtained without flushing a Tech pressman.

It is not unfortunate and to the detriment of MIT that we possess a newspaper that publishes by default rather than by inspiration.

Yours truly,
Lewis Cohen '59

The statement in the article that Mr. Cohen is referring to in an "editizing" is the following: "Cohen did not present his interpretation as such, instead representing it as unsensational trash, incapable of re-election." It is the feeling of THE TECH that Mr. Cohen's bulletin was in itself a reason to the above statement could be made in a basis of fact, rather than opinion. The article in question was written with regard only to Mr. Cohen's bulletin, not to the suggested house master program. It is the feeling of THE TECH that the article adequately covered the news aspects of the bulletin. We disagree on several other points also, Mr. Cohen—ED.

These Rods Have No Effect Upon The Reaction

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 1958

M.L.T. Humanities Series presents

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

Haydn, Quartet in G minor, Opus 77, No. 1
Schubert, "Quartets" in G minor, String Trio, These Pieces for String Quartet
Wolf, Italian Serenade in G major, Serenade
Barber, "Triple Debut"
Saturday, January 14, 3 p.m.
Kernoff Auditorium, M.L.T.
Tickets: $2.50, (Reserved) by mail from Room 14-1212K, M.L.T., Checks payable to M.L.T. Humanities Series.

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