The outside world —

"If MIT could design a grading system just to suit itself, and just to use internally, this is a lot of our faculty would be eliminated. But we have to consider the rest of the world," said Coit, summing up the problem of external records — records which must be read and interpreted by people outside of MIT for a variety of purposes over which MIT has little control. That problem, which seems to be in direct conflict with the purpose of grades as information for the student, has received particular attention in MIT's current grading review.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Grading had included in its recommendations to the faculty a suggestion that all non-passing grades — F, O, IX, I, and J — be deleted from the transcripts which MIT sends to external agencies. That proposal, however, was struck down by the faculty at the February meeting.

The group that has gotten the most attention in the debate on external records is the group of MIT students planning to continue their education at medical schools — the "pre-meds." According to committee chairman Professor Roy Kaplow, for doing precisely that, and for the effects, which they feel, will do more harm than good.

"The pluses and minuses after grades give an impression of exactness and precision which the grading system just doesn't have," Kaplow said, explaining why the committee had rejected such a system. "It gives the impression that we have a sharply delineated system with very good resolution, when in fact we actually have a number of very imprecise systems." The committee also rejected the plus/minus proposal, Kaplow said, because the felt grade pressure would increase if it were adopted. If there are more grades, Kaplow said, there is necessarily more pressure to strive for higher grades, and educational pressure is increased — a goal which the Committee deemed undesirable.

Several faculty members have also given the pluses and minus grades — A-, B+, B-, C+, and C- — in addition to the current grades of A, B, C, D, and F, to emphasize that the letter grades represent a range of achievement and a goal of precision.

The proposal made by Associate Professor Stephen Senturia of Electrical Engineering, who suggested it in a way to combat grade inflation and the "blurring" of grades, was not adopted by the committee. That item is the proposal that MIT should not ignore any of its pre-professional students. "Why, when we are planning to continue their education at professional schools, she explained, have the effect of grade inflation will be made. This year, due to the debate over the pluses and minuses, the system for adding courses, how- ever, has been altered. Students can add a course to their records for about $400 per semester, Kaplow said. Costs in terms of faculty and student time are harder to calculate, but the goal of that faculty "would put whatever time they wanted to put into it, into it.

The argument that forms would be made more useful is based on the freshmen's evaluation forms. Although the students are required to fill in comments on freshmen's in their classes, return rate on such forms has been only about 40 per cent in recent years.

Adding and dropping —

One of the apparent "rites of spring" at MIT is the recurring request that the Drop Date — the last date during a semester before which a student can drop courses without having to petition to the committee. (There has always been such a provision, but the last date for adding was about 40 per cent in recent years.

The system for adding courses, however, has been changed. "It has been added to the registration system," he said, that a student can add a course to his or her record without petitioning a faculty committee. (There has always been such a provision, but the last date for adding was about 40 per cent in recent years.

Many faculty members feel that MIT's relaxed requirements cause it to be the most competitive (Continued on next page)