The current controversy over grades has uncovered several factors: increased concern over marks of A, B, C, D, or F. Underlying the debate are certain basic questions about the value of grading in general and the roles that MIT education should be serving. The faculty should consider whether MIT students' basic understanding of grading reflects a quality of a current grading system that is conducive to a "normal" or "ideal" education? What is the role of grades? How can students learn or be prevented from learning? How can grades serve? How can students learn or lose? -- and how should a process be structured to do this?

The faculty is sharply divided over these questions, which those who believe that students need grades so they will be encouraged to work hard and thus more truly test the quality of their education and gauge the amount of knowledge they gain. Others believe that grades encourage students to work for grades, not knowledge; they believe that MIT students, given the opportunity, will learn because they want the knowledge, not because they are pressured to learn.

The new view has apparently been evolving in the last few years. Average grades of MIT students have risen sharply in recent years. The point where it is now estimated to be 4.3 on a scale of 5 (last year's average was 4.0). Many people believe, is due to decreasing emphasis on grades as the major means of measuring student performance.

As Provost Walter A. Rosenblith pointed out at a recent faculty meeting, the last year was a revelation to him in the way we perceive grades and education. "This revolution, Rosenblith said, is strengthening the hands of the students, not the good old days."

In any case, apparently many faculty who are calling for stricter grading measures are in favor of them. These faculty are concerned that a grade of A, once given only for the best work, has become more and more meaningless. They have come to believe that grades are not being used as a means of encouraging students to settle questions concerning just how a grade is earned. Faculty who are concerned about this grade inflation and who feel that it is time to reduce the "glow" of the A grade are concerned with the need to reduce it to a grade of B, or an "A minus." A grade of B or an "A minus" should make it clear to students that it is important to have a good grade, not just an "A grade."

The Ad Hoc Committee came down in favor of the latter view, supporting late drop students, but did not wish to change the grading system. The committee's recommendations have already been adopted by the faculty.

Philip C. Hoff

Faculty action date

1) That the Faculty adopt the new recommendation on grading, summarized in recommendation 13 and detailed as follows:

a) Pre-registration (as now).

b) Students meet on Registration Day with their advisors (as now). Variations from pre-registration are submitted to the Registrar.

c) Students hand in name cards (and paperwork) to instructors for the purpose of identifying themselves for class rolls.

d) By the end of the third week of the term, the instructor in charge of the course may submit a "status of registration" summary to each student and advisor. All changes in that registration must be made prior to the end of the fifth week of the term.

e) Before the end of the fifth week, the instructor in charge of the course must provide an advisor's or advisor's assistant to confirm or modify registration. Corrections forms must be returned to the Registrar by the end of the fifth week. Registration is finalized as of that date. Official class rolls are then sent to subject instructors.

f) At the end of the fifth week, no changes may be added to registration (except subjects for which the instructor-chance states that it is appropriate for the student to change his registration at the effective date, and then only with the advisor's approval).

g) Subjects may be dropped until a date (drop date) three weeks prior to the end of the term, with advisor's approval; such subjects will be dropped on the report of the term and on term summaries by 3R followed by the date of drop. Dropped subjects will not be entered on the transcript.

h) The faculty continue the customary forms of grading (as in subjects which do not necessarily begin and end within academic calendar terms), graduated grades of A, B, C, D, and F, by which the student is awarded a grade of A, B, C, D, or F, as the case may be. Such grades are awarded to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of study week.

i) That the Faculty adopt the policy that "No Credit," as assigned in subjects in which students register but do not complete all the required work satisfactorily; specifically, except for subjects graded on a Pass/No Credit grading system, the grade of "No Credit" as assigned to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of study week.

j) That the Faculty adopt the grade of "No Credit" to be assigned in subjects in which students register but do not complete all the required work satisfactorily; specifically, except for subjects graded on a Pass/No Credit grading system, the grade of "No Credit" as assigned to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of study week.

k) That the Faculty adopt the policy that "No Credit" is a grade assigned to students in subjects in which students register but do not complete all the required work satisfactorily, except for subjects graded on a Pass/No Credit grading system. Such grades are awarded to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of the second term.

l) That the Faculty adopt the policy that "No Credit" is the grade assigned to students in subjects in which students register but do not complete all the required work satisfactorily, except for subjects graded on a Pass/No Credit grading system. Such grades are awarded to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of the second term.

m) That the Faculty adopt the policy that "No Credit" is the grade assigned to students in subjects in which students register but do not complete all the required work satisfactorily, except for subjects graded on a Pass/No Credit grading system. Such grades are awarded to students doing satisfactory work up to the time of the second term.

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Walter A. Rosenblith, Provost

Ad Hoc Committee on Curricula