



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
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QUANTICO, VA 22134-5068

IN REPLY REFER TO:
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CSC
1 Sep 20

COMMAND AND STAFF POLICY LETTER 4-20

From: Director, Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC)
To: Distribution List

Subj: COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING POLICY

Ref: (a) Marine Corps University Academic Regulations
(b) MARADMIN 412/20: IMPLEMENTATION OF OBSERVED ACADEMIC FITNESS REPORTS AT OFFICER RESIDENT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION COURSES
(c) MARADMIN 43/20: CHANGE TO MASTERS DEGREE POLICY AT RESIDENT COMMAND AND STAFF/COLLEGE
(d) CSC Policy Letter 5-20; Academic and Professional Counseling Program
(e) CSC Written and Oral Communications Guide

Encl: (1) CSC Grading Scale

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this memo is to promulgate the policies and procedures regarding the evaluation and grading of student academic performance while attending Command and Staff College (CSC). Both the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Commandant, Marine Corps, directed that CSC be more rigorous and competitive in order to better prepare our graduates for challenges they will confront in a rapidly changing global security environment. As a result, CSC will enhance how it evaluates students.

2. **Background.** Evaluations are an important part of any educational process. They serve a variety of purposes, the most important of which is to reinforce student learning. They also provide the faculty with an effective means of determining the extent to which course objectives were met and learning outcomes and program goals achieved. They help the College assess its performance in relation to its purpose and mission. The College uses grades as a part of the evaluation process; however, student learning is the ultimate arbiter of an outcome based curriculum.

3. Student Evaluations

a. Grading Methodology

(1) CSC is a graduate school. It is useful to remember that any discussion of grades refers to evaluations at the graduate level. College grading is based on faculty advisors' (FACADs) evaluation of written products and contributions to seminars, exercises, wargames, and practical applications. Informed by judgment, experience, and the CSC assessment rubrics found in the CSC Written and Oral Communication Guide (reference (c)), each FACAD is responsible for just and accurate evaluation of student performance. Written work will be evaluated for its: responsiveness to the assignment prompt; mastery of stated objectives; thesis and support of thesis; content, organization and structure; assessment of higher order thinking skills; as well as style, language, grammar, and format. FACADs may provide, in writing, more precise instructions to enhance the student's overall professional development.

(2) All courses and assignments at the College employ a number grading system with corresponding letter grades, as appropriate. Pluses and minuses may be used within the range of the letter grade. Students who, for whatever reason, do not complete all assignments in a particular course will be assigned an "I" until remediated. The following indicates the level of work necessary to achieve particular grades (see enclosure 1):

(a) A grade of 90-100 (A-, A, A+) is assigned when the student clearly exceeds the standard for the relevant student learning outcomes (see Enclosure 1). The "A" student produces clear, concise, substantive written and/or oral work that shows creativity and complete mastery of the assignment. "A" papers will be outstanding work that go beyond simple regurgitation of class material. "A" level seminar contribution requires making consistently high-quality contributions to conference group learning by actively participating in discussion, and being a catalyst for the learning of others.

(b) A grade of 80-89.9 (B-, B, B+) is assigned when a student meets the standard for the relevant student learning outcomes. This is the expected minimum level for CSC students (see Enclosure 1). A "B" student actively contributes to learning in the conference group. Written and oral communication reflects

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(c) A grade of 70-79.9 (C-, C, C+) is assigned when a student fails to achieve standards (see Enclosure 1). Performance is consistently below the standard required to meet student learning outcomes. Students performing at this level demonstrate significant difficulty with written or oral communication and participation in discussions is infrequent. The contribution the student attempted to make was either factually or conceptually flawed.

(d) A grade of "I" means the student did not complete the course. This grade is usually given in emergency personal situations or in the event a student participates in temporary duty or field trips. Once the incomplete work is made up, the grade of "I" is removed.

(3) All students are expected to meet suspenses and turn in all assignments on time. Any assignment submitted late without prior coordination with the FACAD will receive a grade no higher than a 79.9%.

(4) As a benchmark, the average grade per assignment normally falls out between 89 and 91. This average routinely increases as students' performance improves during the academic year.

b. Program Requirements

(1) Seminar Contribution. Students are expected to complete all required readings and actively contribute to all seminar activities. FACADs will observe and evaluate student performance in relation to the achievement of lesson objectives and course learning outcomes.

(2) Written Requirements. Students will write a variety of course papers as well as create a variety of professional products during the curriculum. Individual course syllabi will identify types and character of requirements. FACADs will evaluate student submissions and provide timely feedback (within ten business days) on both content and style. At a minimum, faculty will provide one paragraph of summative comments that address the extent to which a written assignment demonstrates mastery of program outcomes and student learning outcomes.

(3) Exercises. Students are expected to actively participate in all practical applications and exercises during the academic year. FACADs will observe and evaluate student

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performance in relation to the achievement of the lesson objectives and course learning objectives.

(4) Electives. Electives are intended to be academically rigorous and professionally relevant. The writing and reading requirement will be commensurate with the expectations of a masters degree producing institution. U.S. students and International Military Students (IMS) participating in the MMS Program are required to take two elective courses. IMS not in the MMS program may opt to take only one elective. Students will satisfactorily complete all written and oral requirements in their electives. The grades will be factored into the final GPA.

(5) Masters of Military Studies. IAW reference (c)U.S. students are required to successfully complete the MMS Program. IMS who meet entry requirements may enroll in the MMS Program. The MMS course syllabus will identify the types and character of the assignments. All MMS students will be mentored by MCU PhD faculty. All MMS requirements will be evaluated by the student's mentor and a second reader, at least one of whom will be from the CSC faculty. Students must satisfactorily complete all written and oral requirements for the MMS Program.

(6) Gray Scholars Program (GSP). Students may apply for selection to one of the competitive advanced studies programs at CSC. If selected, students will be required to participate in additional seminars and learning experiences, and complete additional coursework and requirements. The GSP course syllabi will identify the types and character of the assignments. Successful completion of the program will earn students the GSP Certificate and their Masters of Military Studies.

(7) Wargaming. Students will be placed within a time competitive environment against a thinking adversary (other students) throughout the academic year. FACADs will observe and evaluate student performance in relation to the achievement of the lesson objectives and student learning outcomes.

(8) Peer Leadership Assessment. Students will be assessed by their peers twice during the academic year. The purpose of the Peer Leadership Assessment continuum at CSC is three-fold and is rooted in the profession of arms and a leader's continual pursuit to be self-aware and understand how others see them: First, peer assessments inform the counseling process with a meaningful input for the students to reflect on. Second, peer assessments provide the faculty with valuable input

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to couple with their own observations and assessments of the student, which will help validate observations, and potentially unveil blind spots. Third, students gain value in the exercise of assessing their peers as it relates to academic contribution, leadership, and performance. While Peer Leadership Assessments are not graded and have no GPA implications, they will be factored into identifying Distinguished Graduates and overall class standing.

4. Student Feedback and Counseling. One of the unique features of the College's learning environment is the "faculty team," the pairing of military and civilian faculty advisors to mentor, counsel, and guide students through the academic program and evaluate student performance during that program, and do so in a timely fashion. Students should expect to receive feedback on assignments within ten business days of the date submitted.

Counseling is another means for the faculty team to provide in-depth feedback on student academic performance and offer remediation to increase their academic performance. Students will be academically counseled a minimum of four times during the academic year in accordance with the Academic and Professional Counseling Program, reference (b).

5. Graduation Requirements. Satisfactory completion of all course requirements, both core and elective. Students must achieve a "B-" (80.0%) or higher in all courses in order to graduate from CSC.

6. Final Class Standing and "Distinguished Graduates"

a. The Director will identify the graduates of the class who, by their academic achievement and overall leadership and performance, distinguish themselves from their classmates. The final class standing will be determined by adding the Academic GPA (70% of final class standing) and the Leadership/Whole of Student Assessment grade (30% of final class standing).

b. Class Standing Calculations: FINAL ACADEMIC GPA (70%) is determined by adding Leadership curriculum (7 credit hrs) + Warfighting curriculum (16 credit hrs) + War Studies curriculum (4 credit hrs) + Security Studies curriculum (6 credit hrs) + Electives (1 credit hr each) + MMS (3 credit hrs). Gray Scholars receive an additional 2 hours credit.

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LEADERSHIP/WHOLE OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT (30%) is a grade given by the MILFAC/CIVFAC that focuses on: peer leadership and command potential, self improvement, initiative, and service to others. In addition, extracurricular scholarly accomplishments will be considered, including but not limited to: Barrow Scholars, Spartan Shield, publication in professional journals, and other service contributions. Peer Leadership Assessments will inform the Leadership/Whole of Student Assessment. To summarize: FINAL GPA + LEADERSHIP/WHOLE OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT GRADE = FINAL STANDING GRADE.

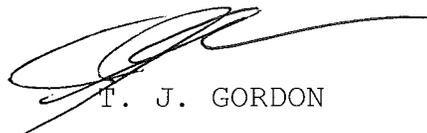
c. IAW Ref (b), and consultation with the faculty, the Director will identify the top thirty percent (30%) of the graduating class for specific recognition and designation in student performance evaluations (e.g. fitness reports).

d. IAW Ref (b), and consultation with the faculty, the Director will designate as "Distinguished Graduates" the top twenty percent (20%) of the graduating class for specific recognition and designation in student performance evaluations.

7. Faculty Responsibilities. CSC faculty are charged with communicating, implementing, and enforcing all elements of this policy letter. Faculty have a professional responsibility to be well versed on all aspects of the topics addressed and associated references.

8. Applicability. This policy letter applies to all students assigned to Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University.

9. This policy letter is in effect immediately. Direct all questions and recommendations for changes to the Deputy Director.



T. J. GORDON

COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE GRADING STANDARDS

Letter Grade	Numerical Grade	Scale Value	Description
A+	97.0 - 100	4.0	Superior work.
A	93 - 96.9	3.7	Outstanding. Clearly exceeds the standard.
A-	90 - 92.9	3.5	Accomplished. Exceeds the standard.
B+	87 - 89.9	3.3	Above average. Rises above expectations.
B	83 - 86.9	3.0	Satisfactory. The kind of work expected of a CSC graduate.
B-	80 - 82.9	2.7	Marginal. Meets <u>minimum</u> acceptable standards but significant room for improvement.
C	70 - 79.9	2.0	Unacceptable due to a single major deficiency or many small deficiencies.
D	60 - 69.9	1.0	Unacceptable due to numerous significant deficiencies or one catastrophic deficiency.
F	<59.9	0	Grossly unacceptable work, suggests a lack of effort.
I	0	0	Approved delay in assignment accomplishment, must be completed to an acceptable level.