University of Windsor
Senate

5.6.1: **Thirteen Point Grading Scale**

Item for: **Approval**

Forward by: **Academic Policy Committee/Student Committee**

MOTION: That the Thirteen Point Grading Scale be changed to a 100% scale, effective Fall 2013 for all current and incoming students.

In 2009-2010 a Working Group was created to address various concerns raised by faculty, students and parents who wrote to the Vice Provost Students and Registrar regarding the issue that the University of Windsor grading system inconsistent with other Canadian universities which disadvantaged students when applying for professional studies (law, medicine, *etc*), post-graduate studies, and when applying for scholarships/grants.

Of 24 Ontario Universities, 13 (54.2%) use the 100% grading system, four (16.7%) use the 12.0 scale and three (12.5%) use the 4.0-4.3 scale. Only two (8.3%) universities use the 10.0 scale, only one (4.2%) university uses the 9.0 scale, and only one (4.2%) uses the 13.0 scale. (see appendix A)

Rationale:

- There have been numerous requests over the past decade for a review of the 13pt grading scale, with a view to changing it to a more commonly used scale. During the course of the previous reviews, it was found that there was no consistent grading scale used across Canada or North America. It was argued that the logistical effort and cost to changing the 13pt grading scale would be misplaced given this lack of uniformity across universities. Subsequent to the last review conducted over five years ago, additional requests have come forward from faculty, parents and students to review the 13pt grading scale.
- Students have indicated that there is a perception, among them, that the reason University has a 13pt scale is because it is easier to get an A at Windsor, and so additional point levels had to be created to make it appear harder to attain the higher grades. While false, such a perception circulating among current and prospective students has a significant negative impact on the reputation of the University.
- Since the last review, there are four additional universities have chosen to use the 4.0 scale, seven have chosen to use the 4.3 scale, two have chosen to use the 100% scale, and one has moved from a 100% scale to a 10.0 scale.
- The majority of universities utilize a 4.3 or 100% grading scale. The 4.0 and 4.3 grade point average appears to be the most commonly used in Canada and the US, potentially making it more accessible and understandable for students, parents, employers, and others. The 100% scale leaves no room for interpretation, since it reflects the actual marks given.
- Changing the grade point scale could have an impact on students' GPA (could go up or down).
- On a 100% scale, a student with a 96% in course X, 81% in course Y and 72% in course Z, would have an overall average of 83% (generally equivalent to an A-). On a 4.3 GPA scale, a student with an A+ (4.3) in course X, A- (3.7) in course Y, and B- (2.7) in course Z, would have an overall average of B+ (3.56).
- Changing the grading scale may cause greater or fewer students to be eligible for awards (financial or just academic recognition), graduation, continuation in programs, *etc*. Before Senate approves changing the scale some analysis to determine the possible financial impact of the change should be done. For example, if the new rules cause a higher percentage of students with entrance awards to maintain eligibility then the Financial Aid office must ensure they have the budget required for those extra awards or they must change the eligibility rules. This could also affect the Work Study and Bursary budgets.
- We cannot "grandparent" grading scales for students following old calendars without making **significant** system changes to SIS. **All students in all programs** would have to switch to the new grading scale.
- Although an initial review has demonstrated that the 100% scale benefits students, should there be circumstance where a current student who was formerly under the 13 pt scale is disadvantaged by this

change, exceptions may be made by the appropriate Dean to rectify the situation.

- Should it be determined that the 13.0 point grading scale should be changed (whether it be to another grade point or to a percentage scale), there would need to be a delay in its implementation given that revisions would subsequently also need to be made to:
  - The regulations relating to standing required for continuation and standing required for graduation for degrees (regular and co-op), certificates and minors, as well as admission requirements to co-op for current students.
  - The regulations relating to graduating with distinction and with great distinction
  - The honour roll criteria for each of the Faculties
  - The criteria for the President's honour roll
  - All regulations in the calendar that refer to a GPA for continuation in a course or program (e.g., some courses have registration restriction rules requiring that the student has a minimum cumulative or major average to be allowed into the course, such as enrolment in thesis courses)
  - Transferring between programs
  - The process for calculation of averages
  - The policy on the standardization of percentages across the university
  - Eligibility for awards and scholarships (entrance, in-course, residence)
  - The criteria for Board of Governors awards
  - The calculation formula for the percentile score used to determine the recipient of the Governor General Award. (The maximum average of 13 is included in the formula.)
  - The process for calculating and reporting class averages in the Faculty of Law would need to be changed to support any new grading scale
  - The regulations for admission to second-entry programs (social work, criminology)
  - Averages passed to the ORBIS system used by Co-op and Career Services and the Odette School of Business
  - Reports run through the Registrar's Office relating to academic standing
  - Reports generated through Institutional Planning that include analysis/projection models using student averages
  - With regard to the SIS and the programming required to make this change for all students in all programs, ITS has confirmed that, other than identifying all the fields that would need to be revised (standing required for continuation, graduation, honour roll, *etc*.) the change would not be difficult to implement. It would however be time-consuming.
  - In light of this, a recommendation to change the grade point scale should be linked to an implementation date of Fall 2012 or Fall 2013.

Student Committee meeting of March 15, 2011

A preliminary discussion revealed general support to change the 13 point scale to a 100% grading scale.

It was NOTED that:

- Over the years there have been various concerns raised regarding the issue that the University of Windsor grading system is inconsistent with other Ontario and Canadian universities which may disadvantage students when applying for professional studies (law, medicine, *etc*), post-graduate studies, and when applying for scholarships/grants.
- As of 2011 the majority of Canadian institution are using either a 4.3 grading scale or 100% scale.
- A discussion on the 13 point grading scale was held at the Associate Deans meeting last week and the majority of members supported changing the scale to either a 4.0-4.3 or a 100%, with preference for the latter.
- A comment was made regarding the issue that this change would have an impact on entrance scholarships (such as the Outstanding Scholars program) which are renewed on a semester by semester basis. However, since students often lose their scholarships after the first semester of their first year, it was expressed that it would be more "student-centered" to change this renewal to an "annual" basis, at least for first-year students.
- A comment was made that it would be more equitable for students if the grading scale and the percentage conversion scale was more consistent with other institutions. At the University of Windsor an "A+" is **93**-100% whereas at other universities an "A+" is generally **90-**100%. This disadvantages UWindsor students when competing for external scholarships.
- A discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of changing the grading scale and the general consensus was that it was that the University of Windsor should move to a 100% grading scale which is more consistent with universities and with the grading systems in high schools.

Student Committee meeting of April 14, 2011
A formal discussion revealed overwhelming support to change the 13 point scale to a 100% grading scale.

MOTION: That the Thirteen Point Grading Scale be changed to a 100% scale, effective Fall 2013 for all current and incoming students.

Sapkota/Gharam

It was NOTED that:

- At the March 15, 2011 Student Committee meeting there was a general consensus amongst members that the University of Windsor should move to a 100% grading scale, as per other Ontario universities who are using either the 4.3 grading scale or 100% scale.
- In response to a question raised regarding whether the 100% scale would have a corresponding letter grade scale, it was noted that the "percentage grade" would be what a student would receive in course. The university policy on the percentage grade conversion scale should be reviewed in the future to ensure are students are competitive when applying for external scholarships and or other sources of funding.
- Although consideration could be given to having a letter grade conversion chart somewhere on the back of a student's transcript for reference only, it was stressed that only the percentile should be used to calculate averages for scholarships, awards, bursaries, etc.
- In response to a question raised as to what happens if a student is applying to a school in the United States where they may be using a 4.0 scale, it was noted that since all universities have their own grading scale, and therefore they convert the scores to their own system.
- Rather than phasing the changes in for incoming students, the Thirteen Point Grading Scale would be changed for all current and incoming students commencing Fall 2013.

CARRIED

Academic Policy Committee meeting of May 12, 2011
A formal discussion revealed overwhelming support to change the 13 point scale to a 100% grading scale.

MOTION: That the Thirteen Point Grading Scale be changed to a 100% scale, effective Fall 2013 for all current and incoming students.

Wilson/Wright

It was NOTED that:

- Over the years there have been various concerns raised regarding the issue that the University of Windsor grading system is inconsistent with other Ontario and Canadian universities which may disadvantage students when applying for professional studies, post-graduate studies, when applying for scholarships/grants, etc.
- The proposal for changing from a 13pt grading scale to a 100% scale has been vetted by Student Committee, Associate Deans Council, Deans Council and the three student groups. In addition, various areas across campus (ITS, Registrar's Office, Awards, Centre for Career Education, Residence Services, Institutional Analysis) have been consulted and have provided suggestions and feedback regarding the proposal.
- Changing the grading scale will require systematic review of all policies and procedures affected by this change. The endeavour will be initially time-consuming but academically worthwhile in the long run.
- In response to the suggestion made that the document go forward to Senate first as a discussion item and then for approval, it was noted that given the projected timeline for implementation, the overwhelming support for the change by the various groups, and the general view that the 13 pt scale does not "make sense", members agreed that the document should just go directly to Senate for approval.
- Instructors would essentially be given percentage number grades. The Grade Conversion Scale (among many other policies) would need to be revisited, pending approval of this proposal. Currently the Policy on Grade Conversion indicates that an A+ is a 93%-100%, and this may need to be reviewed with a view to making it more in line with other universities.
- There was overwhelming support for changing the grading scale to 100%. It was felt that this change would be more consistent with other universities, allow greater flexibility for professors in their marking, reduce student complaints and be more transparent for students, parents, faculty, employers, *etc*.

CARRIED

Associate Deans' Group Meeting:
At the March 8, 2011 meeting, the Associate Deans considered the proposal to revise the University of Windsor's 13pt grading scale. The majority of members supported changing the 13pt scale to either a 4.0-4.3 grading scale or a 100% scale, with a preference for the latter.

It was noted that:
- the preciseness of the 13pt grade scale which is used for awards and continuation/graduation requirements can negatively impact students .
- the fact that students cannot easily explain their GPA to parents, friends and employers who are familiar with the 4.0 scale or 100% scale.
- the scale is unknown outside the university and it disadvantages students applying for external scholarships who are competing with students under the broader 4.0 scale.
- international recruitment and marketing is made more difficult.
- being unique in this instance is not necessarily advantageous. The 13pt scale creates an external perception of the University of Windsor as difficult to understand and navigate.
- tri-council funding for graduate students is allocated to universities on a three-year rolling average based on the number of top students. The 13 point scale and the percentages associated with it negatively impact our level of NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR funding. Conversely a 100% or 4.0 scale could have positive resource implications.
- As the university moves to creating more joint programs with other institutions, having a grading scale that is commonly used (whether 4.0 or 100%) will allow for greater ease and fluidity of student records, advising and will be easier for students to understand.
- Many universities offer 10-14 separate letter grades (A-F), however the common grading scales associated with these letter grades are 4.0, 4.3 or 100%.
- There was general consensus that, if there is to be a change, it should be made with a view to making us more consistent with other universities, particularly Ontario universities.
- The 100% grading scale is the simplest to understand nationally and internationally – an important consideration given the number of international students, increasing international articulation agreements, and the increasing number of inter-institutional joint/collaborative programs.
- A 100% scale or 4.0 scale will facilitate college transfer agreements.
- It is time-consuming and arduous to identify equivalent GPA for students flowing between the College and Windsor campuses in the Collaborative Nursing program. A 100% scale or 4.0 scale would be much easier.
- The practice of evaluating equivalencies for grading scales varies from university to university and is dependent on the level of expertise of the individual providing the equivalency (*e.g.,* new Head vs two-term Head). This impacts consistency.
- It is important to have a grading scale that best reflects academic performance and is the most understandable.

Overall, Associate Deans supported changing the 13pt scale to a 100% scale.

Deans' Council Meeting:
At their March 23, 2011 meeting, the Deans considered the proposal to revise the University of Windsor's 13pt grading scale. The general consensus was that the 13pt scale should be changed to 100% scale.

It was noted that:
- for first generation university students, and parents of first generation university students, the 13pt grade scale (and others) is hard to decipher. A 100% scale is simpler and does not discriminate between those that understand the higher education system and the practice of using grade point scales and those who do not.
- Changing the 13 point scale does not change the categories of letter grades at the university (A+, A, A-, B+, B, *etc.*)
- The 13 point scale disadvantages students seeking scholarship renewals and other awards. The university's grade conversion scale also negatively impacts the ability of our students to compete for external awards.
- This is not an area where the University should choose to be distinctive, particularly given the increasing number of collaborative/joint initiatives with other institutions and the perception that of students that the 13pt scale is used because Windsor is not as rigourous or academic challenging.
- Although the 13pt scale does not appear on the transcripts, students often use the "working copy" of the transcript as they progress through their degree. This copy does refer to the 13 pt scale.
- The 13pt scale may be used for internal purposes but it is a very public.

- Nursing (Collaborative program with Colleges) and Education (Joint PhD with other universities) have struggled with the grade point scale conversion.
- While no system will please everyone, the 13 point scale should be changed as it is incomprehensible, disadvantageous to students, and negatively impacts the University's reputation. The general consensus was that the 100% scale would be preferable as it would be more equitable, comprehensible, and straightforward for all (students from various locations, parents, those involved in inter-institutional initiatives, *etc*.)

The Director of the Centre for Career Education, the Director of Student Awards and Financial Aid, the Registrar, the Department Head of Residence Services, and the Executive Director of Institutional Analysis were contacted for feedback. The GSS, OPUS and UWSA were also asked for feedback.

The following is the feedback received from this group:

- All those consulted noted that a change would not be difficult to implement but it would be time-consuming.
- A concern was expressed by some about time and resources needed to make this change and the fact a change would result in other key priorities being temporarily set aside.
- Karen Benzinger, Director of the Centre for Career Education added a reference to co-op students one of the bullets on p 4.
- There was a question about what had changed since the implementation of the 13pt scale to warrant a change to a different scale.
- Greg Marcotte, Registrar, also noted that:

1. All concerned must be reminded that NO 13-POINT GRADING SCALES REFERENCES whatsoever appear on our transcripts sent to external entities. These appear on students' working transcripts that they can access on SIS, but these are not personalized, in that they do not have the student's name on that record so that it cannot be printed off and construed as an official transcript. UWindsor's 13-point scale is used for a number of INTERNAL purposes only as listed below.
2. Registrar's maintains several hundred Crystal Desktop reports and a large number of these include existing 13-point or grade calculations. Any changes to our scale will require significant time and resources to re-do all these reports.
3. We currently have just over 15,000 sheets of transcript security paper in print. If/when any change is made, we will have to revise the Key To Grading information on the reverse of the form. Alternatively, we could agree to any changeover to the new system in a future year(s) and we can adjust stock accordingly.

- ITS was consulted in the drafting of the report and the comments received are imbedded within the report.
- Ed King, President of OPUs noted that he was in favour of a change, though not specific as to which grading scale.
- Laine McGarragle, President of UWSA and Kim Orr, UWSA rep and Student Senator voiced their strong support for a change in grading point scale, with a preference for the 100% scale for the reasons noted above (easier for students to conceptualize their grades if using a 100% scale; 13 pt scale is too different and disadvantages students; *etc*.).

Appendix A

In 2011 the Grading Scales of (71) Canadian Universities were reviewed and the following was determined:

4.0	4.3	4.5	9.0	10.0	12.0	13.0	100%
Acadia	Brandon	Manitoba	Victoria	Ottawa	Carleton	Windsor	Algoma U
Alberta	Concordia	Winnipeg	York	Saint Paul U	McMaster		Bishop's
Athabasca	Dalhousie	Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface			Redeemer		British Columbia
Calgary	Fraser Valley				Wilfrid Laurier		Brock
Emily Carr U	Kwantlen						Cape Breton
The King's UC	Laval						Guelph
Lethbridge	Moncton						Lakehead
McGill	Montreal						Laurentian
Memorial	Mt. Allison						Nipissing
Montreal Poly Tech	Mt. St. Vincent						OCAD U
Mount Royal	New Brunswick						Nova Scotia CAD U
Toronto	Quebec						P.E.I
	UNBC						Queens
	UOIT						Regina
	Royal Roads U						Royal Military College
	Ryerson						Saskatchewan
	St. Mary's						Ste. Anne
	St. Thomas U						St. Francis Xavier
	Sherbrooke						Sudbury
	Simon Fraser						Trent
	Thompson Rivers						Waterloo
	Trinity Western U						Western
	BC Open U						
	Vancouver Island						
	HEC Montreal						
12	**25**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**22**

Of 24 Ontario Universities, 13 (54.2%) use the 100% grading system, four (16.7%) use the 12.0 scale and three (12.5%) use the 4.0-4.3 scale. Only two (8.3%) universities use the 10.0 scale, only one (4.2%) university uses the 9.0 scale, and only one (4.2%) uses the 13.0 scale. (see appendix A)