Overview and Background

In 2016-17 a task force was created under Academic Affairs to research, discuss and make recommendations on four areas of grading:

1. Adopting a standardized grading scale
2. Revision of the Incomplete Grade policy
3. A+/C- grades
4. Separating Policy and Procedure language

The original task force members were Eddie Johnson, Ken Swarthout, Dana Topliff, Rebecca Walker-Sands, and Courtney Whetstine. Given the number of topics, it was assumed that the work would span one or two academic years. The task force spent 2016-17 exploring the use of a standardized grading scale. The other three charges were slated for discussion in 2017-18. At the end of 2016-17 both Rebecca Walker-Sands and Eddie Johnson stepped off of the task force, after which Tom Barry agreed to participate.

Standardized Grading Scale

The concept of adopting a standardized grading scale surfaced due to concerns regarding lack of consistency in grading practices. The task force developed a list of benefits, drawbacks and considerations of adopting a standardized grading scale to present to student and faculty groups. However, ASCOCC declined to participate in the survey or share with their constituency. Therefore, the survey was presented to faculty to gather feedback on whether a standardized grading scale should be adopted, and if so, whether it should be enforced or recommended. (See appendices A and B for full survey questions and proposed scale).

The results are as follows:

Academic Affairs Grading Task Force - Standardized Grading Scale

Do you support adopting a standardized grading scale?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes	44.6%	66
No	48.0%	71
No Opinion	7.4%	11
answered question		148
skipped question		0

Employees Responding by Status	Response Percent	Response Count
Full-Time Faculty	63.2%	84
Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty	34.6%	46
Student	0.0%	0
Administrator	2.3%	3
answered question		133
skipped question		15

Employees **Against** a Standardized Grading Scale

Employees by Status	Percent of All Employee Responses	Response Count
Full-Time Faculty	34.5%	51
Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty	6.8%	10
Student	0.0%	0
Administrator	0.7%	1
Declined to provide Status	6.1%	9
Against Standardized Grading Scale		71
skipped question		15

Employees **Supporting** a Standardized Grading Scale

Employees by Status	Percent of All Employee Responses	Response Count
Full-Time Faculty	18.9%	28
Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty	20.3%	30
Student	0.0%	0
Administrator	1.4%	2
Declined to provide Status	4.1%	6
Supporting Standardized Grading Scale		66
skipped question		15

Task Force Recommendations

The task force reviewed the survey responses and consulted with Betsy Julian, Vice President for Instruction. As a result of the discussion and lack of clear consensus, the grade task force comes forward with no firm recommendation on this topic. However, the task force does recognize the value of a sample grading scale for new or part time faculty and do support maintaining the sample grading scale in the syllabus template, as is current practice.

Revision of Incomplete Grade Policy

The 2017-18 task force reviewed feedback and proposed edits to the incomplete grade policy (and other edits) that were submitted with the original charge (see appendix C). The content, although helpful, proposed more descriptive guidelines suited for internal faculty training materials, but no significant changes to academic policy or procedure. The task force members made no recommendations for changes to general policy, procedure or student-facing catalog content.

A+/C- Grades

Various faculty groups discussed the possibility of awarding A+ and C- grades and faculty task force members felt there was not overwhelming support and interest. Additionally, we found that given the variety of admissions processes at colleges and universities, there is no consistent disadvantage that our students face by not having an A+ grade option. The task force also decided that offering a C- grade would not provide ample benefit to students. C- grades are not considered passing for prerequisite courses .

Policy/Procedure Language

In 2013-14 COCC's viability committee completed the initial work to, where possible, separate policy and procedure language in preparation for the GPM at the time to separated. While difficult to fully divide the two, the task force agreed to honor the work originally completed by that committee and makes no recommendation for changes.

APPENDIX A

Standardized Grading Scale

Background
Academic Affairs appointed a Grade Task Force to review the possibility of adopting a standardized grading scale (see appendix). The task force is surveying relevant faculty and student groups to solicit feedback before making a recommendation to Academic Affairs. Note that the two questions below include a summary of benefits and drawbacks. If a standardized grading scale is adopted, COCC will need to determine if the scale is mandatory or recommended (noting exceptions). Please read all information before responding.

Question 1: Do you support adopting a standardized grading scale? Please answer with your rationale:

Considerations in favor of a standardized grading scale:
- Creates consistency in student experience and expectation
- Provides a framework for full time, adjunct and part time faculty

Considerations against a standardized grading scale:
- Variation in types of assessments and how standardized/non-standardized assignments may be graded differently
- Regulating faculty grading practices

Note: The grading scale applies to final grades for the course. It is the instructor's discretion to apply grades and/or percentages to particular forms of evaluation. This allows for flexibility based on program requirements and the variety of assessment tools used across courses.
Note: Certain programs with accreditation or licensing requirements may be exempt from a standardized scale.

Question 2: If a standardized grading scale is adopted, should it be required or recommended? Please answer with your rationale:

Considerations for a required use of a standardized grading scale:
- To what degree is it enforced?
- By department chair as he/she reviews syllabi each term?
- By department chair reviewing/sampling individual instructor grading practices?
- Would compliance/noncompliance be considered in faculty performance?
- What does this mean for academic freedom?

Considerations for recommended use of a standardized grading scale:
- Would it be used if it is only recommended?

APPENDIX B

Proposed Institutional Grading Scale

The current G-30-12 Grades policy in the General Procedures Manual has institutionally established grades, but no associated grading scale. The syllabus template provides a suggested scale (below). (This sample considers A+/C- grades which, at present, are not used at COCC).

Grading Scale from COCC's Syllabus Template, updated by Academic Affairs during the 2015-16 academic year:

Grade	Assessment/Meaning of grade	Grade-point equivalent on a 4.0 scale	Typical Percentage scale
A	Exceptional performance	4.0	93-100%
A-	Superior performance	3.7	90-92%
B+	Excellent performance	3.3	87-89%
B	Very good performance	3.0	83-86%
B-	Worthy performance	2.7	80-82%
C+	Competent performance	2.3	77-79%
C	Satisfactory performance	2.0	70-76%
D	Marginal performance	1.0	65-69%

(Note: Courses in which "D" grades are earned may be limited or not used in specific certificate or degree programs)

F	Inadequate performance/Failing	0.0	0-64%

* If re-instituting the grade of C- is considered:

Grade			
C	Satisfactory performance	2.0	73-76%
C-	Below satisfactory performance	1.7	70-72%
D	Marginal performance	1.0	65-69%
F	Inadequate performance/Failing	0.0	0-64%

* If adding an "A+" grade to the scale is considered:

Grade			
A+	Exceptional performance	4.2	97-100%
A	Outstanding performance	4.0	94-6%

Exceptions to the standard grading scale: Programs in Nursing and Natural Industrial Resources, and other Allied Health certificate programs
- The Chair of the Nursing Department should fill in the grading scale requirements for a certificate and/or degree in Nursing
- The Chair of the Natural Industrial Resources Department should fill in the grading scale for any certificate or degree that has different requirements than listed for the standard scale
- The Chair of the Allied Health Department should fill in the grading scale for any certificate that has different criteria/requirements than listed for the standard scale.

APPENDIX C

2017 Proposed Changes to COCC's Grading Policy
Respectfully submitted by Eddie Johnson, Professor of Human Biology

✓ **My proposals are in red**

Definitions in the manual on grades other than A-F:
- **Auditing a course**. Students who want the experience of taking a particular class but do not want to receive college credit may register as an audit student in any of the College's courses. Audit students are not required to meet specific course requirements but should participate fully in class activities. If students wish to audit a class, they must indicate so at the time of registration and note the following:
  - ✓ "X" appears on the transcript
  - ✓ "X" is not figured into a student's GPA
  - ✓ Tuition is the same as classes taken for credit
  - ✓ Audited courses do not meet graduation or transfer requirements and are not eligible for financial aid
  - ✓ A student may convert "audit" status to "regular" status, and vice versa, before the end of the seventh week of the term for full-term classes.

- **Incomplete (I) grade**. An Incomplete/I grade is assigned when a student successfully completes approximately 75 percent of course requirements, but for reasons acceptable to the instructor, the student is not able to complete remaining requirements during the given term, but there is a reasonable expectation that the student will pass the course if the agreed-upon conditions are met before the end of the following term. An "I" grade is not a substitution for a failing.
- The instructor and the student agree upon the expectations for successfully completing the subject matter of the course, and both sign and date the "Incomplete contract". The student, the instructor and the department Chair all are given a copy.
- Students must complete the remaining requirements within one quarter after the end of the original course (summer term excluded; if the "I" is given in the Spring term, the deadline for completion is the end of the following Fall term) - unless the instructor designates a later completion date for unusual circumstances.
- An incomplete grade will not count towards academic warning (i.e., there is no GPA assigned during the time the "I" is in place), but it may affect Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress, so the student should check on these.
- Once the requirements are completed before the deadline, the instructor will submit the earned grade and notify the department Chair, so the Chair can close his/her file on the matter.

- If the student does not complete the requirements by the deadline, the Admissions & Records Office will automatically assign a grade of "F" for the course. If the student submitted the work before the deadline, but the instructor failed to submit a grade change, the student must contact the instructor (or department Chair – see below) immediately, and work with the instructor or Chair to change the grade.

- <u>Part-time, Adjunct, or Full-time Temporary instructor assigning an "I"</u>. It must be noted that if a Part-time instructor agrees on an "I" for a student, there is no guarantee that the instructor will still be teaching for COCC the following term (the same may happen for an Adjunct or FT-Temporary instructor, particularly if the "I" is assigned in the Spring term, and the instructor's contract is not renewed). To "protect" the student, the department Chair must be involved in any Incomplete contract between a student and instructor. In the event that the instructor is no longer employed by COCC, the Chair must take the responsibility of assigning and submitting the student's grade, if the student met the requirements by the deadline.

- **Pass (P)/No Pass (NP) grade**. "Pass" is interpreted as a "C" or better. The P/NP option is used for certain courses where it is deemed inappropriate to utilize the regular grading system. All such courses utilizing the P/NP format must first be approved through the normal committee structure of the College. Such courses set P/NP standards in their original submission for course approval. Every course completed with a P/NP option will be entered into the student's transcript.

- **Course in Progress (IP -** restricted to particular programs, where the course extends beyond a single term**)**. When a course has an ending date past the regular term's grading period, the Records Office will assign an IP grade. IP will stand until the instructor submits a regular grade at the end of a course.

- **Withdrawal (W) from a course**. During the term, students have two options for withdrawing from a course, usually to avoid an undesired final grade, although there are other circumstances that lead to this decision.
  1. A student can decide to drop a course by the end of week seven (short-term courses have different deadlines; the student should check the course syllabus or the short term refund and drop deadlines form on the COCC website). This requires only that the student notify the Admissions & Records Office before that deadline, and the course is removed from the student's transcript, with no evidence that the student was in the course.
  2. A student can decide to drop a course between the eighth week of the term and the Wednesday before finals week (the last Wednesday of classes that term). This requires only that the student notify the instructor, and if the instructor agrees, the instructor will sign the "blue form" or notify the Admissions & Records Office via email that s/he agrees to the withdrawal. In this case, a "W" will be assigned by the Admissions and Records Office and the course with the "W" will be on the student's official and permanent transcript. For any course

shorter than one quarter, proportional times will be used; the student must contact the Admissions & Records Office for specific details.

- **Changing grading status to/from audit and adding a new course**. A student can decide to change the grading status for a course from a letter grade to an audit until the end of week seven (short-term courses have different deadlines; the student should check the course syllabus or the short term refund and drop deadlines form on the COCC website). The deadline for adding a new course, if permitted by the instructor, also is the end of week seven.

Mid-term Grades:
Midway through each term, instructors are notified of the deadline for submitting mid-term grades to the Admissions & Records Office, and then an email with the grade is sent to the student at his/her college email address. In order to help a student decide whether to get assistance with the course (ex: tutoring) or drop the course, **instructors must submit any mid-term grade of "D" and "F" or "NP"** for those students whose performance indicates it, including those who are not regularly attending class. Students must take responsibility for withdrawing if they do not wish to continue in a class. ~~It is entirely the instructor's discretion to submit or not submit a midterm grade report~~.

Final Exams and Final Grades:
The Final Exam schedule is set by the Office of the VPI. Final grades must be submitted to the Admissions & Records Office by the established deadline (currently 8am on the Wednesday following Finals Week). End-of-term grades are available via the student's Bobcat Web Account by the Thursday following the term only and will not be mailed or given out over the phone. Instructors also can post final grades on Blackboard.

Grade Changes:
The responsibility to award and change grades at COCC is entirely the instructor's (please note the Incomplete grade policy exception). A student who disputes the final grade (A-F, P, NP) in a course must follow the Grade Appeal Procedure.
1. The student first must meet with the instructor (or department Chair, if the instructor is not available) to review the grade.
2. If the student does not agree that the assigned grade is fair, the student will meet with the department Chair, who can further review the grade with the instructor.
3. If the instructor does not change the grade to the satisfaction of the student, the student has until the end of the third week of the following term (or the third week of the Fall term if the dispute is over a course taken in the preceding Spring term) to make a formal written request to the Grade Appeal Committee. The student should refer to COCC's Grade Appeal Procedure for more details.

- Exceptions to the grading policy should be requested by a student petition submitted to the Registrar.

4. Issues concerning the change of grade to or from I-W-X should go through the petition process that starts in the Admissions and Records office.

- Instructors have within one year of an original grade being awarded to submit a grade change based on a calculation error, or to change an Incomplete to a letter grade.