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## Grading System in Education: An Overview

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### Abstract

*In the current era, the India universities as well as school boards are changing their trend by adopting grading system in education from the traditional system of absolute marking. In this paper we have given an overview of grading system from international perspective. Further, this paper also covers the merits and demerits of grading system with a special focus towards relative and absolute grading systems.*

**Keywords:** Absolute Grading, Relative Grading, CGPA, SGPA

### Introduction:

The grading system is a methodology by which the marks secured by a student are replaced by some grade which is an alphabet. The grading scale is a varying component which varies between countries and institutions also. For the implementation of grading system credit based system will be used i.e. the whole curriculum will be divided into various subjects to be studied in a semester or year. Whereas each subject will have its own weightage in the semester or year; the weightage of a particular subject is known as credits. In the current scenario, every academic institution is trying to impose grading system and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is also in the favor of grading system not only in higher education but in school education also. Central Board of School Education (CBSE) has already adopted grading system in their examination pattern. The major intention behind grading system is to reduce the mental stress among the students, reduction in the accident as well as depression cases, inclusion of choice based system etc. Since every coin has two sides therefore grading system is also having its pros and cons.

### International perspective of Grading System in Education:

The grading system in education is seriously adopted by academic institutions of developed as well as developing nations. The United States uses five point numerical scale and there are five letter grades A, B, C, D and F where A is the highest grade and F denotes fail grade. In US there are two types of grading systems viz percentage based and rank based. In percentage based method a grade will be awarded on the basis of the percentage of marks secured by the students whereas in rank based method, a grade will be awarded on the basis of the rank owned by the student in a particular subject among all the students appeared for that subject. In rank based method grade A will be awarded to top 7%, B to next 24%, C to middle 38%, D to next 24% and F to bottom 7%. Whereas in percentage based grading method grade A will be awarded for the percentage between 90% - 100%, B for 80% to 89%, C for 70% to 79%, D for 60% to 69% and F for 59% and below. Germany uses 6-point grading scale to evaluate the performance of children like 1 (sehr gut, very good), 2 (gut, good), 3 (befriedigend satisfactory), 4 (ungenügend, insufficient), 5 (mangelhaft, deficient), 6 (ungenügend, insufficient) where "5" and "6" both are considered as fail grades. Academic grading in Canada varies by province, level of education, institution and faculty. Somewhere seven letters grades are awarded and somewhere it is ten or four or five. The universities in Japan follows the system of four grades and percentage method only. The grades are A (80% - 100%), B(70% - 79%), C(60% - 69%) and F(0 - 59%) where F is a fail grade. The most of the colleges and universities in China follows percentage based grading system comprises of five grades A (85% - 100 %), B (75% - 84%), C (65% - 74%), D (60% - 64%) and F (0 - 59%) where F is failure.

### Grading system in India:

The Indian education system comprises of various state boards, central board and international board for school education whereas for higher education system it is having colleges and universities. Since India is a large country therefore its education system is not completely grading based. But despite of the size; CBSE has implemented grading system at

school level and in higher education system various universities are also using the grading system and a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) on a 4,5 or 10 point scale. The grade letters are A+, A, B+, B, C+, C, D, E and F where "E" and "F" are fail grades. All the IITs, IT-BHU, NITs, IIITs, BITS Pilani (Pilani, Goacampuses), BIT Mesra, NERIST Itanagar, MITS Laxmangarh, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Coimbatore Institute of Technology (C.I.T.) and most of the State run Technical Universities follow this system. The grading may be absolute or relative.

### **Absolute v/s Relative Grading:**

These are the two types of grading systems where absolute grading system is a percentage based method for awarding grades. In this method there will be a specific range of percentage and each range associated with a particular grade. Whereas relative grading is a rank based or curve based method for providing grades i.e. the grades will be provided on the basis of the performance of the group or class in a particular subject or course. It encompasses standard deviation which is a statistical tool. Generally a university in India follows both types of grading systems i.e. absolute and relative. The criterion behind choosing absolute or relative grading is the total number of the students in a group. If the group is having students less than twenty than absolute grading system will be followed whereas for the group above twenty; any one of the grading system can be followed preferably relative.

### **SGPA v/s CGPA:**

Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) indicates the performance of the student in current semester whereas Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) indicates the overall performance of the student including current performance.

### **Propitious and Ominous Impacts of Absolute and Relative Grading Systems:**

The majority of reputed institutions for school or higher education across the world are now a days using grading system in education. Although there is no standard format for grading but despite of this majority of the institutions has embraced. As it has been discussed earlier that absolute grading is a percentage based method whereas relative grading is rank based statistical method. The relative grading can be implemented by using normal bell shape curve level method or distribution gap method or by using standard deviation. There merits and demerits are given as under:

- Merits of absolute grading:
- Allows grade to be directly correlated to student's achievement
- There is no chance of manipulation of grades
- Easy to understand as well as easy to implement
- It can be applicable to any group irrespective of group's strength
- It increases the tendency of labor within group because to attain the desirable grade one has to attain a minimum percentage of awards.
- Reduces competition between students as all students having marks between fixed ranges of percentage will get the same grade. For example all students having marks in a subject between 91 and 100 will be awarded with A+ grade.
- Demerits of absolute grading:
- It can allow all students to receive the same grade which creates problem in competitive circumstances for the judgment of the potential of the students.
- Since it's a static system for the award of grades irrespective of the nature of subject therefore sometime it becomes very challenging to get high percentage in theoretical subjects in comparison with practical or mathematical subjects.
- The grades are somehow influenced by the evaluation style of the instructor i.e. leniency or strictness in the award of marks will certainly affect the grades.
- Merits of relative grading:
- The students will get the grades based upon their performance relative to their peers.
- Useful as well as required for today's competitive environment.
- It will reflect the actual performance of the students irrespective of the nature of the subject.
- Demerits of relative grading:

- It cannot be applied to a small group of students.
- It undergoes moderation of grads to obtain the normal bell shaped curve, which sometimes affects the actual performance of the students.
- The actual performance of the student in a particular subject remains hidden.

#### **Conclusion:**

In the current era; the traditional system of giving marks is gradually becoming obsolete because it undergoes a high level competition among students for a small bit of marks even in the fractions which sometimes causes frustration as well as mental disturbance. To overcome such type of problems now the trend is shifting towards grading system nationally as well as internationally; because it is more suitable in the current scenario where stress and competition in every aspect is also increasing rapidly. The emergence of grading system is like a boon for handling specified circumstances and for the welfare of students. Since the Government agencies are also in the favor of adopting grading system in higher education therefore in the coming time every university will follow the grading system and hopefully there will be a standard pattern of grading system also. The standardization in the grading pattern across whole nation will help the students in migrating from one university to another in an easy manner.

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