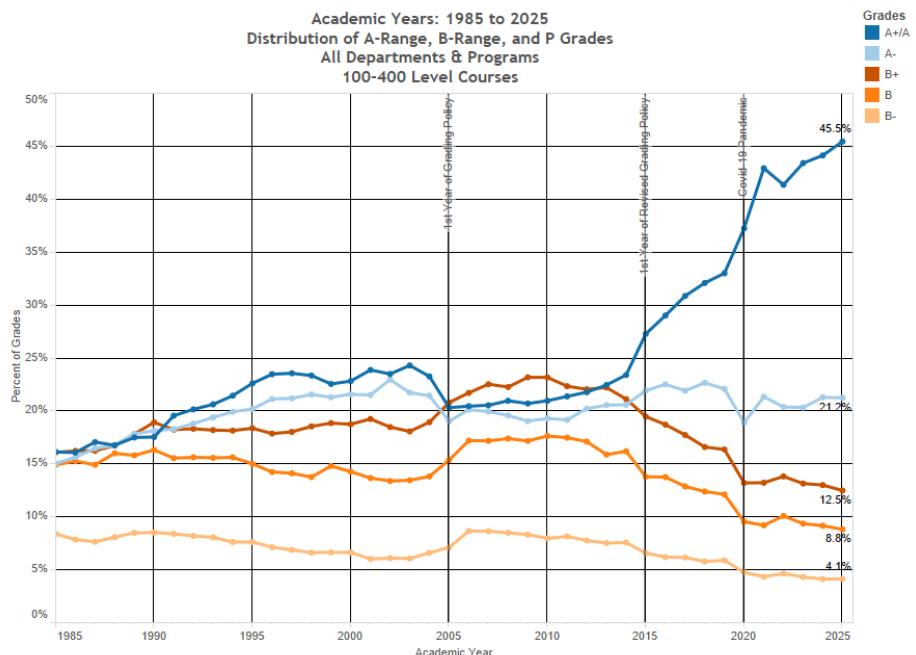


## Undergraduate Grading Report for AY 2024-2025

### Grade distribution and grade compression

The Office of the Dean of the College has tracked both the average GPA and percentage of A-range grades of undergraduates for forty years. In 2005, 39.3% of course grades were A-range (A- through A+); twenty years later, 66.7% of course grades land within the A-range. Even in introductory 100-200 level classes — where one might expect to see a broader distribution of grades — 62.6% of grades last year were A-range; only in Division III (the natural sciences) do fewer than 50% of the grades in introductory courses fall within the A-range. In more specialized 300-400 level classes across all four divisions, the percentage of A-range grades has climbed to 71.7%. In AY 2024-2025 more than half of all grades awarded in 300-400 level courses were A and A+.

Grades are also distributed within a narrow range across the University: last year, 10 departments and 20 programs awarded over 80% A-range grades in their courses. The most significant increase is at the very top of the grade distribution: over the past decade, the percentage of A- grades has stayed roughly the same, the percentage of B-range grades has declined significantly, and the percentage of A/A+ grades has steeply increased.



**Notes:**

Uncovered grades are included in this report. An uncovered grade is defined as the actual letter grade the faculty member assigned to the student, not the Official Grade. For example: If a student received a letter grade of 'B' and elected to take a course Pass/Fail, this report uses the letter grade of 'B' in its statistical analysis.

Statistics are compiled using all uncovered undergraduate grades and enrollments for undergraduate-level courses during the fall and spring semesters within the listed academic department or program. Only courses with a catalog number between 100 and 499 are included. Auditors are excluded. Graduate students are excluded. All courses with a catalog number greater than or equal to 500 are excluded. Engineering independent work is excluded.

Grade compression is even more pronounced in independent work. Of the ten largest departments, eight awarded thesis grades of B or above to over 94% of their majors. (The two exceptions are HIS and SOC.) In 2025 across all departments, seventeen gave no grade lower than a B for a thesis. Notably, senior theses are usually assessed by more than one faculty member, so compression in independent work grades does not reflect individual choices.

## A+ Grades

Once again we observe the uneven use of the A+ among divisions, especially in course grading. While the GPA and percentage of A-range grades are higher in Division I (the humanities) and Division II (the social sciences), A+ grades are more commonly given in Division III (natural sciences) and Division IV (engineering). This is especially true in upper-level STEM courses: in 300-400 level courses, A+ made up 4.7% of engineering grades and 6.5% of natural sciences grades. Among upper-level humanities courses only 2.9% of grades are A+, compared to 3.5% of upper-level social science course grades.

A+ grades are common for the senior thesis across disciplines: eleven departments gave 10% or more A+ grades on their 2025 theses (six are in Divisions III and IV; five in Divisions I and II). Of the fifteen smallest departments (those with fewer than 20 seniors in 2025), twelve awarded no A+ thesis grades.

The authors of the 2014 Ad Hoc Committee to Review Policies Regarding Assessment and Grading wrote: “Our view is that grades within departments need to be meaningful in providing accurate feedback to students but that this does not require identical grade distributions across departments.” Some faculty feel strongly that given the number of A-range grades that are awarded in our current context, the A+ is a necessary tool to differentiate performance: rather than reserving the A+ for rare exceptional work, they use the A+ to mark the top N% of performers in their class.

However, according to Rules and Procedures of the Faculty, the A+ at Princeton “should be regarded as an exceptional grade reserved for work of extraordinary merit.” Across all departments, according to *Rules and Procedures*, the required A+ statement should explain “how the student’s course work or independent work meets the instructor’s standards for truly outstanding work,” rather than simply noting a point on a curve. The A+ is the only grade called out in this way in Rules and Procedures; faculty practice does not currently reflect the stated policy.

Beginning this academic year, the College has removed the A+ from the default grading scale in Canvas. (One can still give A+ grades, but this requires a deliberate decision when entering the grades.) We note that the Faculty Council on Teaching and Learning, whose findings were shared with Directors of Undergraduate Studies this fall, has recommended that department chairs be required to review and approve A+ statements. By reserving the A+ for “work of extraordinary merit,” the faculty would retain the ability to recognize accomplishment that is genuinely exceptional.

We remind our colleagues that grading practices are not centralized at the University. As we respond to generative AI and other significant shifts in student behavior, we exhort faculty to continue developing transparent and consistent grading standards within your department, focusing especially on a shared understanding of what qualifies as excellence at the very top of the grading scale.

Grading data for all divisions, departments, and programs will be made available shortly to all faculty through a secure server: <https://princetonu.sharepoint.com/sites/odoc/gradingdata/>. **We ask that you treat the data as confidential.** Additional information may be found on the Office of the Dean of the College website: <https://odoc.princeton.edu/faculty-staff/grading-princeton>. As always, individual faculty members will receive a report on their own grading data from the Registrar. Chairs will also receive summary reports for their departments.

--*Dean Michael Gordin, for the Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing*

*The Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing is chaired by Michael Gordin, Dean of the College, and includes the following elected faculty members for AY 25-26, representing all four divisions: Benjamin Eysenbach, Computer Science; Matthew Jones, History; Anna A. Kesson, African American Studies and Art & Archaeology; Reza Moini, Civil & Environmental Engineering; Ulrich Mueller, Economics; Andrew Rosen, Chemical & Biological Engineering; and Marissa Weichman, Chemistry. Karen Richardson, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid; Emily Shandley, Registrar; W. Rochelle Calhoun, Vice President for Campus Life; and Anne Caswell, Senior Associate Dean of the College, serve ex officio. The Committee's charge from the faculty is to administer academic regulations concerning the program of study and scholastic standing of undergraduate students.*

*The University grading policy, approved by the faculty in October 2014, charges each department to articulate and uphold its own well-defined grading standards for work within its discipline. The policy calls for the Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing to report to the faculty each fall on the grading record of the previous year.*

*For release December 1, 2025*