What Does a Grade Mean at ACM?

ACM instructors never “give” grades. Students earn grades, according to standards set in each course. ACM grades are “additive,” not “subtractive.” That means each student earns and accumulates points or credits throughout the semester that add up to the final grade.

ACM curriculum is “incremental.” Each assignment or lesson is a foundation for the next one, just as each introductory course is a foundation for the intermediate courses, which are in turn foundations for the advanced courses. In that respect, students should expect to receive a final grade based on the consistency of their performance throughout the semester. One shouldn’t expect to miss assignments, deadlines, or otherwise under perform in the first part of the semester and attempt to overcome it in a flurry of activity at the end.

Students should also keep in mind that we are graded not on what we already know, but on what we learn. Even the most accomplished filmmaker or scholar can’t expect an A or B without a consistent and continual growth and improvement in knowledge, skills, and critical thinking.

Here are how grades in ACM are defined:

**C**  The grade of C signifies the level of performance or accomplishment expected of a university student in the state’s premier and nationally ranked institution of higher learning. A grade of C recognizes that the student met the expectations of the course: regular attendance, completion of all assignments, tests and exams, meeting all deadlines, and participation in all class activities. A grade of C rewards the academic behavior and performance expected of a UHM student. The student earning a C has grasped the basic concepts of the course and can apply them with adequate skill to assignments and/or projects. The student is able to accept feedback in the direction and correction of her/his work and incorporate it in her/his learning to demonstrate improvement. In courses involving group projects, the student offered solid and adequate support and contributions to the group’s outcome. A course where the common grade is C carries no negative reflection on either the students or the instructor. It is not a penalty grade—it is the norm. A grade of C (NOT C-) in a pre-requisite course is required to continue in the higher-level course(s).

**B**  The grade of B signifies an increased level of effort AND performance by the student. The student earning a B has not only met expectations of student performance (attendance, assignments, etc.), but has exceeded many in significant, measurable ways. The student has consistently improved throughout the semester as demonstrated by increased quality and quantity of work reflected in assignments, projects, tests, exams, participation, etc. The student’s work requires some direction and correction, but she/he can then exercise independence in taking it to higher levels and improved outcomes. In courses requiring group projects, the student was able to assume full responsibility, often assuming multiple roles and duties, to making significant contributions to the group’s success. There is no “B for effort” alone. It is not a reward for simply “trying hard.” The grade of B is NOT “the new C.”

**A**  The grade of A signifies the highest level of performance and accomplishment, exceeding ALL expected course outcomes. The student earning an A has taken responsibility for her/his learning, independently accumulating knowledge and improving skills beyond the classroom. The A student’s work requires minimal direction and correction and results in outcomes that can serve as a model of student achievement for the course. In courses requiring group projects, the student has exercised leadership, often assisting others in realizing their full potential to contribute to the group’s success.

**D**  The student has performed below the expectations of the course. Many factors can contribute to this minimal passing grade including poor attendance, poor performance in assignments, projects, tests and exams, lack of participation and cooperation with others. Any behavior that interferes with the learning of others, including frequent lateness, class disruptions, and lack of contributions to group projects, can result in a grade of D regardless of other levels of individual performance. Any incident of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, can result in an automatic D or F.

**F**  The student has not completed a sufficient level of quantity or quality of work to earn a passing grade. The student earning an F has not met a significant number of course expectations.

+/- Individual instructors may utilize the plus and minus system to further define or elaborate on these standards.