

Appendix A:

The following is an outline of the issues/concerns that have been raised in the community, as discussed by the committee. It is intended as background information only.

The main concerns being expressed by students and some faculty:

1. The move to a GPA has been impactful for some students. It has been most challenging for those bridging both the old and the new system.
2. There is no longer the ability to rank students. The granularity is lower, particularly at the high end.
3. There is an issue with cumulative GPA when students change degree programs. Should the cumulative GPA include all courses or do we need more careers?
4. Education uses a 4.0 scale instead of a 4.3 scale and this complicates the calculation of cumulative GPA's.

Questions the committee explored:

1. Did we fully understand the ramifications of the GPA and careers?
 - a. There was extensive discussion and research by various committees in 2008 and 2009 before reaching a decision on careers and GPA.
 - b. SCAP and Faculty Board made these decisions. They are documented and the process was transparent and consultative. There was also a Town Hall held on the use of GPA.
 - c. Real data were analysed to look at the impacts of moving to a GPA. Adjustments were made to items such as the 4.0 scale in response to the results.
 - d. Several questions and concerns have been raised, post go live, that are documented in Senate records.
2. Is there a flaw in the use of the GPA so that grades come out lower?
 - a. There is a non-linearity in the mapping at the higher end. The simulations run in Physics highlighted this.
 - b. There is less granularity than with percentage grades.
 - c. In review for SCAP and Faculty Board a number of "simulations" were run with real data from the FAS between 2006 and 2009, to see if there were any detrimental effects.
 - i. The career GPA compared to percentage average was highly correlated, suggesting a good comparator.
 1. There was bias introduced for those with failed courses.
 2. At the higher end, the correlation was improved by moving from the 4.0 to the 4.3 scale. This was a recommendation that was adopted.
 - ii. Ranking was not significantly impacted by the GPA.
 - iii. Data were analyzed and it was determined in the FAS that making the Honours cutoff at 3.5 would leave the same number on the list.

- d. In their Grading Policy, in FAS, they set out clear expectations around the grade points. This does not necessarily equate to a straight conversion from the % scale to GP. There was an education piece around this.
 - e. The grading culture varied a great deal between departments. Some departments were considered 'harder' markers than others and grade distributions varied considerably across departments. The GPA offers an opportunity that may be more equitable. It was noted that this was an opportunity that may not be realized across the board.
3. Is a GPA harmful to our graduating students?
- a. We are used to seeing and interpreting GPA from other schools.
 - b. Our GPA is consistent with many other schools.
 - c. There is an explanation on the back of the transcript – we discussed whether this could be better explained.
 - d. When looking at applicants for NSERC scholarships (which has explicitly been brought up as a concern), the following was noted.
 - i. For the **general pool** of applications, Academics are scored at 50% (this includes grades and other scholarly work). The other two criteria deal with research potential and leadership.
 - ii. For **Doctorates** applications, the Academic drops to 30% of their score.
 - iii. For **Post Docs** applications, grades are not considered.
 - iv. There is a potential issue in that the pre-screening process sets a cut-off at 3.7 and some of our students at the margin may fall below that with our new system. It was noted by a faculty member who has sat on the applicant review process that the competition is so fierce that people at the lower end will not qualify for an award, so cut-off really does not come into play.
 - e. The SGS has monitored OGS applications and appropriate adjustments were made.
 - f. OGS and SSHRC awards heavily weight marks, so any changes have the potential to be impactful.
4. What are other schools doing?
- a. Most schools use a GPA, particularly in the U.S.
 - b. Only 2.5% of NA schools report GPA and %.
 - c. In U15 only UoT reports both.
 - d. Some schools do not report a cumulative GPA (e.g., Calgary).
5. What is the current lay of the land at Queen's?
- a. GPA and CAREER are foundational pieces in PeopleSoft. It would be difficult to change the foundation now. It is not impossible, just costly. We do not have the capacity given other requirements (e.g., many government-imposed regulatory requirements). It is estimated to be a \$300k+, 6 month undertaking.
 - b. People Soft maintains an 'input' Grade and 'official' Grade. The Input Grade is not passed through the system like the official grade. This is the complex piece that would cost time and dollars to change.

- c. Significant numbers have already made the switch to submitting Letter Grades (over 50%). We can't determine how many of these letter grades are based on percentages or how many have been reserved.
- d. The 'new' transcripts are easier to read and more consistent. This was an objective from the outset. Transcripts during the transition (i.e., those that bridge new and old) have not been easier to read.
- e. Departments, such as Physics, rely on ranking their students and percentage grads offer more granularity at the higher ends.
- f. The FAS relies on a cumulative GPA.