A MODEL FOR GRADING

It is important that we communicate how we evaluate projects and assign grades. Project grading is difficult, particularly since students and advisors develop a working relationship during the project. Project grading is also very different from course grading. In a class, correctly completing all assignments and evaluations (designed by the professor) earns a student an A grade. However, an A project grade requires that students go beyond this level and demonstrate originality, initiative, and creative thinking and analysis. Students generally feel that lots of hard work and a nicely presented report deserves an A. Most professors (including us) do not, unless there is real analysis, originality and depth in the total project effort. Project students are expected to:

- Have clearly stated, achievable goals, appropriately defined and qualified by the project team.
- Strive to achieve as much balance possible between the technical and social/humanistic aspects of the project topic.
- Achieve the goals.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the relevant literature and other background sources; evaluate this material critically and apply it appropriately to the project work.
- Take initiative: students should make the project their own, and pursue its completion independently. (Advisors advise and consult; they should not have to dictate.)
- Design and apply appropriate methodologies to achieve the goal.
- Fulfill responsibilities to partners, sponsors, advisors, and other students.
- Analyze the data or information collected in an appropriate fashion.
- Effectively document and report information about the project, in written and oral form. Your written progress reports, drafts and presentations are the primary means by which your work is conveyed to your advisors and sponsor; we expect that these materials will represent your best efforts.
- Be flexible, and take adversity in stride.
- Grow and learn.
- Have some fun doing the project!

I. How will your IQP be graded?

As in C term, we will evaluate the project "process" and the final "product". We will evaluate the process as described below (see section II) and will assign a grade that will appear on your transcript as the "term" grade. It appears in the list of courses and their respective grades. The product includes the final report and final presentation. It will be evaluated as described below (see section III) and will be the grade entered on the Completion of Degree Requirement (CDR) form. This grade appears on the transcript with your IQP abstract.

II. What is this "process" evaluation?

We will be looking for the following skills and behaviors each week as reflected in the meetings, weekly presentations, and report drafts:

- Do ALL members of the team fully engage in the project activities? Do ALL members participate in weekly meetings?
- Is the presentation agenda well organized, well written, and professional?
- Is the presentation clear and professional?
- Is the team organized and working as a team? Do all members demonstrate the ability to perform several different roles within the team (i.e., research, writing, leadership)?
- Does the team effectively translate issues and situations into meaningful tasks that have a clear purpose?
- Does the team effectively use a variety of information-gathering techniques and information resources?
- Does the team consistently and accurately determine whether information is credible and relevant to tasks?
- Does the team respond to feedback, is it attentive to advice (e.g., taking notes and minutes at meetings), and responsive to that advice by making corrections and adjustments as needed?
- Does the team show determination in the pursuit of solutions and use strategies to keep themselves on task?
- Does the team meet deadlines and conduct work in a timely fashion?

Please note: A "good" process does NOT mean hiding team dynamics issues so that it appears that the team is functioning well when it is not. Good process means bringing those issues to the advisors, when appropriate, so we can help you work through them. Covering them up during D term does not reflect well on each team member regardless of their contributions to the overall effort.

III. What is this "product" evaluation?

The product grade consists of evaluating the final report and final oral presentation. These are the "deliverables" that result from the process of doing the project. Note that the process and product grades can be different.

Listed below are some specific guidelines on how we determine project grades. We will provide periodic written and verbal evaluations during the IQP. Please ask if you have any questions about their meaning. Note that final project grades can be different from the interim evaluations, and that interim evaluations are an indication of your progress. Many of the grading characteristics described below are subjective and open to some degree of interpretation. Student attitude throughout the project can also affect how we, as advisors, make these subjective judgments.

A: This grade represents a consistently excellent effort that attains, and perhaps exceeds project goals. Characteristics of A work include meeting all requirements of the B grade, and exceeding them in several areas such as development of project objectives, initiative, originality, depth of analysis, and creativity. Students taking

the lead in the discussion rather than simply responding to faculty questions (particularly as the project matures) characterize project meetings.

B: This grade represents a consistently good effort that attains project goals. Characteristics of B work include doing all that was asked in a substantially correct form; setting clear project goals, writing a clear, professionally presented report that has not required many drafts; completing all work in a timely and satisfactory manner; demonstrating sound analysis that includes logical interpretation of results; coming to meetings well prepared; and working hard, consistently, and diligently. A B grade means the group worked well and did a good, strong job, but probably did not show lots of originality or depth in analyzing results.

C: This grade represents an acceptable effort that partially attains the project goals. Characteristics of C work include meeting some but not all of the requirements for a B grade; writing a readable but average report that requires many drafts and lots of faculty corrections; and demonstrating little or no originality and initiative. Missing deadlines, missing meetings without prior notification, and ignoring faculty comments on report drafts are traits common to some C projects. A C project cannot be made into a B project by lots of "last minute" work.

NR: This grade denotes effort insufficient for registered credit. Characteristics of NR work include doing very little throughout the project; missing several meetings without prior notification; coming unprepared to meetings; repeatedly missing deadlines; turning in substandard work; not completing assigned tasks and showing little or no initiative and originality.

NAC: This grade is reserved for performance that is unacceptable for credit. It means that a student's performance (or lack of it) has seriously impeded group progress, or it has embarrassed the advisor, the project sponsor, and WPI. Note that this grade remains on the transcript.

Your project experience at WPI is like no other undergraduate academic experience. It is what sets you apart from your peers at other colleges. This experience, including recommendations from project advisors and any possible sponsoring agency liaisons, will be a major part of your resume when you go job or graduate school hunting, and will put you ahead of your competition. Work hard and work smart, and make the most of it!