

# Grading Criteria

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 technical skills. Students generally feel that lots of hard work and a nicely presented report deserve an “A.” Most professors (including us) do not, unless there is real analysis, originality and technical depth in the total project effort.

Listed below are some specific guidelines on how we determine project grades. Your advisors may provide brief written term evaluations of the project as well as a term grade. Please ask if you have any questions about their meaning. 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. Students often ask at the end of a project how they can improve their grade. No project grade can be changed by last minute work; rather, only sustained quality effort over time will result in a good grade.

**A:** This grade represents a consistently excellent effort that **exceeds** explicit project goals. Characteristics of A work include meeting all project goals, and exceeding them in several areas such as development of project objectives, initiative, originality, depth of analysis, and creativity. This grade is reserved for performance that is exceptional and thus is not achieved easily.

**B:** This grade represents a consistently good effort that **attains** the 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. Students should be proud of this grade.

**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 project goals; and writing a readable but average report requiring many drafts and lots of faculty corrections. Missing deadlines, missing meetings without prior notification, and ignoring faculty comments on report drafts are traits common to some C projects. Students who receive this grade have fallen short of expectations in a number of ways.

**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. Sometimes we use the NR grade to limit credit for a project, even though acceptable work occurred during the NR’d term. Except in special circumstances, total credit on a project is limited to 1 unit.

**SP:** a grade denoting an effort sufficient for the granting of the credit for which you are registered. It will be used only under the rare circumstance in which the project advisor is unable to judge the quality of the work, yet can still determine that the granting of the credit is appropriate. This is usually a only temporary grade for an IQP.

**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.

At the discretion of the advisor, members of the group may receive the same or individual grades. Thus, demonstration of individual contribution as well as group effort is important. Note that if a co-advisor or an off-campus sponsor is involved in the project, the evaluation is agreed upon by all the project advisors.