

Attention all instructors using letter grades in Quercus:

Critical issues with Gradebook and SpeedGrader

Due to a number of critical issues with the Quercus grading tools, it is recommended that you do not enter letter grades in Gradebook or SpeedGrader, unless you follow the steps outlined in this document.

Critical Issues:

(Recommendations to address each of these critical issues are described by the corresponding number on the following pages.)

1) The default letter grading scheme in Quercus does not align with the University of Toronto's grading schemes.

The number grade assigned to a letter grade is determined by the default grading scheme, unless you select one of the U of T grading schemes. For example, in the default grading scheme an "A" may appear to students as a "100".

2) The number assigned to a letter grade (e.g., A-) defaults to the numeric value equal to the highest number in the associated range (e.g., 84).

When an instructor/TA enters a letter grade into Quercus, the system assigns the highest number grade associated with that letter (e.g. B+ = 79; F = 49).

3) Quercus assigns a number grade when an instructor/TA enters a letter grade.

While you may only wish to assign a letter grade, Quercus automatically assigns a number grade. Students will see both the letter and a number grade. This will occur in both SpeedGrader and Gradebook.

4) If you enter a grade of "0", Quercus will make the letter grade "F" visible; some students may think this corresponds to a particular numerical grade.

5) The assignment of a numeric value occurs in SpeedGrader, even if the Gradebook is not used and hidden from student view.

For example, the letter grade entered in the SpeedGrader summary assessment box on an assignment e-submission will generate a numeric equivalent visible to students.

6) Quercus will apply the most recent setting used to all subsequent assignments.

Your browser will track the last selected setting when creating an assignment. For example, choosing "Display as Letter Grade" in one assignment saves that selection for the next assignment being created (due to browser cookies).

7) Only one grading scheme can be activated per assignment, which raises issues for cross-listed undergraduate/graduate courses.

The numeric equivalents in the grading scheme for graduate and undergraduate courses is different.

Policy on grades posted in Quercus

While grades posted in Quercus courses allow students early access to preliminary grades, it does not represent their official final marks. Official course grades are posted on ACORN. This is university-wide policy and students are informed of this in Quercus. Nevertheless, students will be confused if over the course of the term, they see numerical values that do not correspond to the instructor’s intentions.

Recommendations for Addressing Critical Issues

1) The default letter grading scheme in Quercus does not align with the University of Toronto’s grading schemes.

When creating assignments in Quercus, if you have not taken the extra step to select one of U of T’s grading schemes, the numerical range for letter grades you enter will be incorrect.

Recommendation:

There are two places where the UofT grading schemes can be enabled in Quercus:

1. Select the U of T grading scheme **at the course level** to be the default scheme for all assignments created in a course
 - Settings > Grading Scheme > Enable course grading scheme > “set grading scheme”
 - Here the instructor can select either the Graduate OR Undergraduate grade scale. This course-wide setting will hold for all assignments created **after** the grading scheme has been selected.
2. Select the U of T grading scheme **when creating each assignment**
 - Add Assignment > Display grade as “Letter Grade” > View grading scheme
 - Here the instructor can select either the Graduate OR Undergraduate grade scale for this assignment

2) The number assigned to a letter grade (e.g., A-) defaults to the numeric value equal to the highest number in the associated range (e.g., 84).

In Gradebook, if a letter grade is entered, the system assigns a number that defaults to the percentage at the top of the range (e.g., an A- range is 80 to 84; Quercus automatically assigns 84). The main display shows the A- and the percentage when viewing the student’s grades.

Essay 1	84 (A-)	100
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If the top of the range value is not what the instructor will be using to calculate the final course mark, the instructor must enter the assignment grade as a percentage, which will be displayed along with the corresponding letter grade (e.g., 82 → A-). Students will see the 82% and the A-.

Essay 1	82 (A-)	100
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Recommendation:

After selecting the appropriate U of T grading scheme for your course (see Critical Issue #1), instructors and TAs should enter all grades into the Gradebook column using a number to control the numbers that students see. For example, entering any number between 80-84 for an

undergraduate class assignment will display as the number entered and the letter “A-“. This is what students will see. The number entered will also be used in the calculation of totals over the course of the term.

3) Quercus assigns a number grade when an instructor/TA enters a letter grade.

If letter grades have been enabled for an assignment, students will see a number that corresponds to all letter grades entered into SpeedGrader and Gradebook. While instructors may be able to control which number appears, there is no way to completely hide a number value from the student view. Students will see a number and letter, but the number assigned may not be visible to the instructor.

Recommendation:

If the display of the number or percentage in the Gradebook is not an instructor’s intention, working on a spreadsheet offline to track grades is advised. Do not post grades. For online assignment submissions, see Critical Issue #5 below for recommendations on how to ensure students only see letter grades on assignments marked and returned within Quercus using SpeedGrader.

4) If you enter a grade of “0”, Quercus will make the letter grade “F” visible; some students may think this corresponds to a particular numerical grade.

If a student does not submit an assignment and is given a “F”, through the ‘translation’ this could generate a mark that is top of the F range (e.g., 49) in the Gradebook. Entering a “0” will make visible the letter “F”, which students might assume corresponds to a numeric value (e.g., 30).

Recommendation:

- For students who do not submit an assignment, do not enter a grade in the Gradebook. Instead, just leave the dash as it appears in the Gradebook field.
- For students who receive a failing grade, enter the percentage that you would like them to see.
- For students who are excused from an assignment, enter an “EX”. See online guides for this.

5) The assignment of a numeric value occurs in SpeedGrader, even if the Gradebook is not used and hidden from student view.

For example, the letter grade entered in the summary assessment box on an assignment e-submission will generate a numeric equivalent visible to students in the assignment list.

Recommendation:

If the instructor does not want the assignment grade to appear as a number:

- **Option A:** Use the SpeedGrader to add a text box with the letter grade to the actual digital submission.
- **Option B:** Use the comment box in the SpeedGrader to provide the student with the letter grade instead of the box where the grade would typically be entered.

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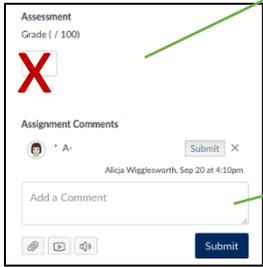
OPTION A

Use a text box in SpeedGrader to annotate the submission with the letter grade.



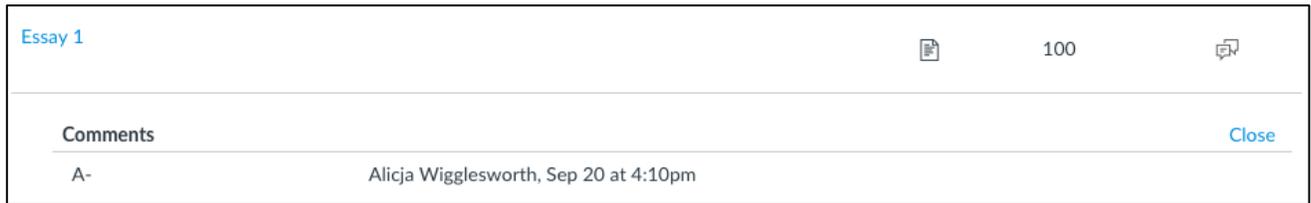
OPTION B

Do not add letter grade or percentage here; leave blank



Type your letter grade in the comment and "Submit."

Students will be able see the letter grade assigned by reviewing the in-line feedback in the assignment itself (Option A) or accessing the "Assignment Comments" with the letter grade (Option B). Student view is below:



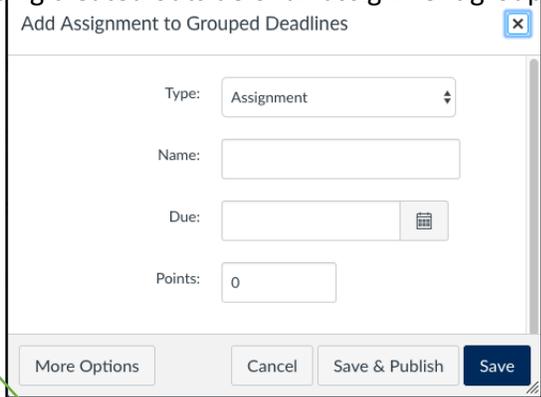
6) Quercus will apply the most recent setting used to all subsequent assignments.

Your browser will track the last selected setting when creating an assignment. For example, choosing "Display as Letter Grade" in one assignment saves that selection for the next assignment being created (due to browser cookies).

Recommendation:

When creating an assignment, always use the full view ("More Options") to ensure all of the settings are correct. Do not automatically click on "Save" on the small pop-up window that first appears when creating an assignment. The small pop up only appears when adding an assignment within an assignment group. An assignment being created outside of an assignment group will automatically show the full view.

Review "More Options" to ensure all assignment settings are correct.



7) Only one grading scheme can be activated per assignment, which raises issues for cross-listed undergraduate/graduate courses.

If a course is cross-listed as graduate and undergraduate, problems will emerge as only one grading scheme is activated per assignment. The numeric equivalents in the grading scheme for graduate and undergraduate courses is different.

Recommendation:

When graduate and undergraduate courses are cross-listed together, the grading scheme for letters needs to be applied assignment by assignment and not from the course settings page in order to differentiate between the graduate and undergraduate sections (see page 2, second option for selecting U of T grading scheme). Instructors should then create separate assignments for the graduate and undergraduate sections and enable the letter grade scheme for each assignment separately.

If an instructor does not want to create and manage a graduate and undergraduate version of each assignment, one should not to use the letter grade display in cross-listed graduate/undergraduate courses.