



Comparison of Grading Systems

This page tells you how the grades you receive at UNSW compare with overseas grading systems.

Comparison with European and US grades

In some instances, you may need to know how the grades you receive at UNSW compare with overseas grading systems - whether you are an international student studying here or a domestic student wanting to apply to overseas universities.

The European Credit Transfer System of letter grades (ECTS) was devised to deal with the large number of grading standards among universities in the European Union, and to enhance the portability of results. It is based on fixed percentiles, relative to the number of students who achieve a pass.

ECTS grades are defined below:

- **A** (percentage assigned 10%) = **Excellent**: outstanding performance with only minor errors
- **B** (25%) = **Very Good**: above the average standard with some errors
- **C** (30%) = **Good**: sound work with a number of notable errors
- **D** (25%) = **Satisfactory**: fair but with some significant shortcomings
- **E** (10%) = **Sufficient**: performance fulfils minimum criteria

In the United States, grading schemes usually have a higher proportion of As and Bs than in the ECTS. For example, even a conservative scheme in the US such as that recently adopted by Princeton University awards about 35% of students a grade of A- or higher.

Grade ranking (gumleaf diagram)

Although US or European Credit Transfer (ECTS) grading systems are not formally used at UNSW, it may be useful for you to know what approximate grade your result corresponds to under other standards.

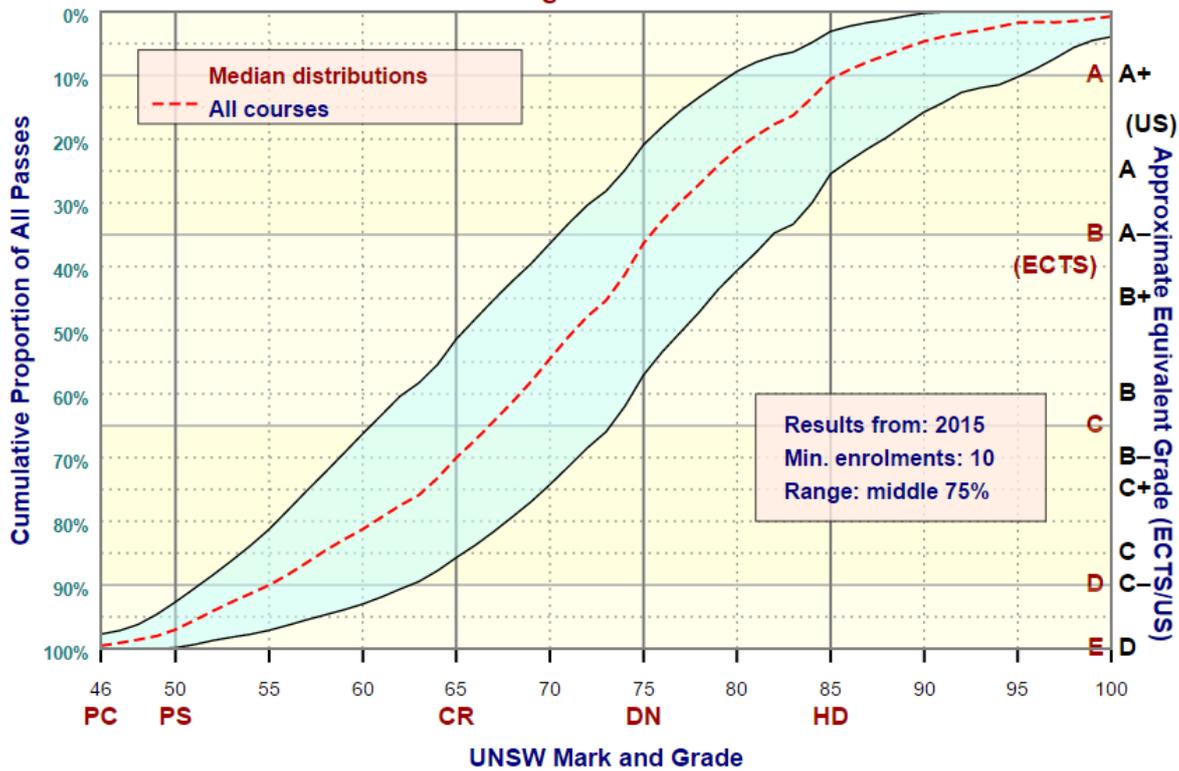
Since course grade distributions are not published, the Gumleaf diagram below provides a way for UNSW students to estimate your approximate ranking given your final grade in a course.

The diagram represents a composite plot of the cumulative distributions of courses assessed in 2015 - there are slight variations each year. The shaded, gumleaf-shaped area represents the middle 75% of all distributions.

The dashed red line is the median distribution over all courses.

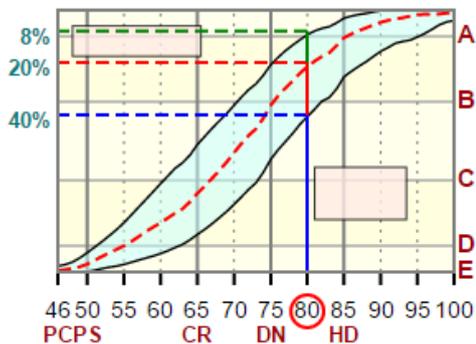
Horizontal grid lines are drawn at each 5% of the cumulative distribution, with distinctive boundaries drawn at the ECTS cut-off points.

UNSW Grading Distributions for 2015



The diagram gives a range of percentiles corresponding to any UNSW mark, and also shows the corresponding ECTS and conservative US letter grades. For example, if you received a mark of 80 (Distinction, see diagram below), the vertical line at that value intersects the gumleaf region at about 40% and 8% on the vertical scale. Your ranking would probably lie within these bounds.

For a single estimate, use the intersection with the dashed red median line at 20%. The corresponding ECTS grade is B, or an A on a conservative US scale. Similarly, a 65 Credit is near the lower third of passing grades, a borderline C in the ECTS scheme (or US B-).



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