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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION:	Senate	DATE:	August 20, 2024
FROM:	Zareen Naqvi, Institutional Research and Planning (IRP)	PAGES:	1 of 1
RE:	IRP Reports for Information		

At a meeting of Senate held on March 7, 2011, Senator Paul Percival requested that relevant IRP reports, such as the annual Grades Report, be brought to Senate for information.

Attached are three reports for information:

- **2023/24 Grades Report:** This report is prepared once a year and it summarizes course grades at the University over a ten-year period. The 2023/24 Grades Report covers the period from 2014/15 to 2023/24. Attached is the Summary Report. More detailed information is available on IRP's website: <https://www.sfu.ca/irp/students/grades-report.html>
- **2023 Undergraduate Student Survey (UGSS) Report:** The UGSS survey is conducted every fall term. The attached report presents a summary of key findings from the Fall 2023 survey. Topics covered are selected in consultation with faculties, Student Services and other administrative units of the University. This year's topics included: course availability, credential planning and completion, teaching and curriculum, services, and university culture and environment. The report can also be accessed on IRP's website: <http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss.html>
- **Effect of COVID/Grading Policies on Grades/Performance:** At the September 2023 meeting of Senate, it was requested that IRP provide some data related to the preparedness of incoming undergraduate students in COVID vs. pre-COVID times, as well as the effect of various recent grading policies on undergraduate course grades. This report was prepared to meet that request.

If you have trouble accessing files on IRP's website, please contact askIRP@sfu.ca.

Enclosure

2023/24 Grades Report:
Executive Summary of
Undergraduate and Graduate Course Grades
2014/15 to 2023/24

Prepared by
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Summer 2024

This report summarizes patterns in student course grades at Simon Fraser University over the ten-year period from 2014/15 to 2023/24¹. Grades are reported on a GPA scale. SFU faculty, staff, and senators can access a report with more detailed tables and charts (<https://www.sfu.ca/irp/students/grades-report.html>).

Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Recent Grading Policies

- A combination of changes to grading policies and other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with a bump in average course grades at the undergraduate level.
- This bump occurred in both lower division (LD) and upper division (UD) courses.
- The pattern was seen in every faculty.
- The increase in average grade awarded began in 2019/20 - 2020/21, then tapered off, so that by 2022/23 the grades appeared to be following their pre-pandemic pattern (which was a slightly increasing trend).
- However, the one-time grading policy in Fall 2023² has coincided with a new bump in average course grades.

10-Year Patterns

- Even ignoring the grading pattern associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and recent grading policies, over the past ten years, the average grade awarded in courses has shown a gradually increasing trend in all faculties at the undergraduate level, and most faculties at the graduate level.
- Comparing grades in 2014/15 versus 2023/24, all *increases* of at least 0.30 occur at the lower division level, and include average course grades awarded by:
 - the Faculty of Education (+0.65),
 - the Faculty of Environment (+0.42), and
 - the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (+0.33)
- There are no faculty-level *decreases* of at least 0.30.
- Over the last decade, the Faculty of Education has awarded the *highest* average grades in most years in both undergraduate and graduate courses.
- In most years, the *lowest* average course grades have been awarded by:
 - LD: the Faculty of Science
 - UD: the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
 - Grad: the Beedie School of Business
- Graduate courses have consistently awarded higher average grades than upper division courses, which have awarded higher average grades than lower division courses, in all faculties.

¹ This report only includes grades with a numeric equivalent, plus P/CR/NC grades due to the Elective Grade System or the one-time Spring 2020/Fall 2023 grading policies; only grades with a numeric equivalent are included in averages.

² in response to the TSSU strike

2023/24 Course Grades

- The average course grade this year was 3.05 in undergraduate courses (LD: 2.95; UD: 3.19), and 3.74 in graduate courses.
- Among faculties, the Faculty of Education awarded the highest proportion of A grades and the highest average grades this year in lower division and upper division courses. In graduate courses, the Faculty of Environment awarded the highest proportion of A grades, and the Faculty of Science awarded the highest average grades.
- Among faculties, the lowest average grades were awarded by:
 - LD and UD: the Faculty of Science
 - Grad: the Beedie School of Business
- The subjects awarding the highest and lowest average grades this year were:
 - *Highest* average grades:
 - LD: PUNJ (4.12)
 - UD: DIAL (3.92)
 - Grad: MASC (4.33)
 - *Lowest* average grades:
 - LD: FAN (2.43)
 - UD: MACM (2.62)
 - Grad: ACMA (3.37)
 - Note that MASC and ACMA at this level awarded fewer than 20 grades this year.
- A few course subjects have shown a large change (at least 0.40) in average grade awarded from last year to this year.
- Subjects with a large *increase* include:
 - SCI (UD: +0.75)
 - COGS (UD: +0.50)
 - SD (UD: +0.49)
 - ITAL (LD: +0.47)
 - APMA (Grad: +0.43)
- Subjects with a large *decrease* include:
 - ACMA (Grad: -0.48)
- Note that ACMA awarded fewer than 20 grades at the graduate level each year, so significant year-to-year variability is not unexpected.
- This year, courses offered by the Faculty of Applied Sciences had the highest use of the P/CR/NC grade scale (via the Elective Grade System and/or the Fall 2023 Grading Policy); P/CR/NC grades made up 11% of their undergraduate course grades (LD: 11%; UD: 10%).
- This year, groups of undergraduate students who were most likely to make use of the P/CR/NC grade scale in their undergraduate courses include:
 - Faculty of Health Sciences students taking Faculty of Applied Sciences courses (18%),
 - Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology students taking Faculty of Applied Sciences courses (15%), and
 - Beedie School of Business students taking Faculty of Science courses (15%).

Student Faculty vs Course Faculty (Undergraduate Students in Undergraduate Courses)

- Student Faculty:
 - Students in a given faculty most frequently took courses from their own faculty.
 - Students from all faculties received their highest average grades in Faculty of Education courses.
- Course Faculty:
 - Courses in a given faculty were most often taken by students from that same faculty.
 - The exception is courses from the Faculty of Environment, which were most frequently taken by students from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
 - In terms of how courses in each faculty awarded grades to students from different faculties:
 - Courses in the Faculty of Applied Sciences awarded the highest average grades to Faculty of Applied Sciences students.
 - Courses in the Faculty of Health Sciences awarded the highest average grades to Faculty of Health Sciences students.
 - Courses in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences awarded their highest average grades to students from the Faculty of Science.
 - Courses from the remaining faculties awarded their highest average grades to students from the Beedie School of Business.