

## **Grading Policy Tips**

University of Richmond School of Law

1. *Use a point system, with lots of points.* The most challenging part of the policy is likely to be the distribution requirement; it might require professors to draw lines between students that they would not have otherwise drawn. It will be easier to draw those lines if you grade using a point system with lots of points—e.g., make 300 total points available in the course. Otherwise, there will be an increased chance of ties between students, and meeting the distribution will be more challenging.

2. *If you give assignments during the semester, use points, not letter grades, for those too.* If you give letter grades for earlier assignments, it may become difficult to reconcile those letter grades with the ultimate grade in the course, because you have basically begun to “curve” the class without knowing how each student will perform in the end. If you use numerical grading instead (e.g., 8/10 instead of a B), that problem goes away.

3. *Use the “Grade distribution targets” spreadsheet before you start assigning final letter grades.* All you have to do is enter the number of students in your course, and it will tell you how many of each grade you need to give in order to be within the distribution policy. It will be useful to have this target in mind ahead of time. (Of course, if you have sixteen students or fewer, the distribution policy does not apply.)

4. *Use the “Grade policy verification” spreadsheet at the end.* If you enter all of your letter grades into the spreadsheet, it will tell you whether you comply with the distribution requirement (if applicable) and the GPA requirement—and if not, why not.

5. *Don’t post your grades.* In the old days, professors would post all their grades publicly on a bulletin board somewhere, identified by anonymous number. These days, there is no reason to do so, because students can see their individual grades online as soon as they are released. And if you post them all in one place, some student will put all the grades in a spreadsheet, second-guess every decision you made, point out that under the grading policy you could have done X rather than Y, and so forth.