

MBS Grading and Distance Learning

MBS is committed to giving equal weight to care, equity, and learning. As a consequence, for the period of distance learning, MBS will be modifying its grading policy in light of four considerations:

1. Stress, anxiety, and uncertainty related to COVID-19 are pervading the lives of our students, whether they are fully conscious of them or not. It is likely that they will impact student performance for the worse, making the work we see from students less than an accurate reflection of their abilities.
2. Related to the above, we do not know the dynamics of home life for most of our students; some might be living 24/7 with families that are under heavy emotional strains or worse.
3. School closures and distance learning have a disparate impact across socio-economic and ethnic groups, disadvantaging those students with fewer resources or additional at-home responsibilities, when parents might be continuing to work.
4. Normal grading proceeds under the assumption that teachers can gauge how well students are mastering materials and classroom techniques that are thoughtfully and expertly presented. We cannot make that assumption under current conditions.

We cannot know the nature of strain that students are under or the circumstances that surround their efforts to complete school work at home. We are concerned to ensure above all else that students feel supported as people, that we are providing an equitable education, and that learning is happening meaningfully by meeting students where they are.

Grading Guidelines

In light of the considerations stated above, the year-end grades will be based on student performance and achievement that has taken place through the end of the third quarter. Assessments, feedback, and grading over the fourth quarter will follow a three tier rubric, giving students the chance to hold steady at their third quarter grade, to improve slightly, or to decline slightly.

Three tier rubric:

Above expectations: students impress with a performance that is above-and-beyond.

Within expectations: Students meet the standards and objectives set by the course. Most students should fall within this tier.

Below expectations: Students not quite in the broadly acceptable performance bandwidth.

AP classes can continue using existing AP rubric.

Students who do not fall within the three tiers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Where students are Within Expectations, the Q3 grade will be their semester grade; where students come up Below or Above Expectations, they might see a slight lowering or raising (B to B+ for instance). The rubric is *not* intended to be a translation or equivalent of grades. Instead, it is intended to give students space to do the work that they can, with an understanding that *meeting expectations will mean different things for different students at this difficult time.*

Teachers will inform students where they fall within those three tiers, based on their trained judgment, but bearing in mind that expectations of acceptable work should afford considerable latitude.

MBS is not the only one in facing challenges on assessment and grading, and we have been in contact with peer schools around the country and world. Many schools are turning away from traditional grades given the circumstances we face. With our tradition of holistic assessment, we are confident that our teachers are fully capable of assessing students without traditional grades, and to better serve their teaching objectives as they do so.