

## ACCT 2301 SU1 2009 Final Class Posting

With the budgeting assignment grade posted, four items related to final course grades may need additional clarification. All four items are addressed in this message.

- (1) What letter grades correspond to the posted final exam scores?
- (2) If my grade is exactly on a “border”, what happens?
- (3) What is my group grade?
- (4) What is my in-class assignment 2 grade?

Before turning to these questions, a few administrative issues require discussion.

First, if you have not returned the course book, please return it to my mailbox in BA 410. Please identify yourself (i.e., tell me which check I should rip up). No checks will be cashed prior to July 20<sup>th</sup> (i.e., no huge rush on returning the book).

Second, in the event you are considering accounting as a major, please don't let your current course schedule prevent you from taking ACCT 3304 this coming fall.<sup>1</sup> Although many class members may find it hard to believe, some have expressed interest in accounting as a major, but have found undergraduate services will not automatically enroll you in ACCT 3304 this coming fall. Undergraduate services will not automatically enroll you simply because they are doing their job managing class capacity. We (meaning the area of accounting) have the ability to add sections if demand exists. As such, if you have an interest in exploring one more accounting course, write a short message and leave it with undergraduate services in BA 202 (ask that your message be forwarded to Associate Dean Duran). If you say something like, “I'd like to take ACCT 3304 this fall because I am considering accounting as a major”, there are extremely high odds that we will accommodate your request (if you received a B or better in ACCT 2300 &/or if you did well in this course). If you currently intend to major in finance, if *any* part of you (even a very small part), is saying “maybe I should think about accounting”, then taking ACCT 3304 this fall buys you a costless option. Specifically, you need to take ACCT 3304 at some point as a finance major... if you take ACCT 3304 this fall, you leave the door open to major in either accounting or finance. If you are interested, don't let the simple message “classes are full” stop you...undergraduate services is simply doing their job (and they need the area of accounting's permission to add students “beyond capacity”). Keep in mind the process of (1) aggregating demand and (2) thinking about how to handle demand (with an additional course vs. bumping current course size) is not one that allows for an immediate answer to your request... I'd imagine early August is a reasonable timeframe regarding what the final fall schedule will be.

Related to future accounting courses, we talked extensively this semester about the need to change how we present introductory accounting (because we need to learn who might be interested in accounting at an earlier point). One accounting-faculty-discussed option is to run a “dual track” of courses: a traditional problem-focused format (not what we did this semester) and a separate track of

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<sup>1</sup> For those of you who aren't considering accounting as a major, please skip to the next paragraph (the current paragraph is long).

courses that would be writing intensive (what we did this semester). If you have comments about this “dual track” approach, or if you are interested in future writing-focused courses, please send a brief note to the area of accounting’s undergraduate advisor, Professor Quepha Lynn ([quepha.lynn@ttu.edu](mailto:quepha.lynn@ttu.edu)). If there is demand for both formats (problem-focused and writing-focused), we will need a mechanism to identify the course focus for future students (if you let us know your thoughts, we can contact you directly via email to ensure you are aware of the class format options).

## Final Grade Issues

### 1. *What letter grades correspond to the posted final exam scores?*

I imagine this issue needs clarification for most everyone (except those with top scores, who rightfully suspect they received an “A” letter grade on the final).

Before turning to the score / grade conversion, multiple choice exams have the unfortunate feature of being “right vs. wrong”. To explain, many of you might look at a particular question from yesterday’s exam and think, “I knew how to do that”, but some very small error led you to select the wrong answer. In addition, we still have ‘cut off’ problems similar to past assignments. Specifically, if you are thinking, “one more point and I would have had a higher grade” and if you made a minor mistake, that is clearly a bothersome situation (any time you are just below a desirable cutoff, it is bothersome).

Nevertheless, selecting cut-offs with a desired grade distribution in mind (per the syllabus) is achieved by the following score / grade correspondence:

Score	Letter Grade	Number of Students
17 - 19	A	18
15 – 16	B	33
13 – 14	C	24
11 – 12	D	13
Below 11	F	4

Note that the average on the exam, 14.5, separates “B” from “C” letter grades.

### 2. *If my grade is exactly on a “border”, what happens?*

The only thing that should require clarification is the “border” situation... if you are exactly on the border between grades, you will win the tie (i.e., you will receive the higher letter grade).

While that discussion should suffice (because we discussed the 4.0 letter grading system on June 12<sup>th</sup>), I have received a few questions about how to determine grades (unrelated to ‘ties’). Hopefully, the following will help.

“Offset / Average” your exam grades (each is worth 15% of the total course grade) and “offset / average” all other grade components (each of the **four** other grade components is worth 10% of the total course grade). To illustrate, if you have an A- and a B on exams 1 and 2, the

“average” is a B+. For final grades, you need a weighted average of exam scores vs. other scores. To illustrate, if you have a “B” average for exams and a “C” average for non-exam scores, you are not “right on the border” between a B and C because the exam scores ‘count more’ (specifically 60% of the total grade). You can think of weighted average like this: In the preceding example, you have the equivalent of six “B” letter grades and four “C” letter grades, which averages to a B-.

### **3. What is my group grade?**

I imagine most are not confused or uncertain about their group grade. If you participated in your group assignments, your group leader forwarded your name to me. For group assignments 1 and 3 (see June 5<sup>th</sup> & June 18<sup>th</sup>), receiving your name via email means you have an A on those assignments. If you didn’t participate in assignment 1, but sent an email requesting a “second chance”, you received an A on assignment 1.

In contrast, group assignment 2 was not an ‘on / off’ switch (meaning A vs. F grade). Consistent with other group assignments, you received an “F” for not participating; however, participating does not guarantee an “A”.

Specifically, group assignment 2 (June 12<sup>th</sup>) required a well-written and professional message in order to receive an A. No one received a lower grade for poor writing; however, the “professional” part of this requirement is an issue.

Certainly, whether or not your group’s message was “professional” is a subjective determination on my part. Most were quite professional (e.g., well organized, complete sentences, etc.).

For a very limited number of group assignments, I did not consider the message “professional”. To illustrate, group assignment requested three “pros and cons” about the class format. A few groups apparently viewed this as an opportunity to vent anger about the format. While venting anger, per se, is not unprofessional, you typically want to be careful about how you do it.

For example, I received a limited number of assignments with the following type of message (not verbatim, but very close):

“I should not be graded on my ability to write in an accounting course. I paid \$800 for this class. If I am graded on my ability to write, then I should not be graded by doctoral students or graduate students or other students. The professor is paid to teach this course and he should grade everything.”

Here are a few thoughts about why this type of message isn’t professional, in my opinion.

First, any person knowledgeable about the accounting profession should find the first argument to be naïve. Arguably, and person serious about education would find the first argument to be ridiculous regardless of the course topic.

The second argument is bothersome on multiple dimensions. Directly related to this course, the argument fails to acknowledge that all resources (in this case, the professor’s time) have limited

capacity. Second, the argument displays a failure to recognize the business environment. As discussed during class, examples from class (e.g., IMPC bank) come from my most recent executive course (the only other course currently listed on my website). If the respondent took the time to explore that webpage, then he/she would know there are executive students – who pay \$40,000 for their classes – who are waiting for grade responses (and these students, in addition to paying much more per class, have - on average - more valuable time per hour relative to A2301 students).

More generally, it's typically not a good idea to vent unrestrained anger towards anyone. From a self-interested perspective, this is almost always true in contexts where the party receiving vented anger can negatively impact you.

Again, venting anger – *per se* – isn't unprofessional... but you should think carefully before doing so (and communicate your frustrations professionally).

#### **4. What is my in-class assignment 2 grade?**

Clarification on this point should only be necessary for those who took their final exam in the PASS center. Although we previously discussed the general nature of grading assignment 2, I clarified that a 2-point per question approach would be used (see the very first grading system on Posting #35 (the "Exam 2" link)).

#### ***Two final comments... honestly... this is it...***

If you have argued that scanning quality issues negatively affected your first exam, I will personally investigate your complaint if a minor difference in your Exam 1 score would impact your course grade.

I found it interesting that, on average, the class did very well on the final exam (a bit better than the 2005 class who originally took this exam, even after adjusting for the three 'given' questions). That said, the lowest percentage of correct answers came from question 10 – a 'think about fixed costs' question. The 2005 class did better on this question – I believe this is true because they were 'matching problem types' (i.e., they had seen almost this exact question many times before). "Matching problem types" is not very useful in terms of thinking about fixed costs... the situation is seemingly always unique.

For this problem, I think it would have been helpful to forget you were taking an accounting exam. Regardless of what type of business you are in, or what business function you specialize in, you will need to think about fixed resources and fixed costs. In this problem, the South division has a fixed resource that can make an extra 500 units... and that resource is already "paid for" ... so the fixed costs are irrelevant.