Grade Distribution

Introduction

This course serves two different purposes for the Computer Science department. For undergraduate majors, this is an upper-level algorithms course which must be passed as part of a student's major. For incoming graduate students, this course serves as a "checkpoint" for graduate progress, and thus graduate students must receive an A^- or better to satisfy the requirement. Our class consists roughly of 40 undergraduate students and 25 graduate students.

For this reason, the assignments in the course have been quite challenging. Our goal is to walk a very fine line between making the course very approachable and interesting for the undergraduate students, while at the same time challenging the graduate students. Please keep this in mind when viewing your progress in the course, and do not be unnecessarily discouraged by your percentage grades without taking this point into consideration. The ideal purpose of the course is to learn, and so assigning grades provides us with a way to give you direct feedback on those things which you understand very well, and those things which you may have overlooked. In this regard, it is perfectly reasonable that a good student may still lose many points on assignments, as even a student who receives an "A" in the course still has much more he or she could learn.

As the true goal of the class is to learn, we are still well aware that the overall course grades are important for students. For this reason, we want to give you feedback on the first half of the course, so that you have a better understanding of your progress, as well as our expectations for the course. Included below are the grades for each of the assignments thus far, averaged over the whole class, and broken up into the undergraduate and graduate populations. Following that we give our current prediction for how overall percentages will translate into letter grades for the course.

Previous Assignments

	Overall Class		Undergraduates		Graduates	
	mean	stdev	mean	stdev	mean	stdev
hw1	75.0	22.4	63.7	21.0	93.9	7.4
hw2	70.7	17.9	64.9	18.7	81.8	9.0
hw3	73.2	17.7	66.3	18.0	85.3	6.9
hw4	86.1	13.5	80.6	13.0	95.4	7.9
midterm	76.4	23.3	68.4	25.2	90.1	9.5

Letter Grades

At the end of the course, we will decide on the range for letter grades by looking only at the scores of the undergraduate students. After the range is set, graduate students will be assigned their grades based on this same range. (Also, extra credit scores will then be added in to a student's grade).

Below, we will give predictions for how we will turn overall percentages into various letter grades for the course. Please understand that these are only predictions, and it may be that the final scale may change somewhat depending on the difficulty (or ease) of the assignments in the second half of the course. However at this point we have a good enough sampling of grades, and so these are probably reasonably accurate predictions.

- 85% $\longrightarrow A^-$ or better
- 60% $\longrightarrow B^-$ or better
- 45%-50% $\longrightarrow C^-$/`pass` or better

As an example, if the class ended today, and we used this scale, after dropping the lowest homework thus far and re-weighting correctly, roughly 33% of the undergraduates and over 90% of the graduate students would be receiving an A^- or better.