Appendix 2

Conversation Starters for Departmental Discussions of Grading Practices

General points for discussion:

- Are grades a reflection of student learning or are they a kind of certification to denote that students have achieved a certain level of mastery?
- Do you agree with this statement? The judging of students should be regarding the depth of their learning instead of in comparison to each other.
- What should it take for a student to earn each grade: A+, A, B, C, D, D-?
- Under what circumstances should a student fail a course in our department?
- Since we have +/- grades (A/A-/B+/B, for example), how should we discriminate between them?
- Should we match letter grades with specific number ranges out of 100?
- Should all faculty in our department use the same range and letter-number grade equivalencies?
- Is our department grading practice consistent with similar departments at other institutions?
- For new faculty: is this practice consistent with what you learned or practiced at your previous institution?
- What is a fair regrade policy?
- If students in a particular course have the opportunity to revise their work for a better grade, how do you determine the improved grade? Is the original version counted in some way or not?

When discussing the grades for a particular course:

- How many students are in the course?
- Is this a distribution course?
- Is this a core course for the major or an elective course?
- What is the course level (100, 200, 300, etc.)? Are there prerequisites?
- Who are the students enrolled in the course: majors? Non-majors? Undergraduates? Graduate students? What was their perceived level of preparation?
- Do students have the opportunity to revise their work and how is this graded?
- How would you categorize this course (discussion, lecture, lab, performance, private lessons, creative work, field work, ensemble, experiential, independent research, internship)?
- If students work in teams in this course, how should we grade team work?
- If there are two course sections with different average grades, were the students comparable in these courses?
- Have the grades in this course varied over the years?