

■ CAMPUS LIFE ■

The implications of GRADE BOUNDARIES ON STUDENTS

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

Although it felt like the entire universe was working against you, you managed to preserve and push through a particularly tough semester at university. Knowing your marks and the effort you put in, you aren't too worried about the grade submission. However, once you actually get your grades, your heart sinks. A's have become B+'s, B's have morphed into C's, and so on. Understandably, you panic and frantically email your faculty, who either coldly brushes you off or explains there is nothing they can do as the grade submission deadline has passed. So, finally, you're left devastated without closure and left to deal with anguish, regret, disappointment, fear, and disgust. And then comes pre-advising, and the whole thing plays out yet again.

If I asked a university student if they related to the given scenario, there's a high chance they'd relate. University is tough academically, socially, physically, and mentally, but the implications that grading systems and boundaries have on students are often

notably North South University, which is known for its whopping 93 percent A grade cutoff and 20 percent quota on the number of students eligible for an A and A- grade per section.

Furthermore, there are many more moving parts under consideration in university grading. You have a very short amount of time to develop a relationship with your teacher compared to school, and there's no doubt that more extroverted and talkative students fare better when appeasing their faculties. This also raises concerns about how teachers may develop certain biases, further resulting in preferential treatment.

On the flip side, there also lies an argument justifying faculties providing preferential treatment. Faculties are more aware of student's participation in class and may favour them, seeing they go the extra mile to earn a good grade. "Class participation is a testament to our dedication as students. Thus, being involved in class activities definitely holds value," says Labiba Raida, a student at NSU. "Class participation is an evaluation factor, and I think it's unjust to term

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underscored in favor of academic pressure.

How we are graded in high school is drastically different from university. For many, the transition is less straightforward. University grading scales are far more complicated, with numerous positive and negative grades alongside letter marks. Most private universities allocate A grade to students scoring above 85 to 90 percent on coursework, from multiple midterms, final exams, and presentations to attendance and class participation. There's also a couple of outliers, most

faculties preferential for leaning toward students showing more interest in the subject," she adds.

Grade boundaries have implications beyond academics, causing tension and distress within students' families and friends. For many reasons, friends who performed similarly throughout the semester can end up with drastically different grades, threatening to unravel many relationships. "University is already a highly competitive environment, and the added strain of grade cutoffs leads to a lot of

unnecessary volatility and animosity between peers," says Shihab Sharar, a CSE student at BRAC University. "When I don't get the grades I expected, it does cause distress. At the end of the day, a degree is a big investment, and not having the grades to justify such an expensive undertaking, does complicate things."

Undoubtedly, there is a disparity between grading in public and private institutes. The public grading system is more lenient than the private ones, especially institutes following North American Grading Systems. An A grade at Dhaka University can be earned at 75 percent, lower than the 80 to 90 percent range in private universities. However, Hossain Sahal, an Economics student at Dhaka University, states otherwise. "It is true that we have lower thresholds for grading compared to some private institutions. But, in many cases, we have to face a fair share of systematic issues, which can arguably make it harder to have a good learning environment," he states. "These issues do pose a good deal of pressure on us, so I don't think it'd be fair to say outright that it's easier to get good grades in the public system."

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Taaseen Mohammed Islam is a student at North South University.