Policies and Procedures for Norm Matloff’s Courses

Winter 2020

Contents

1 Sorry for the Length 3

2 Class Information Web Page 3

3 Machines 3

4 Communication with Me by E-Mail 3

5 Each Student Must Have His/Her Own Course Materials 4

6 Bring the Course Materials with You to Class 4

7 Quizzes 4

7.1 Why Quizzes? 4

7.2 PLEASE NOTE: There Are No Makeup Quizzes 4

7.3 Group Quiz, Last Day of Lecture 5

7.4 Partial Credit on Quiz Problems 5

7.5 OMSI 5

7.6 Numeric Questions (ECS 132 Etc.) 5

7.6.1 It Must Be Real R 5

7.6.2 Useful, Likely Crucial, R Functions 6

7.7 Open-Materials Policy 6

7.8 Electronic Devices 6

7.9 Re-assessment of Quiz Grading 6

8 Regarding Academic Dishonesty 7

8.1 Cheating in Quizzes 7

8.2 Homework 7
9 Lecture Format

9.1 I Seldom Write on the Blackboard ................................................. 8
9.2 You Will LEARN MORE This Way ................................................. 8
9.3 Bring the Materials to Lecture .................................................... 8
9.4 Use of Laptops During Lecture .................................................. 8

10 The Discussion Section

11 Groups

11.1 Forming Groups ................................................................. 9
11.2 Group Participation: Your Responsibilities ............................... 9

12 Our Class Blog

13 Homework

13.1 Homework Due Dates ........................................................... 10
13.2 Announcements ...................................................................... 10
13.3 Programming Work ............................................................... 10
13.4 Submitting Homework ........................................................... 10
13.5 Interactive Homework Grading ................................................ 11
13.6 If You Need Help, Hints, Etc .................................................. 12
13.7 Late Work ............................................................................. 12

14 Term Project

15 Grading

15.1 Weighting .............................................................................. 14
15.2 + and - Grades ...................................................................... 14
15.3 Quizzes Grade ........................................................................ 14
15.4 Positive and Negative Factors in Your Course Grade ............... 14
  15.4.1 Factors Increasing Your Grade above the Formula .................. 14
  15.4.2 Factors Reducing Your Grade below the Formula .................. 15
  15.4.3 Example of How the “Special Offers” Can Make a Substantial Difference in Your Grad .................................................. 15

16 I Do Care!
1 Sorry for the Length

Yes, this document is absurdly long. But it contains information concerning almost any question you might have on course policy and procedure.

For example, when you are about to finish Homework I, this document will tell you how to submit it and how it will be graded, very important information.

In fact, roughly 50% of this document is on grading, especially how your course grade is determined. An extremely valuable document!

2 Class Information Web Page

Our class information Web page is http://heather.cs.ucdavis.edu/~matloff/ecs< coursenum ber >.html where the course number is 132, 145, 158, 256 etc. It contains information such as: Professor and TA’s office hours; textbooks; prerequisites; important dates and so on.

3 Machines

When you submit Homework code, it is not considered valid unless it works on the Linux PCs in CSIF.

HERE IS A SHOCK FOR SOME OF YOU: Most jobs obtained by UC graduates in the computer area are at firms that are either fully or partially based on Linux or some other kind of Unix, meaning Linux or Mac OS. Intel has complained that UCD grads don’t know Unix well. Of course, students from UC Berkeley know Unix thoroughly; why be at a disadvantage relative to them?

See an interesting Quora discussion on this at

https://www.quora.com/Is-a-Mac-or-Windows-better-for-a-CS-student-or-developer

The general consensus was, use Linux or a Mac, not Windows. Note: This does not mean you should buy a Mac if you con’t have one; Linux is free.

4 Communication with Me by E-Mail

You are welcome and encouraged to send me e-mail. You’ll find that I generally respond quickly. Please keep these points in mind:

• Please include ‘[ecs < coursenum ber >]’ in the Subject line, substituting your course number.

• Please do NOT send me screenshots unless it’s really necessary. I often check mail from low-bandwidth connections, which makes receiving images a problem. So if, say, you are going to send me code, then send me the code, not a picture of the code! If you need to some me code + error message, use the Unix ‘script’ commend.
5 Each Student Must Have His/Her Own Course Materials

Note that Quizzes are open-book, and there is no sharing of books or other materials during Quizzes, nor are electronic devices allowed.[1] Thus every student must have his/her own hard copy of the textbook and any other course materials.

6 Bring the Course Materials with You to Class

Bring the entire textbook and other course materials to lectures, discussion sections and Quizzes.

If you forget to bring your book to a Quiz, the TA or instructor will lend you one; if several students forget, you’ll need to take turns.

7 Quizzes

A Quiz will be given almost every week in discussion section. Quizzes will not be announced; assume that there will be one each week.

Note for ECS 132 or other probability/statistics course: In numeric problems, exact answers are required, not simulation, unless the latter is specified.

All the old quizzes, with solutions, are available on our class Web page. It would be quite advantageous to you if you were to look through them, to see what kinds of questions are asked.

7.1 Why Quizzes?

This is a lot of work for me. For example, in Fall 2012, I was teaching two courses, one of which had two different discussion sections. That meant I needed to compose and grade 3 quizzes per week—yikes! But I do this for two reasons:

• It’s a natural way to ensure that you don’t fall behind, which is a serious problem for universities using the quarter system.

• It’s much better for the student, with far less pressure. Giving a midterm and a final is quite stressful to the students, as they count so much in a course grade. Giving Quizzes instead relieves that stress.

• It’s also better for your grade. In a final exam, you could be misgraded and never know it.

7.2 PLEASE NOTE: There Are No Makeup Quizzes

Life is complicated. You may miss a Quiz due to illness, a job interview or whatever. If you miss a Quiz, for whatever reason, it simply will become one of the two Quizzes you exclude from your grade.

There are no makeup Quizzes, and no early or late ones.

[1] An exception is the Group Quiz, given the last day of class.
7.3 Group Quiz, Last Day of Lecture

The last Quiz, given in lecture on the last day of class, will consist of an in-class Group effort, i.e. you will work on the Quiz with your Group. **NOTE: We have a Term Project instead of a Final Exam, but the Group Quiz in essence is a final. Your attendance is required.**

(Please note: Unforeseen circumstances may result in this becoming an ordinary individual Quiz.)

7.4 Partial Credit on Quiz Problems

If a student submits a problem on a Quiz that has some relevant analysis but is partially wrong, I will likely give some partial credit. But note two things:

- Mere commonality between the symbols in your solution and mine does not automatically mean you were on the right track.

- If a problem has a mathematical answer, do NOT submit it in simplified form. For instance, write $2(3^2 - 1)$ rather than 16. This will increase your chances of getting partial credit, as it amounts to showing your work. (You can also include comment code to explain what you did.)

7.5 OMSI

You will use the OMSI system, [http://github.com/matloff/omsi](http://github.com/matloff/omsi), to take the Quizzes, on your laptop computer in class. It does NOT need to be a fancy laptop; an old, slow machine is fine.


7.6 Numeric Questions (ECS 132 Etc.)

You will use R to answer any Quiz problem that requires a numerical answer. (Use of R code enables automatic grading of math problems.) And it must be real R! Here are some examples of non-R:

1 + 2 = 3
2 * 2
3 over 2
five
the matrix has 5 rows

OMSI will run your code, and obviously non-R will cause an error.

7.6.1 It Must Be Real R

In the case of questions with numerical answers, write them in program style, using R syntax, e.g. using * for multiplication, ^ (carat) for exponentiation, %% for the mod operator, etc. Call `exp()` for evaluating powers of $e = 2.71...$ and `pi` for $3.14...$

Use the concatenate function, `c()` if a numerical problem asks for more than one number, e.g.
> c(1.2, 88.6)
[1] 1.2 88.0 6.0

### 7.6.2 Useful, Likely Crucial, R Functions

Here are examples of R functions you may find useful: `length()`, `choose()`, `combn()`, `sum()`, `min()`, `max()`, `exp()`, `log()`, `integrate()`.

Here are examples of `integrate()`:

```r
> integrate(function(t) 2*t/15, 2.5, 4) $value
[1] 0.65
> integrate(function(t) 2*t^2/15, 1, 4) $value
[1] 2.8
> integrate(function(t) sqrt(abs(t)) * dnorm(t, mean=10, sd=2.1), -Inf, Inf) $value
[1] 3.144017
```

Did you notice the "$value" above? Without it, the class object is printed—in English—and thus not readable by my grading script.

### 7.7 Open-Materials Policy

**TESTS ARE TAKEN ON AN OPEN-MATERIALS BASIS.** Bring the textbook and other course materials with you to each Quiz. You are also welcome to bring whatever other materials you wish, e.g. technical books, dictionaries, whatever you want. Whatever you bring, **make absolutely sure that you remember to bring all your course materials, as many of the Quiz questions will refer to specific pages in them.**

OMSI has a PDF viewing feature. You may use that to view your textbook, providing it fills your computer screen while you are using it.

Please note that in program code on the Quizzes you are only allowed to use language, functions, etc. constructs presented so far in our course.

### 7.8 Electronic Devices

Other than using your laptop with OMSI, you are not allowed to use any electronic devices, INCLUDING CALCULATORS, during Quizzes.

### 7.9 Re-assessment of Quiz Grading

If you believe you were misgraded, I will be happy to take another look. PROVIDED you submit a request to me within two weeks of my sending out grades.

Send me your regrade request by email, not in person, as I may forget in the latter case. Make sure you explain clearly why you feel you deserve more credit.
8 Regarding Academic Dishonesty

An embarrassing subject which nevertheless must be mentioned is cheating. Starting Fall 2018, all UCD instructors have been required to explicitly inform students that they are subject to the Code of Academic Conduct, [http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf](http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf).

Another major change, effective Fall 2018, is that “…authority [is granted] for instructors to assign a student a maximum grade penalty of ’F’ for a course — as opposed to an ’F’ only on the examination or assignment in question — when academic misconduct is admitted or is determined by adjudication to have occurred.”

If a student is found to be cheating, it will be treated as a VERY SERIOUS matter, not a harmless prank, AND WILL BE REFERRED TO STUDENT JUDICIAL AFFAIRS. It will harm his/her standing at the university, and also possibly make it difficult for him/her to get a job when seeking employment after graduation.

8.1 Cheating in Quizzes

Official university policy forbids

“Wandering eyes,” talking during exams...or leaving the exam room without permission.

Please work as follows during Quizzes:

- To avoid the appearance of cheating, MAKE SURE THAT THE OMSI APP WINDOW FILLS YOUR ENTIRE SCREEN AT ALL TIMES.
- Try to sit in alternate seats if possible.
- ABSOLUTELY NO TALKING to classmates at any time during the Quiz.
- It would be greatly appreciated if you USE THE RESTROOM BEFORE THE EXAM STARTS, RATHER THAN DURING THE EXAM.

And never leave the exam room without permission. If you do need to use the restroom, you must close your laptap and LEAVE IT WITH THE PROCTOR, not taking it out of the room.

Thanks very much for your help.

Please note that in the case of larger classes, students may be photographed, including video.

Please do not wear hats during Quizzes.

8.2 Homework

Outright copying of homework, whether in the form of code or algorithm or math, is of course an extremely serious violation of university policy and personal ethics. Similarly, asking for advice on the Internet, paying people to do your work, or otherwise improper consultation, is again an extremely serious violation of university policy and personal ethics.

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2See the Class Schedule and Registration Guide.
However, you are welcome, and indeed encouraged, to trade tips with people in other Groups. You may also on rare occasions ask people whom you know outside the class for hints, say friends or relatives who have some knowledge of the field, on a very limited basis.

You are also welcome to make reasonable use of the Web. For example, I’m a big fan of Wikipedia and there is a ton of material there.

9 Lecture Format

My lecture style is very nontraditional.

9.1 I Seldom Write on the Blackboard

Instead, I talk about what’s in the textbook. I typically will ask you to open to a certain page, and then will call your attention to various sentences, examples and pictures on that page. The lectures will consist mainly of discussion and amplification of the examples in the textbook, with additional explanation.

This is just like using PowerPoint, except that the information is in front of you in your book, rather than on a screen at the front of the class.

9.2 You Will LEARN MORE This Way

Traditionally, the professor writes on the board (or shows slides), and the students copy down what he/she says. That’s a waste of time! Instead, what I do is give you in print what I would have written on the board.

Since the textbook already contains my lecture, you don’t take notes (other than miscellaneous comments in the margin). This frees your attention to ask questions and to engage in class discussion.

The latter aspect, discussion, is key. You are very much encouraged to bring up any questions you might have. Please don’t be shy about asking questions; there is no such thing as a “dumb” question.

Similarly, listen carefully to the questions the other students ask; this can be a very valuable source of insight, to which you should pay special attention.

Note carefully: Often points that arise spontaneously during lecture wind up as Quiz questions!

This is a lecture style which you may not be accustomed to, but you will LEARN MORE this way.

9.3 Bring the Materials to Lecture

Make sure you bring the textbook to every lecture. It will play a very active role in the lectures.

9.4 Use of Laptops During Lecture

Really, this is rude. And though it has become commonplace, I (and many other professors) do not like it, and surveys have shown that many of your fellow students are annoyed by it too. It is very distracting. If you wish to use a laptop in class, PLEASE SIT IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM.
Use of tablets is OK (during lectures, not Quizzes), as long as you do so quietly, with the device lying flat on the desk.

10 The Discussion Section

The discussion section is required. It will be used for the purpose of giving Quizzes, and occasionally for presenting material not covered in lecture. (That material will appear on Quizzes.)

If the class has multiple discussion sections, you are NOT allowed to take a quiz in a section you’re not enrolled in. Under rare circumstances, you may ask the TAs involved for permission to take a quiz in the “wrong” section; you must cc the instructor in making this request.

11 Groups

The following will be done in Groups:

- Homework
- the last Quiz of the quarter, in lecture
- the take-home Term Project

So, get to be very good friends with your Group, as you will be working with them constantly!

11.1 Forming Groups

Group size must be at least three (two if the class enrollment is under 25), and no more than four.

During the first week of class, the TA will ask you to either state the membership of a Group you formed on your own, or state that you will to be placed into a Group. If you and someone else in the class wish to form a Group, then ask the TA to assign one or two more people to your Group.

Note CAREFULLY: If you are planning to take this course Pass/No Pass, or you simply are planning not to put much work into the class, please inform your teammates AT THE START. Otherwise you will be letting them down. Similarly, if you plan to work hard in the class, you should make sure your teammates feel the same way; if not, please ask me to be transferred to another group.

11.2 Group Participation: Your Responsibilities

YOUR HOMEWORK PARTNERS DEPEND ON YOU.

Repeated failure to work cooperatively with your Group may result in a substantial penalty being applied to your course grade, which could drop to an F.

Please do not allow things to deteriorate to the point at which I send you an e-mail message titled, “Your course grade is in jeopardy.”
If one or more Group members repeatedly fail to comply with the above, they will be placed in separate, one-person Groups. This means not only the Homework but also the Group Quizzes and, most importantly, the Term Project.

12 Our Class Blog

Our class Blog is linked to from our class information Web page. IT IS REQUIRED THAT YOU READ THE BLOG EVERY DAY; it’s used to make all important announcements for the course.

Any information disseminated on the Blog is considered part of official course materials. This means for example that it may be used in Quizzes.

I will try to send an e-mail message informing you that a new blog post has been made, but cannot guarantee it.

13 Homework

We will have approximately two to four Homework assignments through the quarter, depending on the course and other factors.

13.1 Homework Due Dates

The term due date means 11:59 p.m. of the stated date.

13.2 Announcements

Homework assignments will be announced in the class Blog. (Note: An assignment is not official until it is announced on the Blog, even though it may appear on the Web before then.) The Homework specs themselves will be on the course Web site, so look there when an assignment is announced on the Blog.

Occasionally there will be news about a current Homework assignment, such as clarifications, hints and so on. These will be announced in the Blog.

13.3 Programming Work

In general, you will not be docked points for poor style—no indentation, no comments, etc. But you should do these things FOR YOURSELF, to help organize your thinking, and to be able to understand your program two months from now.

Use a debugging tool! Learn my Principle of Confirmation! Don’t flail for hours when you can actually shorten your debugging time by a large fraction.

13.4 Submitting Homework

If the assignment includes mathematical work, e.g. as in ECS 132, you must write up your solutions in LaTeX, in detailed, clear form. Don’t just write down equations; explain them. The Term Project will also use LaTeX, even in a programming course.
It is REQUIRED that you use the Unix tar command to package all of your files. In a course with math content, this means any .tex, .pdf, image and code files.

For a programming course, this will be just your source code files, except in the Term Project, where you will follow the above rule for math courses.

The name of your submitted file will be email1.email2....tar where the “email” fields are the official UCD e-mail addresses of the members of your Group, e.g. jsmith.agutierrez.streddy.tjwong.tar. Be sure to get those addresses exactly correct, to avoid a situation in which your team member doesn’t get credit. Be sure to use the proper e-mail address, NOT a different one based on your UCD login. Your official address is the one used by the TA and me in mailing you; check your records.

Your submission MUST be a .tar file and MUST use the above naming scheme. The TA may ask you to resubmit if you fail to comply.

Typically an assignment will also specify names of individual files.

In submitting your .tar file, make SURE not to make subdirectories. When the grading script unpacks your .tar file, it will expect to see all your work files in the same directory from which the script invokes the .tar command.

You then submit your .tar file to the TA (not to me), using handin on CSIF.
handin taUserName hwkName yourMailAddresses.tar

(The TA will announce hwkName.)

13.5 Interactive Homework Grading

We will use interactive grading. The TA will announce Homework grading times, and each Group will sign up for a time slot. All members of the Group must be present during the grading time.

During a Group’s time slot, the TA will ask each member of the Group questions about their Homework submission, such as “What if the problem had asked...”, “Explain in detail why you did it this way...”, “What if you were to do it this way instead...” The purpose of these questions is to ensure that all partners are actively involved in all the work. The TA will also ask questions about the general course material.

The TA will assign separate grades for each Group member. In some cases, these grades will be identical, but if there is a disparity in the levels of understanding the different Group members have regarding the assignment, the TA will assign different grades to each member.

It’s not expected that all members of a Group are equally proficient in programming or math, and thus it’s not expected that everyone contributed equally to their submitted work. However, it IS expected that everyone was very actively involved.

You must be prepared to speak cogently about the ENTIRE assignment. In particular, if you worked on one part of the assignment and Johnnie worked on another, it is NOT acceptable to answer the TA’s question about Johnnie’s part by saying “Oh, I don’t know about that part, because Johnnie did it.”

The TA will e-mail me a report after grading an assignment, with tentative grades for my approval. Below are samples of what the TA might say.

Example 1:

Group 3, John, Jim and Mary: All three students seemed to have actively contributed to this assignment, and all three answered my questions well. The program worked fine. Tentative
Example 2:

Group 3, John, Jim and Mary: The program worked fine, but Mary seems to have done most of the work. John had some trouble answering my questions, and Jim could answer almost nothing. Tentative grades—John C, Jim F, Mary A.

Example 3:

Group 3, John, Jim and Mary: The program worked mostly OK, but failed when I tried the input combination 8, 88 and 168. All three Group members did answer my questions well. Tentative grades—John A-, Jim A-, Mary A-.

In the case of ECS 132 or other math courses, there will be similar reports for math problems.

13.6 If You Need Help, Hints, Etc.

Please note that Homework assignments here will NOT lay out a detailed recipe, with tons of hints, telling you how to do the problems.

The work is designed to be challenging and thought-provoking. This thought-provoking nature of the assignments is the vehicle by which you get to really understand the concepts. You are not necessarily expected to see right away how to do an assignment. Instead, you are expected to spend a considerable amount of time pondering the assignment, gradually seeing more and more, until you finally see how to do the whole thing. It is through that thought process that will develop insight into the course material.

The TA and I will be quite happy to help you, definitely including giving you hints—but only if, after giving a matter considerable thought, you still don’t see what to do. Once you have reached the point where you cannot go any further, we very much encourage you to seek help from us. We want you to do well on the Homework!

13.7 Late Work

An assignment is late if it is submitted to the TA after the due date. If you are late, you will be assessed a 5% penalty the first late day, and 10%-per-day penalty after that in your grade for that assignment. (Since handin is available every day, each of the seven days of the week counts as one day.) The maximum total penalty is 50%.

Each Group will be allowed a total of 2 late days over the quarter, time which is not penalized. You can use this as being late 2 days with no penalty on one assignment, or as being late 1 day with no penalty in each of two assignments.

Don’t squander your grace period days in the first assignment! The subsequent ones will almost certainly be more difficult, so save your grace time for then.

The TA will keep the appropriate records as to how many days of grace period you have used.
14 Term Project

In lieu of a Final Exam, we have a Term Project, which also serves as the last Homework assignment. It will be take-home and collaborative with your Group, just as with your earlier assignments. It will be very different from regular assignments, though:

- It will be of a different nature, notably in its requirement that you submit a written report.
- It will involve work approximately 2 times that of a regular assignment, and will be weighted accordingly, especially given the dual role of the Project as both Homework and a replacement for a final exam.
- A good Term Project may be given heavy Extra Credit, substantially boosting your course grade, much more than a regular assignment would. I typically bump up your course grade according to the following scheme:
  - B+ project grade: Bump up course grade 1 notch, e.g. B- to B.
  - A- project grade: Bump up course grade 2 notches, e.g. B- to B+.
  - A project grade: Bump up course grade 3 notches, e.g. B- to A-.
- No late Term Projects will be accepted. I highly recommend that, during the course of your work on the Project, you periodically submit what you have to **handin**. That way, if you do miss the deadline, at least you will have something submitted for grading.

You submit your Project reports in the same manner as for Homework, as detailed in Section 13.4. **Make sure to heed the point about subdirectories.** You use **handin**, in my directory (not the TA's) on CSIF, using the subdirectory `xproject`, e.g. `50project`:

```
handin matloff xproject yourMailAddresses.tar
```

Note these Project requirements:

- Do a good, professional job.
- Correct grammar and spelling, clarity/fluidity of the writing, etc., do count — a LOT.
- You must use LaTeX.
- You must adhere completely to the instructions. For instance, in ECS 132, all work, *including graphics*, must be done in R.
- Use bold font for program variables in text.
- Use the **listings** package or similar for displayed code listings.
- Full code listings must be included in an appendix.
- Use Bibtext for references. Note: Lots of materials already have Bibtext entries available online, saving you work. In referencing a Web page, include at least the title and URL.

Details will be given later. If you are curious now, though, you can find model examples in files with names of the form “Exemplarx” on our class Web site, e.g. [http://heather.cs.ucdavis.edu~matloff/132/](http://heather.cs.ucdavis.edu~matloff/132/)
15 Grading

Grading is noncompetitive (there is no “curve”), so it is possible for everyone to do well.

15.1 Weighting

The formula used is

\[ \text{course grade} = 0.60 \times \text{Quizzes grade} + 0.20 \times \text{Homework grade} + 0.20 \times \text{Term Project grade} \]

where the Homework and Quizzes grades are each on the 4-point scale (4 for an A, 3 for a B, etc., with + adding 0.3 and - subtracting 0.3).

(However, note Section 15.4 below, Positive and Negative Factors in Your Course Grade.)

15.2 + and - Grades

The threshhold for a grade of n is (n-1).85; the threshhold for an ‘n-’ grade is (n-1).6; the threshhold for a ‘+’ grade is n.2. So, for example, if your weighted average from the above formula is between 2.6 and 2.84, your course grade is B-; if the average is between 2.85 and 3.19, your course grade is B; if the average is between 3.2 and 3.59, your grade is B+.

15.3 Quizzes Grade

You will get a letter grade on each Quiz.

In recognition of the fact that on (rare) occasions — for whatever reason — you will not be able to attend discussion section, or you simply will have an “off day,” your lowest two (letter) Quiz grades will be thrown out. Your other Quiz letter grades will be averaged to produce your overall Quizzes grade.

If you miss many quizzes, your course grade will be reduced, possibly to an F, regardless of overall grades on the Quizzes, and Homework.

15.4 Positive and Negative Factors in Your Course Grade

This is not “CHEM 1A-style grading,” calculated purely by formula, in which falling 0.5% below the cutoff point for an A results in a grade of B. The grade as determined above is just a lower bound. (However, see below regarding negatives.)

15.4.1 Factors Increasing Your Grade above the Formula

- A good Term Project may be given heavy Extra Credit, substantially boosting your course grade, far more than a regular assignment would. (It affects writing letters of recommendation too.) Of course, it must be clear that the student actively participated in the Project. As noted earlier (Sec. 14), I typically bump up a student’s course grade by 1, 2 or 3 notches, for a B+, A- or A Project — that’s A LOT!
- Student has been making a really strong effort in the class.
• TA’s detailed reports to me of the student’s performance in the interactive Homework grading sessions show that the student has better insight than his/her Quiz scores show.

• “All’s well that ends well”—student showed a marked improvement in Quiz grades as the quarter progressed.

• Student’s insightful comments in class.

• Student got one or more really difficult Quiz problems right that few or no other students got.

15.4.2 Factors Reducing Your Grade below the Formula

Negatives can be an obstacle. Problems such as the following, though rare, may have a major impact, e.g. making the student ineligible for “special offers” such as the discarding of the two lowest quizzes, and maybe even resulting in a D or F for the course grade:

• A pattern of missing three or more Quizzes.

• Lack of involvement in the Homework.

• Lack of involvement in the Group Quiz or the Term Project.

• Failure to show up for a scheduled Interactive Grading session, without prior notice to the TA.

• In a class with multiple discussion sections, taking quizzes without permission in a section other than the one the student is enrolled in.

• Unethical behavior.

Remember, the Term Project is assigned in lieu of a final exam. If this is missing, or if you do almost no work on it, it will not merely be treated as an F. Instead, you will be imposed a heavy penalty on your course grade, and in fact possibly receive an I (Incomplete) grade. To make up the I, you will be required to do a new project, by yourself.

15.4.3 Example of How the “Special Offers” Can Make a Substantial Difference in Your Grad

This was a student in ECS 132.

Original quiz record:

\[
\text{F A+ F C+ B+ D B}
\]

Add Quiz 0, practice using the OMSI system (most students get A+):

\[
\text{F A+ F C+ B+ D B A+}
\]

Drop two lowest quizzes:

\[
\text{A+ C+ B+ D B A+}
\]
Replace next-lowest quiz by “job interview” grade:

A+  C+  B+  B+  B  A+

Course grade according to formula (after the above changes):

B+

Bumped-up course grade after two-notch bonus for A- project:

A

Again, look at that original quiz record!

F  A+  F  C+  B+  D  B

Yet, A for course grade!

16  I Do Care!

I wish to emphasize that I care very much that you succeed in this course, and I look forward to getting to know all of you.