TITLE: ASSESSMENT AND GRADING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:
Red Deer College (RDC) uses assessment and grading practices that enhance effectiveness of teaching and learning, provide students with accurate information about their learning, certify student achievement, and establish appropriate academic standards.

PURPOSE:

This policy provides guidance to students, faculty and staff on RDC's systems and expectations regarding assessment, grading, and reporting. Clarity and consistency in these practices support effectiveness in teaching and learning and provide reliable information to students. Information on student achievement also supports decision making by RDC (on such matters as eligibility for admission, graduation, awards and scholarships, honors, assignment to probation or requirement to withdraw). Credible certification of achievement is also critical to students when seeking admission to other post-secondary institutions and when seeking employment.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all students in credit programs and to all faculty members and staff involved in assessing, grading, and reporting student grades. Assessment and grading for non-credit career development programs is included in the "Non-credit Programming Policy".

PRINCIPLES:

Procedures and decisions at Red Deer College:
- Treat all persons fairly and respectfully.
- Are non-discriminatory and non-intrusive.
- Incorporate open, honest, and timely communication.
- Are made in a timely manner.
- Provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy.
- Provide appropriate access to education.
- Ensure that all persons have access to informed support regarding policies, procedures, rights, and responsibilities.
- Operate with clear written expectations for conduct and handling of complaints.
- Meet all accreditation standards.
- Maintain and clearly state a high standard of instruction and administration in all areas of educational programs and services.
- Are communicated in alternate forms to those who require such accommodation.

The following principles guide assessment, grading, and reporting processes at RDC:

1. Student learning is assessed fairly and without discrimination or disrespect.

2. Student learning is assessed on the basis of the learning outcomes stated in course outlines.

3. Instructors transform learning outcomes into dependable assessments that yield accurate information on student achievement.

4. Students are informed about the assessment and grading practices to be used in a course through the course outline as they begin their participation in a course.

5. Optimal learning takes place when students are actively involved in assessment processes (for example, self reflection, peer feedback, checklists, and rubrics).

6. Ongoing, formative assessment is an important part of constructive learning processes that requires consistent and timely feedback. This helps students to gauge their progress and to form goals and action plans to improve academic performance.

7. Through formative assessment, the instructor can adapt to the learning needs of students in a timely way helping to improve teaching and learning in a course.

8. Grading of a student's performance is based on a variety of assessment tools (for example, assignments, projects, performance-based tasks, portfolios, interviews, presentations, quizzes, tests, and final exams) since any one assessment of student learning is incomplete and imprecise.

9. Assessment results and grades may be assigned in reference to how each student is progressing toward established criteria (criterion referenced) or in reference to how they are progressing relative to their peers (norm referenced).

10. Grading differentiates levels of student performance consistent with the philosophy and practice of student assessment in the various programs in the College.

11. Grading is applied in a fair and consistent fashion from student to student in a section, and from section to section within a course.

12. Grading practices promote consistency of College-wide academic standards across courses, programs, and time.

13. Grades are reported to students confidentially.

DEFINITIONS:

Criterion-referenced assessment: A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of a clearly defined and delimited domain of learning tasks.*

Norm-referenced assessment: A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of an individual's relative standing in some known group.*

Assessment: Process of collecting information on student achievement and performance to inform instruction and improve student performance. Often involves judgment of how well a student has done based on a number of indicators (evaluation).

Grading: The process of applying a grade (letter, number, percentage) which represents the quality of student performance.

Grades Assigned By RDC:

Valid RDC grades include:

- The Letter Grading System and the approved letter codes AI, AU, CR, CS, NCR, DEF, IN, IP, and WD for all credit programs.
- The grades of CR (Credit) or NCR (No Credit) or percentage for Apprenticeship programs.
- A percentage grading system may be used where prescribed by an outside agency.

A. Letter Grading System:

Grade	Grade Point	Grade Description
A+	4.0	Exceptional
A	4.0	Excellent
A-	3.7	
B+	3.3	
B	3.0	Good
B-	2.7	
C+	2.3	
C	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	Poor
D	1.0	
F	0.0	Fail

Grade of A and A+: The grade of A will generally be the top grade in a course, with A+ being reserved for recognition of exceptional achievement.

B. Letter Code System:

Where a letter code is used, it is not included in grade point average calculation.

"AI" - Administrative Incomplete

Grades assigned by the instructor not received before grade release by the Registrar. The "AI" descriptor is replaced by the final letter grade as soon as it is received.

"AU" - Audit

Registered as an auditor. In auditing a course the student is allowed to attend and participate in class activities, but is not evaluated in any way.

"CR" - Credit

Course requirements completed, no grade point value assigned. For an instructor to utilize "CR" for courses in a program, prior approval of the Associate Dean, Dean, and Academic Council is required. "CR" is not an acceptable letter code for university transfer courses.

"CS" - Continuing Status

In good standing, but all course requirements not completed. For an instructor to utilize "CS" for courses of a program, prior approval of the Associate Dean, the dean, and Academic Council is required. "CS" is not an acceptable letter code for university transfer courses.

"NCR" - No Credit

Failure to meet course requirements, credit denied. For an instructor to utilize "NCR" for courses or a program, prior approval of the Associate Dean, the dean and Academic Council is required. "NCR" is not an acceptable grade for university transfer courses.

"DEF" - Deferred

Final examination deferred due to illness, domestic affliction, or other compelling reasons.

"IN" - Incomplete

Course requirements incomplete with special provisions for students to complete the course requirements after the final date for submission of the final grade for that course.

The code of "IN" may be assigned only when it is known that the student has expressed an intention to complete the course requirements. In cases where the student has not overtly expressed a commitment to the College with regard to completing the course requirements, a grade based on course work completed at the end of the term is assigned.

A code of "IN" does not indicate the provision of an indeterminate time frame for completion of the course requirements. The latest completion date is the end of the next regular academic term for the program.

There is no extension of time beyond one academic term for the "IN" code without prior approval of the Vice President Academic.

"IP - In Progress

Applies only to courses that have not officially terminated according to the dates of a normal term as defined by the academic schedule.

"WD" - Withdrawal

Withdrawal from an individual course up to the date indicated in the Academic Schedule.

Students continuing in classes after the date for withdrawal indicated in the Academic Schedule are expected to complete course requirements, including term assignments and final examinations where they apply.

In cases where a student does not officially withdraw by the specified time but stops attending without arranging to complete the course requirements, an instructor assigns a grade based on actual work completed.

GUIDELINES:

1. Assessment is an integral part of the planning and design of a course. It is important to define the expected learning outcomes for a course, provide learning opportunities so that students can achieve these outcomes, and provide formative and summative assessment directly related to the expected learning outcomes.

2. Assessment is:
   a) Carefully aligned with outcomes for the course
   b) Focused on cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains as appropriate

      c) Developed from research and best practices on teaching and assessment methodologies

      d) Used to improve teaching and learning as well as to evaluate and assign grades to individual learners.

3. Learner-centered assessment assists learners in developing their ability to self-assess and self-reflect thus promoting deep learning.

4. A variety of assessment methods are employed as considered appropriate to a particular subject.

5. Clearly articulated standards at the School level that are consistent with College policy and approved by Academic Council guide the assessment practices of instructors and the assignment of final grades.

6. Grading in post-secondary academic programs often incorporates both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment processes. Grades are often reflective of both achievement of prescribed learning outcomes and standing within a defined cohort.

7. Review of class section GPAs is designed to encourage the establishment of reasonable standards for assessment that are consistent with the learning outcomes established by the School and by Academic Council.

8. Significant and consistent deviations from the expected range of final course GPAs require attention at the individual instructor and School level.

9. The last day for submission of grades indicated in the Academic Schedule is five days following the last scheduled examination except in the case where it must be reduced to four days in order to enable the Fall Term academic schedule to begin after Labour Day, in accordance with the Academic Schedule Policy.

10. Instructors provide a reasonable time frame for the completion of assignments/student work.

11. Instructors mark and return class assignments/student work in a timely manner.

12. Documentation leading to the final grade is kept on file by the instructor for a minimum of one year and no longer than three years after the final grade has been assigned. Documentation includes the detailed record of component marks to allow the reconstruction of the student's final grade when necessary. If the instructor leaves the College, these records are submitted to and held by the Associate Dean of the School.

PROCEDURES:

Academic Council:

1. Establishes the assessment and grading policy based on recommendations from the Academic Policy Committee.
2. Periodically reviews college-wide grade distributions as presented by the Registrar in order to gauge the effectiveness of the policy and the maintenance of acceptable academic standards for the College.

School Councils:

1. Establish School assessment and grading standards that comply with this policy while meeting the needs of consistency and academic standards as established by the School.
2. Review program grade distributions periodically as presented by the Registrar in order to maintain the academic standards as established by the College and the School.

Course Instructor:
1. Determines the specific assessment and grading system for each course in compliance with approved School Standards on assessment and grading, and communicates these in the course outline (specifying which elements are criterion-referenced and which are norm-referenced).
2. Conducts assessments and provides formative feedback to students throughout the term, including substantive feedback prior to the last day to withdraw from the course.
3. Assigns valid final grades that result in a class GPA that normally falls within the range expected by the approved School Standards. If the GPA is outside this range, the instructor prepares a rationale for the Associate Dean that describes the reason for the difference.
4. Forward grades (and rationale if grades assigned are not in compliance with the School Standards) as soon as possible, and not later than the date indicated on the Academic Schedule as the last day for submission of grades, to the Associate Dean of the School for validation.

Associate Dean:
1. Reviews and approves course outlines for compliance with the Course Outline Policy, this policy, and any School assessment and grading Standards.
2. Reviews and validates final grades for compliance with this policy and any approved School assessment and grading Standards. The Associate Dean may recommend that the instructor change the grades.
3. If the Associate Dean and instructor disagree on whether grades need to be changed, refer the issue to the Dean for resolution.

Dean:
Reviews and decides on final grades when a grade review question is not resolved by discussion between the Associate Dean and instructor.

Registrar:
1. Releases validated grades to students.
2. Determines academic standing of students and enters that standing on the student record.
3. Informs the Associate Dean of any students with academic standing less than "Satisfactory".
4. Reports grades and academic standing on the official transcript.
5. Reports grade distributions, periodically, to Academic Council and to Schools.

Procedures for the use of "AU", "IN", "IP", "WD", "DEF":

"AU" – Audit

A grade of audit is assigned by an instructor if:
- The student is admitted to the College.
- The student has registered as an auditing student through the Registrar's office.
- The student has been permitted to audit the course by obtaining the instructor's signature.

- The registration as an auditing student is completed prior to the last day to register in courses as prescribed in the Academic Schedule.
- The student has met any attendance or participation requirements specified by the instructor when the student sought permission to audit.

"IN" - Incomplete

An interim grade of "IN" is assigned by an instructor including the final grade the student will receive if outstanding requirements are not met.
- One month after the submission of final grades, the Records Office notifies all instructors who have grades of "IN" requesting that a grade change form or "Contract for Completion of Incomplete Grades" be submitted to the Records Office.
- The Contract for Completion of Incomplete Grades is signed and dated by the instructor and the student indicating the expected completion date. The latest completion date is the end of the next regular (sixteen week) academic term.
- If a contract or grade change is not completed, the default letter grade indicated on the original final grade roster is assigned to the student.
- Notice is sent to the instructor after the contract date has expired. If no documentation is received, the default grade indicated on the final grade roster is assigned to the student.

"IP" - In Progress

The letter grade of "IP" is assigned by the Registrar if a course is not officially over when the student's transcript is prepared.

"WD" - Withdrawal

The WD notation is assigned by the Registrar if a student has officially withdrawn from the course prior to the date indicated in the Academic Schedule and in the manner prescribed by the Registrar's office.

"DEF" - Deferred

The DEF notation is assigned by the Registrar when a student applies to the Registrar's Office and is approved for a deferred final examination.
If the deferral is approved, the Registrar makes arrangements for the examination to be written and informs the student.
If the student fails to write the deferred examination, the instructor is asked to provide a grade that reflects no contribution from a final examination.
The "DEF" notation is only included in the transcript from the time official grades are due until the date for the deferred examination.

OFFICER RESPONSIBLE: Chair of Academic Council

RECOMMENDING AUTHORITY: Academic Council

CONSULTATION FOR REVIEW: Students, Registrar, Deans' Council, School Councils, Academic Policy Committee.

POLICY REVIEW DATE: January 1, 2019

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

REVISION HISTORY: July 1, 1993 (Grading Policy, and Grading Standard Practice)
June 16, 1999 (Grading Policy, and Grading Standard Practice)
July 1, 2003 (Grading Policy, and Grading Standard Practice)
July 1, 2004 (Grading Policy, and Grading Standard Practice)
July 1, 2005 (Grading Standard Practice)
July 1, 2014 (renamed Assessment and Grading Policy, Standard Practice rescinded)

RELATED POLICIES:
- Academic Schedule
- Academic Standing
- Course Outline
- Final Examination
- Graduation, Certification and Completion
- Non-credit Programming

CONNECTION TO BOARD POLICIES:
All RDC policies support relevant Board of Governors operational policies.