

Nova SBE International Mobility Office

Conversion of Grades

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1 Introduction

Grades at Nova SBE follow the Portuguese grading scale for higher education (0–20 scale). If a student takes a course abroad, the grade has to be converted to our scale in order to properly register the course credits in the student's transcript at Nova SBE. This document details the grade conversion process.

We use the information written in the official foreign transcript in the following order of preference:

1. A grade in a numerical scale, as detailed in section 2.
2. A grade in the ECTS scale, as detailed in section 3.
3. A grade in a qualitative scale, as detailed in section 4.

This means that, as a general rule, we do not use ECTS grades when the transcript shows a quantitative grade. However, the student has the option to choose between numerical or ECTS grades, as discussed in section 2.3.

The conversion is consistent with the recommendations from Direção Geral do Ensino Superior (DGES) and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. Even though these sources typically only specify the conversion of full degree final grades, we apply the same correspondence in the conversion of individual course grades whenever possible.

2 Numerical scales

2.1 General rule

If the grade in the foreign transcript follows a numerical scale, then the conversion is made in a proportional way.

Let y be the grade at Nova and x the grade obtained abroad. Define by x_{\max} the maximum grade in the scale of the foreign university and by x_{pass} the

minimum passing grade. The grade at Nova is then given by

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{y - 10}{10} &= \frac{x - x_{\text{pass}}}{x_{\text{max}} - x_{\text{pass}}} \\ \Rightarrow y &= 10 + 10 \times \frac{x - x_{\text{pass}}}{x_{\text{max}} - x_{\text{pass}}}\end{aligned}\tag{1}$$

Example. In Tilburg, Netherlands, grades are on a 0–10 scale, with a minimum passing grade of 6. Using formula (1), a grade of 8 is thus converted to 15 at Nova.

2.2 Exceptions and special cases

1. Whenever grades are given in two different numerical scales, we use the scale with more resolution.

For example, in Prague University, transcripts show grades both in a 1(excellent)–4(fail) and a 0(bad)–100(good) scale. In this case, we use the 0–100 scale, with a minimum passing grade of 60.

2. Inverted numerical: formula (1) still applies.

For example, in Goethe University, Frankfurt, the highest grade is 1 and the minimum passing grade is 4. A grade of 2 is thus converted to 17 at Nova.

3. Some grades are given as numbers, but have a qualitative interpretation. These cases are converted as described in section 4.1.

2.3 Students' option

If the official transcript shows both a quantitative and an ECTS grade for each course, the student may opt to have all grades converted using the method of section 3. If you prefer to use the ECTS scale, please state this when you submit your transcript to the International Mobility Office. Please note that the same method will be applied to *all* courses listed in the transcript, that is, you cannot choose to apply one method to one course and another method to another course.

3 ECTS scale

If the foreign transcript does not show a numerical grade, but shows instead a grade in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) scale, we apply the following conversion.

ECTS grades are qualitative (A, B, ...), but are meant to position the student relative to the overall distribution of grades. For example, an A grade implies

that the student is among the best 10% of students in a course. At Nova, there are about 0.9% of students with 20, 4.1% with 19, and 7.2% with 18. Therefore, the average of the 10% highest grades at Nova is 18.6, which rounds to 19. As a result, the ECTS grade A is converted to 19. The same procedure is applied to convert other ECTS grades. The correspondence is in table 1.

Table 1: Conversion of ECTS grades

Grade	ECTS		Nova SBE Grade
	Interpretation	% of students	
A	Excellent, outstanding	10	19
B	Very good, above average	25	17
C	Good, with a number of errors	30	15
D	Fair, but with shortcomings	25	13
E	Pass	10	11
F	Fail		Fail

Note that the ECTS scale has only five values for passing grades (A, B, C, D, E), while the Portuguese scale has 11 values for passing grades (the integer numbers from 10 to 20). As a result, some grades at Nova are never used in the conversion.

4 Other qualitative scales

For countries with grading scales that deviate from the previous rules, we apply the conversion in one of the following sections.

4.1 Grades equivalent to ECTS

Many universities follow different grading scales, but with the same interpretation as ECTS grades. This is the case of some universities in Austria, Denmark, Finland, and other countries. Some of the scales are numerical, but the numbers actually denote a qualitative grade. Table 2 shows the conversion procedure for universities in different countries that have a direct correspondence with the ECTS grading scale.

Table 2: Grading scales equivalent to ECTS

ECTS Grade	Austria	Denmark	Finland	Hungary	Poland	Nova SBE
A	1	12	5	5	5.0	19
B	2	10	4	4	4.5	17
C	3	7	3	3	4.0	15
D	4	4	2	2	3.5	13
E		02	1		3.0	11
F	Fail	00/−3	0	1	2.0	Fail

4.2 U.S. grades

Grades in the U.S. follow a qualitative scale with letter grades. In the same way as the grades of the ECTS scale, the grades in the U.S. reflect the frequency of the grade over the population of students. Students with 18, 19, and 20, for example, would on average have the grade A in the U.S. as these grades correspond to the highest 10% grades in the distribution. As a result, an A in the U.S. is converted to 19 at Nova. The conversion from U.S. grades to grades at Nova is given in table 3.

Table 3: Conversion from U.S. grades

U.S. Grade	Grade at Nova SBE
A	19
A−	18
B+	17
B	16
B−	15
C+	14
C	13
C−	12
D+	11
D	10
D−	10
P	Pass
F	Fail

Some schools in the U.S. also include an $A+$ in their scale. In those cases, an $A+$ translates to a grade of 20.

4.3 U.K. grades

The conversion from U.K. grades to grades at Nova is in table 4.

Table 4: Conversion from U.K. grades

U.K. descriptor	U.K. mark	Grade at Nova SBE
First Class Honours	90-100	20
First Class Honours	75-89	19
First Class Honours	70-74	18
Second Class Honours, Upper Division	65-69	17
Second Class Honours, Upper Division	60-64	16
Second Class Honours, Lower Division	55-59	15
Second Class Honours, Lower Division	50-54	14
Third class	45-49	12
Third class	40-44	10
Fail	0-39	Fail

4.4 Other cases

The examples shown in this section may not cover the specificities of all countries and universities. The International Mobility Office maintains a list of grade conversions for all schools. If you have any questions about your destination school, please check with us.