

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

### *WHAT DO GRADES MEAN AT THE ANU LAW SCHOOL?*

Prospective employers often find it difficult to compare the results of law students from different law schools, as marking standards and grading systems vary considerably. The purpose of this letter is to give some explanatory background that may assist with understanding and evaluating levels of achievement in the ANU College of Law.

In 1996, in order primarily to ensure reasonable uniformity and fair comparisons across subjects and across years, the College adopted a policy on grade distribution. This policy currently stipulates that the distribution of grades in any given subject normally should conform to the following guidelines:

High Distinction	(80% and above)	2 – 5% of students
Distinction	(70 – 79%)	10 – 20% of students
Credit	(60 – 69%)	30 – 50% of students
Pass	(50 – 59%)	No quota for pass or fail

The grading system has implications for the number of degrees awarded with honours. After selective entry to the honours program, honours are awarded on the basis of grades across the course together with the grade in a substantial research thesis. The number of honours awarded over the years has varied, but in 2006, 13% of the graduating students were awarded first class honours, 19% were awarded second class (2A) honours, and 7% were awarded second class (2B) honours. A student performing consistently at Distinction level is likely to be well in the running for first class honours.

We sometimes hear anecdotal evidence that other law schools may award more generous grades, and that this may disadvantage ANU students in competition for the same jobs. Whether or not this is so, it is well recognised that ANU standards have traditionally been high, and that superficial comparisons can be misleading. I hope this letter is of some assistance in understanding the context of ANU grades. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to call me or my Sub-Dean Dr Jean-Pierre Fonteyne.

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**Dean of Law and Robert Garran Professor of Law**  
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