Assign text grades instead of numerical grades

Introduction
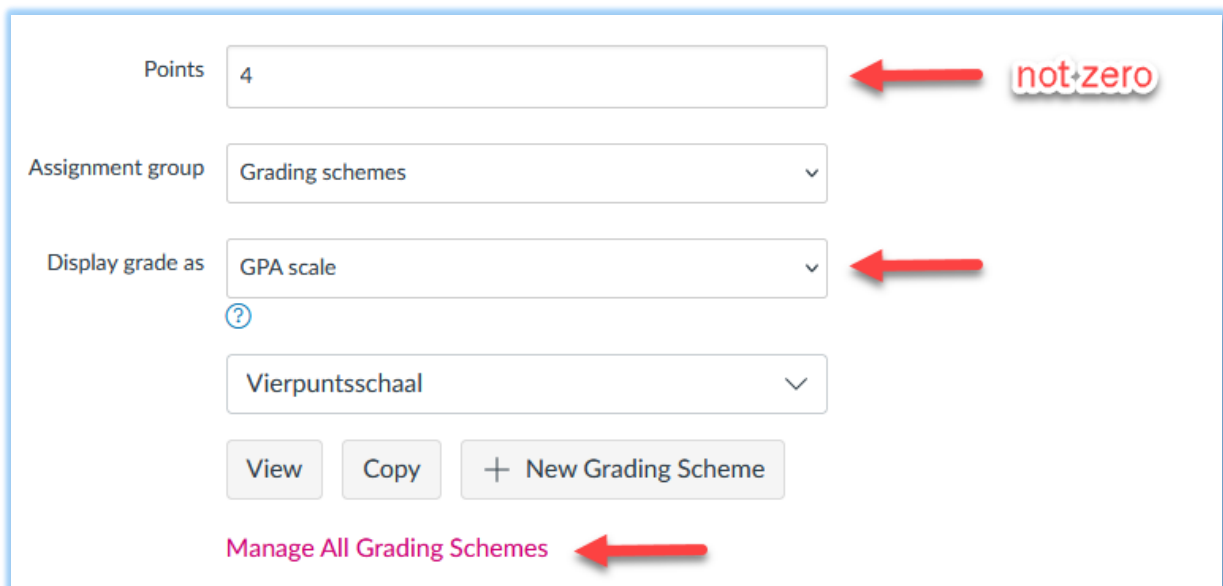
In Canvas you can define your own grading scheme so you get the possibility to grade with "good/average/bad" or "on track/mostly on track/not on track" etc., instead of a numerical grade. You can use the defined grading scheme for grading your assignments. This document will give some pointers and best practices for grading schemes in Canvas. All screenshots are made on a Windows-10 PC.

The process outlined

1. Create, or edit, an assignment
2. Choose "Letter Grade" or "GPA scale" for "Display grade as"
3. Add your own grading scheme
4. Assign the grading scheme to the assignment
5. Use the grading scheme in the gradebook

Step by step instruction

1. Create, or edit an assignment where you want to use a grading scheme instead of a numerical grade. Even though you will not use a numerical grade, it is **important** to set the "**Points**" field **not to 0 (zero)** if you want to export the grading of your assignment in the future with the defined values like "good/average/bad".

2. Choose "Letter Grade" or "GPA scale" for "Display grade as". This will give you the opportunity to "View Grading Scheme" as shown in the screenshot below. Choose "GPA scale" if you want to export the defined values of your scale, instead of the underlying points, to a CSV file.
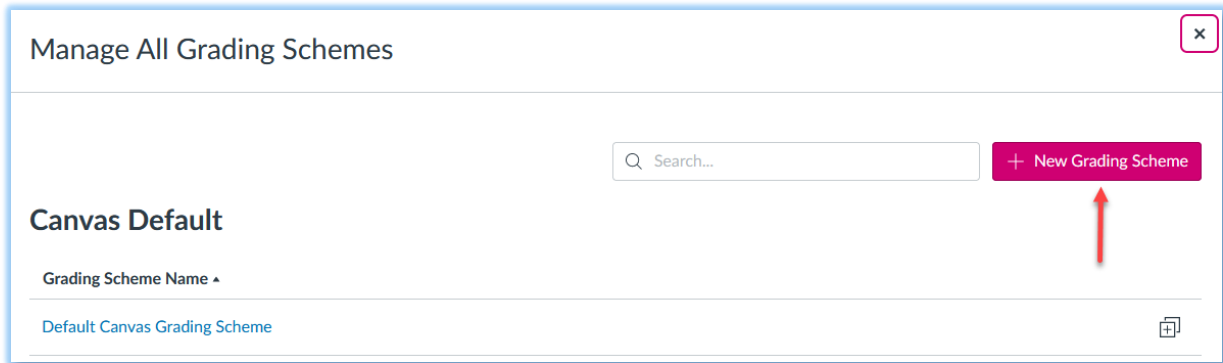
Assign text grades instead of numerical grades

3. Click on the link "Manage All Grading schemes". A window will appear that shows the currently assigned grading scheme. Click on the button [+New grading scheme].

Define your grading scheme and click the [Save] button under the scheme to add it to the available course grading schemes. See this Canvas guide for specifics on defining your grading scheme.
Note: since the Canvas release of 16-9-2023 you can choose if you want a percentage based grading scheme (default) or a points based grading scheme. The instructions in this best practice apply to a percentage based grading scheme.

If you combine your assignment "Points" field and the definition of your grading scheme, you can enter grades in the gradebook in an easy and unambiguous way, by giving in a score that translates exactly to your defined values. See some configuration examples below.

assignment "Points" field =1

Value	Range scheme	Score
Pass	100% to 1%	1 (=100%)
Fail	< 1% to 0%	0 (=0%)

assignment "Points" field =2

Value	Range scheme	Score
Good	100% to 51%	2 (=100%)
Average	< 51% to 1%	1 (=50%)
Bad	< 1% to 0%	0 (=0%)

assignment "Points" field =4

Value	Range scheme	Score
Very good	100% to 76%	4 (=100%)
Good	< 76% to 51%	3 (=75%)
Average	< 51% to 26%	2 (=50%)
Bad	< 26 to 0%	1 (=25%)

assignment "Points" field =5

Value	Range scheme	Score
Very good	100% to 81%	5 (=100%)
Good	< 81% to 61%	4 (=80%)
Average	< 61% to 41%	3 (=60%)
Bad	< 41 to 21%	2 (=40%)
No show	< 21% to 0%	1 (=20%)

Assign text grades instead of numerical grades

4. Once you have defined your grading scheme you can assign it to your assignment by selecting it from the dropdown menu. You can check the set-up of the grading scheme by clicking the button [View].
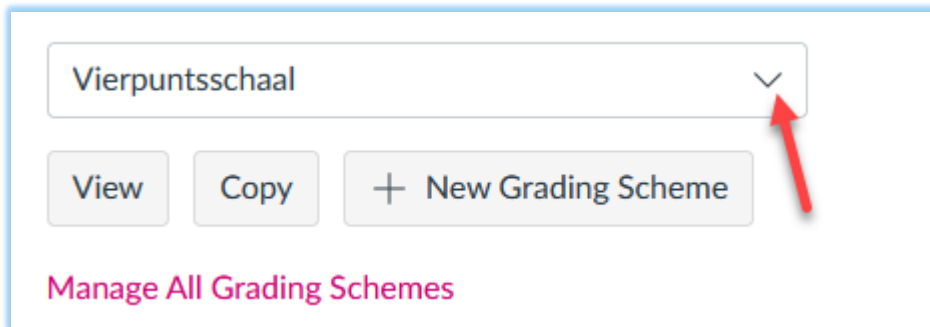

Don't forget to Save your assignment changes.

5. If you want to see your defined grading scheme values in the gradebook, make sure you select "Grading scheme" under the assignment option: Enter Grade as, as shown in the screenshot below. It is possible to change between points, percentage and Grading scheme.
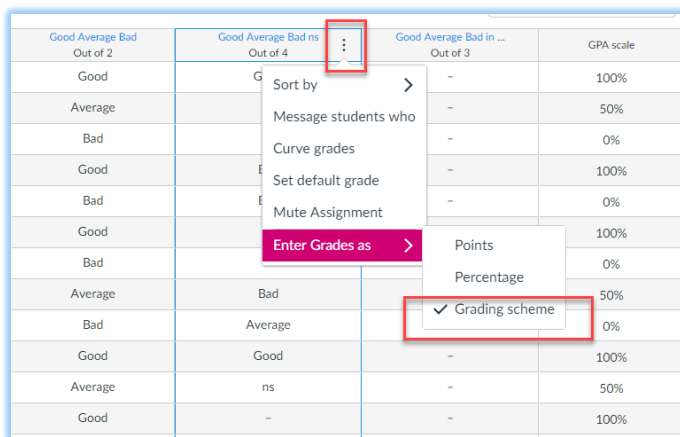
You can select a defined value from your grading scheme through a pull down list, as shown in the screenshot below. Click in a field to get the possibility to select from the pull down list. Notice that the value "Excused" will also be added since it is a default gradebook option.
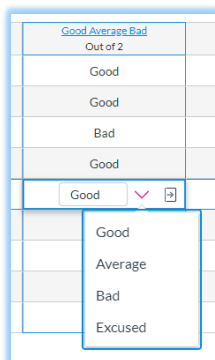
If your grading scheme is defined as shown in the second example (assignment "Points" field =2), you could also grade "Good" by typing "2", "Average" by typing "1" and "Bad" by typing "0".

Notice: If the underlying points, or percentage, still have meaning apart from the defined scheme value, and you selected "GPA scale" for the "Display grade as" field, you have to be careful with (re-) importing the assignment through a CSV file. On import Canvas will recalculate the underlying points to the highest value percentage in the range. For the example above, giving in 1.9 or 2 would both result in "Good". But importing this assignment with a Canvas gradebook CSV file, the value 1.9 will result in "Good" **and** the value will change to "2".

Assign text grades instead of numerical grades

A student will see the defined values of your grading scheme in parentheses. The underlying value is also shown in their gradebook, as you can see in the screenshot below.

IF YOU USE CALCULATION OF GRADES IN CANVAS, YOU SHOULD PROBABLY NOT INCLUDE AN ASSIGNMENT THAT USES A NON-NUMERICAL GRADE IN THE CALCULATION. IF WANT TO EXCLUDE THESE NON-NUMERICAL GRADED ASSIGNMENTS, CHECK THE BOX AT OPTION "DO NOT COUNT THIS ASSIGNMENT TOWARDS THE FINAL GRADE" WHEN CONFIGURING YOUR ASSIGNMENT. BY DEFAULT THE CALCULATED TOTAL GRADE IS NOT SHOWN TO STUDENTS IN CANVAS AT UTWENTE.

Version: 29 April 2024

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Assign text grades instead of numerical grades