

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 4234
By: Shofner
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Research reported by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) shows that the percentage of A's awarded in college courses has increased from 15 percent in the early 1960s to more than 40 percent by 2023, while grade point averages have risen from 2.7 to 3.2 despite declining student effort. The bill author has informed the committee that this grade inflation incentivizes students to seek easier courses and pressures faculty to award higher grades to maintain enrollments and job security, ultimately compromising academic integrity. The consequences extend beyond universities, as employers increasingly doubt graduates' readiness, with 60 percent of employers citing inflated credentials as a major concern, according to TPPF.

Former State Representative Scott Turner sought to combat this issue in the 83rd Legislative Session by introducing H.B. 3498, which would have required public universities to report median grades alongside individual transcripts, promoting transparency without mandating grading policies. However, that bill stalled in the senate after passing the house, and the bill author has informed the committee that legislative action is still needed to restore credibility to academic credentials and ensure students are truly prepared for life beyond college, as grade inflation threatens both workforce competitiveness and the foundational principle that education requires effort and challenge. H.B. 4234 seeks to combat grade inflation by requiring general academic teaching institutions to report median course grades alongside individual student grades on transcripts, allowing employers, educators, and policymakers to assess the extent of grade inflation without imposing a mandatory grading curve or interfering with university autonomy.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 4234 requires each general academic teaching institution to include on a student's transcript, for each class attempted by the student, the average grade awarded to all students in the class or, for a class for which letter grades are awarded to all students in the class, the median grade awarded. The bill requires the institution to place the average or median grade, as applicable, immediately to the right of the student's individual grade. These requirements expressly do not apply to the following classes:

- a class offered to students solely on a pass-fail basis or for an independent study credit;
or
- a class in which grades are reported for 10 students or fewer.

H.B. 4234 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to adopt rules to administer the bill's provisions as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date. The bill authorizes the THECB, for that purpose, to adopt the initial rules in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

H.B. 4234 applies beginning with the 2025 fall semester.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025.