

Grades

Only the instructor of the course has the responsibility and authority to judge the quality of a student's work and assess the appropriate grade. No one can overrule instructors and require them to go against their judgment of the work. Grading must not be arbitrary or capricious or influenced by illegal discriminatory considerations. To avoid the influencing of grades by improper consideration or student pressure, a grade, once given, may only be changed if an error in the original grade is claimed by the instructor. The instructor should be willing to review the basis of an assigned grade with an inquiring student and correct the grade if an error is found. The evaluation of the quality of the student's work is solely up to the instructor, but the grade must not contain a punitive element for an offense against academic integrity if the student has been found innocent of this offense by a duly constituted board.

Grading System

In May 1965, the University Faculty adopted the Cornell University Grading System, a letter system of grading with shadings of pluses, minuses, and variations in grade-point values, as well as a system of symbols to be used in lieu of grades. The grading system is attached as appendix 8. It is also available from the Office of the Dean of Faculty and available online at:

<http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/handbook/APPENDIX8.pdf> .

The S-U System. Alongside the letter-grade system stands an *S-U* System, in which *S* means satisfactory, as defined by performance that would be graded C- or higher, and *U* means unsatisfactory, as defined by performance that would be graded below C-. Grades of *S* and *U* are not given grade-point values or taken into account in computing grade-point averages. **The purpose of the S-U System is to encourage students to venture into courses outside their main areas of familiarity without great risk to their academic record.** The border between *S* and *U* is not the same, however, as that between pass and fail in the letter-grade system. Credits toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements are earned for courses evaluated *S* but not for those graded *U*. The various schools and colleges differ in the restrictions they place on the election of *S-U* grading over letter grading. But in those courses where college rules and course procedures allow it, the election is a student option that must be exercised within the first seven weeks of the beginning of the term. Students may not defer the decision in the hope of first seeing the letter grade they are likely to earn.

Incomplete. The symbol of *Incomplete* is only appropriate when two basic conditions are met: (1) The student has substantial equity at a passing level in the course with respect to work completed; and (2) the student has been prevented by circumstances beyond his/her control, such as illness or family emergency, from completing all of the course requirements on time.

An *Incomplete* may not be given merely because a student fails to complete all course requirements on time. Such a practice would be open to abuse; by deferring completion of some major course requirement, a student could gain advantage over his or her classmates by obtaining additional time to do a superior job. This is not an option that may be elected at the student's own discretion.

While it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for an *Incomplete*, reasons for requesting an *Incomplete* must be acceptable to the instructor, who establishes specific make-up requirements. **An *Incomplete* allows a specified amount of time determined by the student's college of registry, for completing course work.** The instructor has the option of setting a shorter time limit than that allowed by the student's college. Several colleges require that a statement signed by the instructor be on file indicating the reason for the *Incomplete* and the restriction, if any.

The consequences of failure to complete all course work within the time permitted will depend upon the policy of the student's college of registry. Some colleges convert the *Incomplete* symbol to a grade of *F*; others let the *Incomplete* stand on the student's transcript. In either case, the option to make up the work is lost.

It is the responsibility of the student to see that all *Incompletes* are made-up within the deadline and that the grade change has been properly recorded with the student's college registrar.

Faculty under no circumstances should give an *Incomplete* due to pressure to meet the deadline for reporting grades. The symbol *Incomplete* becomes a permanent part of the student's transcript, even when a grade is later submitted.

Late Grades. Late grades should be avoided. They often result in unwarranted academic actions or even in students not being able to graduate on time. Furthermore, late grades must be posted by hand at considerable expense and do not appear on grade slips and may prevent students from receiving recognition for academic achievement.

Changes in Grades. Each semester's work is an entity and grades are to be assigned for work completed during the normal period of the semester. Subsequent changes in

grade may be made only in the event that the instructor made an error in the assignment of the original grade. As a matter of equity, grades must not be changed after the end of a semester because a student may have subsequently done additional work.

Posting of Grades. Posting of student grades by name or a personally identifiable number is prohibited under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). However, a student waiver authorizing disclosure of educational records by means of a personally identifiable number (e.g. a student ID number) is acceptable provided that such consent is in writing, dated and signed by the student. **[NOTE: A name or social security number must never be used for this purpose.]** If instructors use this method, the waiver must be for a specific course; must be for a specified period of time (semester, academic year, etc.); must specify the records to be disclosed; and must be retained by the instructor of the course for a period of one year after its expiration. **Students should not be coerced into signing a waiver, as the law requires that it be voluntarily given. Instructors may post grades for students who do not want their student ID number used by establishing a unique identifier known only to that student and the instructor.**