

# GRADING AND EVALUATION POLICY FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

**Sponsor:** Office of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Committee for Academic Policy

**Contact:** Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Category:** Academic

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**Implementation History:** This policy supersedes the Policy and Procedures for Undergraduate Student Evaluation and Grading initially approved July 17, 2003, and revised July 2006, March 2012, September 2015 and September 2019.

**Keywords:** Grades, Formative Evaluation, Summative Evaluation, Learning Contract Outcomes, Grade Point Average.

## Purpose

This policy establishes formative assessment of student work by an instructor of a course as a principle that drives educational activity and achievement at Empire State University and allows for summative evaluation, or grading, of that achievement.

This policy defines the possible letter grades that may be assigned for undergraduate work, as well as their meanings and consequences in terms of an undergraduate student's G.P.A., transcript, and academic progress and standing.

Learning and the assessment of student learning, as shown through the assignment of grades based on the evaluation of required student work, are central to academic integrity. Grades should reflect levels of student achievement on student learning outcomes and standards presented to students at the beginning of a course in a learning contract or syllabus. Because only the instructor of record is placed to judge a student's work against the outcomes, activities, and evaluative criteria of that contract, in accordance with the SUNY Faculty Senate's 2013 Memo to Presidents on Grading, this policy grants authority and responsibility for assigning grades to only the instructor of record in a course, within the context of institutional policies and procedures and consistent with the academic freedom of institutions of higher education to set standards. In rare cases in which that instructor becomes unavailable, the policy provides for another qualified faculty member to assign a grade.

This policy also provides an option, the administrative withdrawal (ZW), for instructors to use in cases where there was insufficient academic attendance on the part of the student to allow the instructor to generate any other grade and defines the consequences of such grades for an undergraduate student's G.P.A., academic progress, and transcript.

## Definitions

Summative evaluation is the assessment of a student's educational development compared to a standard or benchmark at the end of an educational period, such as a semester. A final course grade is one form of summative evaluation.

Formative evaluation is developmental feedback given periodically and/or episodically as part of a course to determine the type and/or direction of further efforts toward the educational goal of the course.

In order to meet federal standards, "For interactions to be considered regular and substantive interactions (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/dlis/design-your-course/regular-and-substantive-interaction/>), they need to meet the following characteristics:

- They should be mostly instructor-initiated
- They need to be regular, scheduled and predictable, and
- They must be substantive, i.e. focused on the course subject."

## Statements

Once an undergraduate student has enrolled in a course with an instructor, both student and instructor have responsibility for the educational results. The instructor must provide learning outcomes and evaluative standards that align with them, while the student must provide substantive original work that demonstrates engagement with the learning outcomes and activities throughout the course, and thereby the status of his or her progress toward those outcomes. The instructor must respond with timely and thoughtful feedback on this work, addressing both the quality of the current work and directions for further effort and development towards the outcomes. The student should then attempt to apply that feedback to ongoing efforts in the course as well as to appropriate subsequent courses.

The instructor is responsible for providing regular and substantive interaction and feedback to the student. A grade for a course is a final, summative evaluation of the student's work in a course. Grading of a student's work is based on the learning objectives/outcomes and the methods and criteria of evaluation stated in the learning contract or course syllabus, which according to the Undergraduate Learning Contract Policy each student should have not later than the 4th week of a term.

A grade awarding credit is assigned by the instructor only if the academic expectations of the learning contract or course syllabus have been completed satisfactorily. A student who works hard and shows progress but does not meet the stated criteria for evaluation does not earn university credit.

## Grades

Undergraduate Grades	QP	Description	Meaning
A	4.00	Excellent	Performance significantly exceeds college-level expectations for learning outcomes.
A-	3.67		
B+	3.33		
B	3.00	Good	Performance is above expectations
B-	2.67		
C+	2.33		

C	2.00	Adequate	Performance meets expectations
C-	1.67		
D+	1.33		
D	1.00	Minimally	Performance is below expectations
D-	0.67		
F	0.00	Unacceptable	Performance does not meet minimum requirements

The following outcomes are not included in the grade point average:

- IN (Incomplete)
- WD (Withdrawal- student initiated)
- ZW (Administrative Withdrawal)
- NP (No Pass)
- P (Pass)
- NG (No Grade)

### Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) Calculation

The university registrar calculates the grade point average and includes the G.P.A. in the student transcript. The G.P.A. calculation at Empire State University is:

- Based only on SUNY Empire courses for which a letter grade is assigned. This includes courses for which a student cross registers at another institution.
- Not based on prior transfer credit or prior learning assessment components included as part of the student's official transcript.

### Minimum Grade Point Average Requirement

SUNY Empire undergraduate students must maintain an overall 2.00 G.P.A. A cumulative 2.00 GPA is a requirement for graduation.

These and other criteria apply to eligibility to receive financial aid. See the Policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress and the statements on Eligibility for NYS and Federal Financial Aid.

### Assignment of Grades to Credit by Evaluation/Prior Learning Assessment Components

SUNY Empire does not assign grades to Credit by Evaluation/Prior Learning Assessment components.

### Repeated Courses

When a course is repeated, the highest grade and associated credits are included in the student's course attempted, credits completed, and grade point average (G.P.A.).

All courses taken and all grades earned are included in the student's SUNY Empire transcript. Repeated courses appear on the SUNY Empire transcript with a note indicating they have been repeated.

A repeated course grade does not replace the original grade:

- If a student withdraws from the repeated course or
- If a student is administratively withdrawn from the repeated course or

- Until a grade A through F or Pass/No Pass is awarded for the repeated course.

If the student took the first enrollment of the course prior to fall 2018 term, the student must initiate the Request to Repeat a Study request form. Submission of this form should be done at the time of registration. If the student took the first enrollment beginning on or after the fall 2018 term, the system will be automatically updated with the repeated course designated with the end of term processing.

Financial aid may not be available for a repeated course.

### Status of C and D Grades

- SUNY Empire learning contracts and courses: a grade of D- or better is required for SUNY Empire to award credit.
- For students engaged in Empire State University combined Bachelor's/Master's programs, grades of D-, D, D+, or C- in a graduate course will count towards the Bachelor's degree, but not toward the Master's degree. See the Grading Policy for Graduate Studies.

### F Grade

The course instructor submits an F grade when a student engages in a course throughout the term of enrollment and fails to complete it in a satisfactory and sufficient manner.

### Pass/No Pass Option

A student may select a Pass/No Pass (P/NP) option for a course. Students may not exceed 12 credits graded as Pass/No Pass. Under this option, receiving a grade of Pass (P) implies that the student's work is completed at the C- level or better. The student selects the Pass/No Pass option at the time of enrollment. The university does not later award letter grades for such courses, nor are the results of such courses included in the student's G.P.A.

**Pass (P):** Ordinarily, a course instructor submits a letter grade when the student successfully completes a course. When a student successfully completes (at a C- or better) a course taken on a Pass/No Pass basis, a Pass (P) grade is recorded.

**No Pass (NP):** The course instructor submits a No Pass (NP) when a student engages in a course throughout the term of enrollment and fails to complete it in a satisfactory and sufficient manner or fails to complete (at a C- or better) a course taken on a Pass/No Pass basis, a No Pass (NP) grade is recorded.

### Incomplete (IN)

Students are expected to engage with their course work throughout the term, submitting work for evaluation on a regular basis. However, when extenuating circumstances arise such that a student's work is delayed, a student may request an outcome of incomplete (IN) from the course instructor by submitting the incomplete request form. No course instructor is obligated to grant an incomplete, nor should any instructor submit an outcome of incomplete unless the student has requested one.

The course instructor submits an IN outcome only when the student has consistently engaged in learning activities and has successfully completed at least 50 percent of the assigned work before the end of the term for the course. Individual instructors are free to set higher standards for proportions of work submitted before considering a request for an incomplete on a course-by-course basis. Course-specific policies for consideration of an incomplete should be specified in the learning contract or syllabus, which should also refer students to this policy.

A student who is awarded an IN outcome is allowed no more than 15 weeks after the course end date to complete the course. The course instructor may establish an earlier completion date. Upon agreeing to issue an IN, the instructor is to submit an Incomplete Form prior to the end of the grading period. The instructor has the ability to enter a default grade when an incomplete is requested. The Incomplete outcome will automatically convert to the default grade entered by the instructor at the end of the Incomplete period if another grade is not entered. If no default grade was entered and a grade is not entered by the instructor at the end of the incomplete period, the Incomplete outcome will convert to an F or NP.

After the deadline to submit the final work for the incomplete course, the instructor has seven days to evaluate the work and submit a grade.

If a new grade is not issued by the end of the evaluation period, an IN outcome automatically converts to the default grade entered by the instructor. If the instructor has not issued a default grade, the IN outcome converts to an F or NP depending on the grading type.

### Administrative Withdrawal (ZW)

The course instructor submits an outcome of administrative withdrawal (ZW) if a student registers for a course and either does not engage in course work at all or initiates participation in the activities of the course, but then ceases to participate and does not officially withdraw. See definition of substantive engagement for acceptable participation. The ZW outcome must include the last date of substantive contact in an academically related activity by the student. As a guideline, instructors should evaluate at the 20% point of their course if any students have a lack of substantive engagement. If they meet this definition, a ZW should be entered. If at any point a student stops engaging, a ZW should be entered. It is not appropriate to enter a ZW during the grading period if the student never engaged or stopped engaging early in the term.

*Faculty have the authority to institute their own course attendance requirements.*

**Withdrawal (WD):** A student may withdraw from a course until the last day of the course. A student must withdraw using the stated procedures from the Office of the Registrar. The effective date is the date the student transmits the request. The actual date of withdrawal may affect enrollment status, satisfactory academic process, and financial aid eligibility. See SUNY Empire policy on Academic Withdrawal.

### Implications of Outcomes

Outcomes of IN, ZW, NP, and WD have specific implications for financial aid eligibility. For an explanation, see the Empire State University statements on Eligibility for New York State Financial Aid and Eligibility for Federal Financial Aid.

### Grading Deadlines

Student work is due as specified in the learning contract or course syllabus. As soon as possible after receiving it, instructors should strive to return student work with feedback, so that the cycle of regular and substantive effort, feedback, and development continues unabated.

The final grade/outcome for each course should be prepared as soon as possible after the student has completed the course, so that the student has timely evaluative information as well as an official transcript for the course. Grades/outcomes are due within seven calendar days after the last day of each term, or in the case of an incomplete, within

seven calendar days after the deadline to submit the final work for the incomplete.

## Applicable Legislation and Regulations

- FERPA (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/>)
- 34 CFR 668.22(l)7: (7)(i) ([http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2a9549ea032df95c72f031d60a6c3c8c&mc=true&node=se34.3.668\\_122&rgn=div1](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2a9549ea032df95c72f031d60a6c3c8c&mc=true&node=se34.3.668_122&rgn=div1))
- State University of New York Records Retention and Disposition Schedule: Academic Affairs and Instruction (<http://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/compliance/info-management/records/Academic-Affairs-Schedule.pdf>)

## Related References, Policies, Procedures, Forms and Appendices

- Undergraduate Learning Contract Policy (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/reg-docs/reg-docs-html/undergraduate-learning-contract-policy.php>)
- Academic Probation for Undergraduate Students (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D121110>)
- Comprehensive Transcript Policy (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D82917>)
- Student Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/reg-docs/reg-docs-html/student-academic-appeals-policy-and-procedure.php>)
- Empire State University statements on Eligibility for New York State Financial Aid and Eligibility for Federal Financial Aid (<http://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D36217>)
- NYSED Regulation (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/>)
- SUNY Guidelines on Grading MTP4 2013 (<https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/mtp/mtp13-2.pdf>)
- Grade Change Policy (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/grade-change/>)
- Course Catalog/Cross Listing Policy for Undergraduates (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/course-catalog-cross-listing/>)